

11 bodies recovered
PESHAWAR (APP): Rescue divers have recovered bodies of 11 individuals who drowned in Swat River, with operations continuing to locate two more missing persons. This update comes as authorities concurrently launch an extensive anti-encroachment drive along riverbanks. Faraz Ahmed Mughal, spokesman for Chief Minister, shared these details with journalists during his visit to Swat on Sunday.

Dar calls Turkish FM
ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar and Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan discussed bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Dar spoke with Turkish FM and they also discussed the recent regional developments and the forthcoming ASEAN Regional Forum scheduled to be held on 10-11 July in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Foreign Office Spokesperson said.

PM:Govt not to discourage solarization boom

Launches ‘Power Smart App’ to curb overbilling & empower electricity consumers

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif said on Sunday that the government would not discourage the solarization boom in the country, as he welcomed the ongoing process, which is regarded as the most inexpensive way of producing electricity in the world.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of ‘Apna meter, Apni reading’, a power smart mobile application, developed by the Ministry of Energy Power Division, the prime minister said that Pakistan was among the few countries where solarization process was rapidly taking place.

Referring to vital reforms in the power sector, the prime minister termed the launch of the mobile app as a revolutionary reform step that would benefit the consumers.

Its introduction in five languages would improve the provincial coordination and harmony among the provinces, he added.

The ceremony was attended by ministers, parliamentarians and relevant authorities.

The prime minister said a series of reforms were being initiated in the relevant ministry for the last one year and spearheaded by the minister and his team who had been working hard and delivering substantial results.

In the past, he said they had taken different vital decisions and stressed upon more to provide maximum relief to the consumers. Throughout

Pakistan, the prime minister said, vital reforms were introduced in the DISCOs boards where merit based appointments were made.

Effective steps were also taken against corrupt mafia, he said, adding for reduction in power prices, a task force and the minister concerned had really worked hard.

The prime minister, in his address telecast on national TV channels, referred to negotiations held with the Pakistani IPPs to bring down power tariff terming it ‘hard negotiations and a difficult phase’. Thus price of per unit was reduced to Rs7.41 for the households.

While they also held negotiations with the banks to settle down the circular debt issue which was a big achievement, he added.

The prime minister said that when the prices of petroleum prices at the international market were sliding down, they took its advantage and provided relief to the power consumers in the fortnightly petroleum products price adjustments.

Moreover, collective decision was taken to address the rebasing issues and by capping the per unit price under the same rate.

The prime minister also announced to end PTV fee charged from the power consumers in their monthly bills.

He also identified two challenges in the power sector, including power theft amounting to Rs500 billion and the difference between the high production and less consumption of electricity

due to solarization in the country.

He said that they were fully cognizant of these challenges and were exploring ways to take the country on the path of progress, besides ensuring to further reduce the power tariff for the industrial or household consumers.

Minister for Energy Power Division Sardar Awaiz Ahmed Khan Leghari, addressing the ceremony, said they were depending upon the use of latest technology to ensure transparency and provide relief to the consumers.

He said overbilling was a big issue and they were able to reimburse billions of rupees to consumers charged in this regard.

Meter readers’ mechanism was now handed over to consumers through the developed app, he added.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Power Division has introduced the Power Smart App under the “Apna Meter, Apni Reading” initiative to make electricity consumers directly part of the system and promote transparency in the billing process.

The App was formally launched by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday, said the spokesperson of the power division.

The app enables consumers to take a photograph of their electricity meter on a specified date and upload it to the App. Based on this user-submitted image, monthly electricity bills will



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif addressing the launching ceremony of Apna Meter Apni Reading-Power Smart Mobile Application.

President issues IHC judges’ seniority Justice Dogar made permanent CJ IHC

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The seniority notification of Islamabad High Court (IHC) judges has been officially released. According to the notification, Justice Sarfraz Dogar has been declared the most senior judge of the IHC.

Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani holds the second position in the seniority list, while Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb is ranked third. Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri is fourth, and Justice Babar Sattar is in the fifth position.

The seniority order has been determined by the President of Pakistan in light of the Supreme Court’s directions to decide seniority based on the judges’ service records. The notification



was issued with the President’s approval by the Ministry of Law and Justice.

Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq is sixth, Justice Arbab Tahir is seventh, Justice Saman Riffat is eighth, Justice Khadim Soomro is ninth, Justice Azam Khan is tenth, Justice Muhammad Asif is

eleventh, and Justice Inam Minhas is twelfth in the seniority list.

Additionally, the notification confirms that the transfer of three judges has now been made permanent, a decision also finalized by the President of Pakistan. Another significant legal matter was also settled by the

President alongside this decision.

Judicial Commission to consider appointment of IHC’s permanent CJ on July 1

The process for appointing the permanent Chief Justice of the Islamabad High Court has moved forward, as the Judicial Commission has scheduled a meeting on July 1.

According to sources, the commission will review the names of the three most senior judges of the Islamabad High Court for the top position. These include Justice Sarfraz Dogar, Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani, and Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb.

The final decision regarding the appointment is expected to be made following the commission’s deliberations.

Shehbaz holds meeting with Chaudhry Nisar



RAWALPINDI (APP): Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Sunday visited

political leader Chaudhry Nisar at his residence.

In the meeting, the prime minister inquired about Chaudhry Nisar’s well-being.

They discussed the national and international situation during the meeting.

The meeting took place in a very pleasant atmosphere and both the leaders revived memories of the past.

China ‘rolls over’ \$3.4bn commercial loans to Pakistan

KARACHI (Reuters): China has rolled over \$3.4 billion in loans to Pakistan, two senior Pakistani government officials told Reuters on Sunday, in a move that will help boost Islamabad’s foreign exchange reserves, a requirement of the International Monetary Fund.

Beijing rolled over \$2.1 billion, which has been in Pakistan’s central bank’s reserves for the last three years, and refinanced another \$1.3 billion commercial loan, which Islamabad had paid back two months ago, the sources said.

The officials asked not to be named as they were not authorised to discuss the matter publicly ahead of an official announcement.

Another \$1 billion from Middle Eastern commercial banks and \$500 million from multilateral financing have also been received, one of the officials said.

“This brings our reserves in line with the IMF target,” he said.

The loans, especially those from China, are critical to shoring up Pakistan’s low foreign reserves, which the IMF required to be over \$14 billion at the end of the current fiscal year on June 30.

Pakistani authorities say that the country’s economy has stabilised through ongoing reforms under a \$7 billion IMF bailout.

Pakistan’s foreign exchange reserves held by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) declined by \$2.66 billion during the week ending June 20, 2025, bringing the central bank’s reserves down to \$9.06 billion, according to data released by the State Bank of Pakistan.

Israel orders evacuations in northern Gaza as Trump calls for war to end

CAIRO (Reuters): The Israeli military ordered Palestinians to evacuate areas in northern Gaza on Sunday before intensified fighting against Hamas, as U.S. President Donald Trump called for an end to the war amid renewed efforts to broker a ceasefire.

“Make the deal in Gaza, get the hostages back,” Trump posted on his Truth Social platform early on Sunday. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was due to hold talks later in the day on the progress of Israel’s offensive.

A senior security official said the military will tell him the campaign is close to reaching its objectives, and warn that expanding fighting to new areas in Gaza may endanger the remaining Israeli hostages.

But in a statement posted on X and text messages sent to many residents, the military urged people in northern parts of the enclave to head south towards the Al-Mawasi area in Khan Younis, which Israel designated as a humanitarian area. Palestinian and U.N. officials say nowhere in Gaza is safe.

“The (Israeli) Defense Forces is operating with extreme force in these areas, and these military operations will escalate, intensify, and extend westward to the city center to destroy the capabilities of terrorist organizations,” the military said.

The evacuation order covered the Jabalia area and most Gaza City districts.

Medics and residents said the Israeli army’s bombardments escalated in the early hours in Jabalia, destroying several houses and killing at least six people.

In Khan Younis in the south, five people were killed in an airstrike on a tent encampment near Mawasi, medics said.

At least 12 other people were killed in separate Israeli military strikes and gunfire across the enclave, taking Sunday’s death toll to at least 23, medics said.

At Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, relatives arrived to pay their respects to white-shrouded bodies before they are buried.

“A month ago, they (Israel) told us to go to Al-Mawasi (in Khan Younis) and we stayed there for a month, it is a safe zone,” said Zeyad Abu Marouf. He said three of his children were killed and a fourth was wounded in the Israeli airstrike.

“We ask God and the Arabs to move and end this occupation and the injustice taking place against us,” Abu Marouf told Reuters.

The military escalation comes as Arab mediators, Egypt and Qatar, backed by the United States, begin a new ceasefire effort to halt the 20-month-old conflict and secure the release of Israeli and foreign hostages still being held by Hamas.

Interest in resolving the Gaza conflict has heightened following U.S. and Israeli bombings of Iran’s nuclear facilities.

There has also been rising concern over how aid is being distributed to Gazans in the ruined enclave. Hundreds of Palestinians have been killed over the past month in the vicinity of areas where food was being

handed out, local hospitals and officials have said.

A Hamas official told Reuters the group had informed the mediators it was ready to resume ceasefire talks, but reaffirmed the group’s outstanding demands that any deal must end the war and secure an Israeli withdrawal from the coastal territory.

Hamas has said it is willing to free remaining hostages in Gaza, 20 of whom are believed to still be alive, only in a deal that will end the war. Israel says it can only end the war if Hamas is disarmed and dismantled. Hamas refuses to lay down its arms.

The war began after Hamas attacked Israel on October 7, 2023, killing 1,200 people and taking 251 hostages, according to Israeli tallies.

Israel’s subsequent military assault has killed more than 56,000 Palestinians, according to the Gaza health ministry, displaced almost the entire 2.3 million population and plunged the enclave into a humanitarian crisis.

Two Indian-backed terrorists killed in Duki IBO

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Security forces conducted an intelligence based operation in Duki District of Balochistan, on reported presence of terrorists belonging to Indian proxy, Fitna al Hindustan.

During the conduct of operation, own forces effectively engaged the Indian

sponsored terrorists’ location, and after an intense fire exchange, two Indian sponsored terrorists were sent to hell, while two terrorists were apprehended.

Weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from the Indian sponsored terrorists, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area.

Sanitization operation is being conducted to eliminate any other terrorist found in the area, as the security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipeout the menace of Indian sponsored terrorism from the country, and reaffirm the nation’s unwavering resolve to bring the perpetrators of terrorism to justice.

Suicide bomber, handler killed in Peshawar

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Peshawar foiled a major terrorist plot by eliminating two militants during an intelligence-based operation in the Shamshato area of rural Peshawar, officials said on Sunday.

According to CTD officials, credible intelligence indicated that operatives of the banned international outfit Fitna Al-Khawarij (FAK), affiliated with the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), were planning a large-scale attack on a sensitive installation in Peshawar.

One of the killed militants was identified as Muneer Ahmed, son of Muhammad Gul, a resident

of Nangarhar, Afghanistan. Muneer had reportedly infiltrated into Pakistan from Khost in November 2024 with the aim of carrying out a high-profile suicide attack.

He had been nominated in FIR No. 161 dated November 23, 2024, under multiple sections of the Anti-Terrorism Act registered at the CTD Police Station Peshawar.

The CTD said its team moved swiftly on actionable intelligence and launched an operation in Shamshato, where an intense exchange of fire took place. Both militants were killed without any casualties among the security forces.

The identity of the second militant, believed to be

Muneer’s handler, is being verified. During the operation, security forces recovered one submachine gun with ammunition, one pistol with ammunition, and a suicide jacket from the possession of the slain militants.

A fresh case will be registered at CTD Police Station Peshawar, while a specialized investigation team has been formed to dismantle the entire network behind this plot. A CTD spokesperson said the successful operation highlights the department’s unwavering commitment and proactive efforts to safeguard the lives of innocent citizens and counter any attempts to destabilize peace in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Saif urges Maryam to focus on healthcare crisis in Punjab

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information, Barrister Dr. Saif, has urged Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz to focus on addressing the healthcare crisis in her province rather than politicizing the recent natural disaster in Swat.

He expressed deep concern over the reported deaths of at least 20 children at the District

Headquarters Hospital in Pakpattan due to inadequate medical facilities and the absence of timely treatment.

Barrister Dr. Saif stated that this tragic incident highlights serious shortcomings in Punjab’s healthcare system.

He noted that, despite the gravity of the situation, no action has been taken against any responsible officials in Punjab, which he termed a clear case of administrative negligence.

In comparison, he said,

the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur, responded promptly to the Swat incident by suspending six officials, including the Deputy Commissioner, Assistant Commissioners, and the District Rescue Officer.

A formal inquiry committee has been constituted, and investigations are underway to determine responsibility and ensure appropriate disciplinary measures.

Dr. Saif further stated

that public hospitals across Punjab are facing shortages of essential medicines, medical equipment, and trained staff.

He called on the Punjab government to prioritize healthcare reforms and ensure that necessary resources are provided to prevent further loss of life.

He concluded by emphasizing that governance should be focused on addressing public issues effectively, particularly in sectors as critical as healthcare.



Governor establishes ‘Special Muharram Cell’ after meeting with Ulema

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori has announced the establishment of a ‘Special Muharram Cell or Control Room’ to resolve all the issues including security, electricity, stagnant rainwater and roads in Muharram ul Haram at the Governor House here on Sunday.

Talking to media persons after a meeting with Ulema along with Chairman of Pakistan Ulema Council Hafiz Mohammed Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi, the Sindh Governor said that the Governor House is open to all schools of thought to arrange their programs including Majalis, and 12 Rabiul Awwal. He said we have to be away from difference of opinion and have to bring the people at one platform for respect and unity. Tessori said that everyone has to play its role for the development and prosperity of the country. He said that no example is seen in the world like ‘Karbala’.

Speaking about the recent Indian aggression, he said that Pakistan gave a befitting response to her (India). Replying to a question regarding bumpy roads in the city,

the Governor said that they would talk to the administration for the resolution to the problem.

He said that a Special Cell is being established for the purpose in the Muharram ul Haram.

Chairman of Pakistan Ulema Council Hafiz Mohammed Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on the occasion welcomed the announcement of establishing a Special Cell in the Governor House. Ashrafi said that he was against disrespecting to any school of thought. He said that the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) is Hafiz e Quran. He said that the people, who met him out of the country were praising Pakistan for giving a befitting response to India.

MMC delegation calls on Governor Sindh: The participants of 42nd and 43rd Mid-Career Management Course (MMC) met with Governor Sindh Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori at Governor House.

Addressing the participants, the Governor said that Governor's initiatives were not being run with government funds, but with public support and private sector's participation. He

said that more than 50,000 children were benefiting from modern IT courses at Governor House, a communique said on Sunday.

Tessori said that by opening the doors of Governor House to the public, it has been transformed into a ‘People's Governor House’ in the true sense. He said we are implementing a welfare mission despite limited powers. He said that breakfast was provided to 6,000 children and food to 25,000 people daily from the Governor House. He further said that work was underway effectively on 14 Governor Initiatives including climate change.

The Governor Sindh said that more than 16,000 saplings have been planted so far under the tree plantation campaign. He said that 62 percent of Pakistan's population is made up of youth, who are our most valuable assets and real hope for development. He said that the scope of modern IT courses would be expanded beyond Karachi and would soon reach Hyderabad. He further said that introduction of Artificial Intelligence (AI) education in vocational training centers was need of the hour.

Illegal travel agent arrested, 31 passports, cash seized

LAHORE (APP): Federal Investigation Agency's (FIA) Anti-Human Smuggling Circle Lahore arrested an unlicensed travel agent involved in illegal overseas employment schemes.

FIA spokesperson told the media on Sunday, that arrested suspect identified as Aftab-ur-Rehman was operating business namely ‘Legal Migration Consultancy’ in Johar Town, Lahore.

During the raid, the FIA officials recovered 31 Pakistani passports, various other documents, and Rs 807,000 in cash, along with receipts believed to be collected from victims. Additionally, 25 mobile phones and other relevant records were also seized.

Preliminary investigations revealed that the suspect maintained contact with other agents and foreign associates through these mobile devices.

The spokesperson added the suspect was involved in collecting large sums of money from citizens under the guise of providing employment abroad, despite lacking a valid license.

The suspect failed to provide a satisfactory explanation regarding the recovered passports and documents, the spokesperson said.

FIA Lahore Zone Director Sarfaraz Khan Virk said that investigations were underway, and more arrests were expected based on leads provided by the suspect.

8 dead, 27 injured as heavy rains lash Punjab

LAHORE (APP): At least eight people lost their lives and 27 others sustained injuries in various rain- and wind-related incidents across Punjab on Sunday.

According to Rescue 1122 spokesperson, the injured were shifted to nearby hospitals in critical condition following heavy downpours and thunderstorms reported in multiple districts.

In Lahore, two persons, identified as 25-year-old Uzma and her seven-month-old daughter Aleena, were killed and one was injured when the roof of their house collapsed in Ahmad Town, Daroghawala. Separately, a 50-year-old man named Shahid was killed and two others injured when a wall collapsed near Master Adda, Shera Kot, adjacent to Abdullah Shadi Hall. In another incident, 25-year-old

Shakeel died in a wall collapse on Katar Bund Road.

Additional rain-related injuries in Lahore included one person hurt at Nain Sukh Chowk, Hazrat Ali Road, three injured near Pindi Graveyard in Shahdara Town, one injured from a falling stone at Peco Road, Pipe Stop, and another injured in a wall collapse on Infantry Road, Dharampura.

In Gujranwala, a 25-year-old man named Hazira was killed by lightning in Phame Soran, Nowshera Virkan. Another fatality was reported in Bale Wali village, Nandipur, where 20-year-old Zain died due to electrocution. One person was injured in a roof collapse near Nawar Pind, close to Malhi Chowk.

In Nankana Sahib, two persons were injured when walls collapsed on Abdali

Yousafwala-Warburton Road and Colony Canal Jaranwala Road. In Kasur, three persons were injured after the roof of a house collapsed in Kot Fatah Baz Khan, while another was hurt in a wall collapse in Man Singh Wala.

In Sheikhupura, a 10-year-old boy named Sahir died when a wall collapsed in Khanpur village. Multiple other incidents in Kot Abdul Malik, Kathala Warqan (Muridke), and Chhapa Manaran village on Hafizabad Road resulted in at least six injuries. Two people were injured when a flex board fell near Salman Sweets, Sim Pul. One individual was hurt after being struck by a gate during a windstorm in Chak 16 near Marah Baghwan, Sharqpur, while another sustained injuries from a fall in Pind Rattan Singh, Muridke.



LAHORE: Vehicles are passing through rain water accumulated on road during the rain in the Provincial Capital. —APP Photo

PBA refutes misleading claims on remittance subsidies

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Pakistan Banks Association (PBA) strongly rejects misleading assertions in recent press coverage suggesting that government subsidies to banks under remittance incentive schemes serve no economic purpose. Such narratives dangerously undermine public confidence at a time when Pakistan's financial stability depends on robust formal remittance flows.

When the Pakistan Remittance Initiative (PRI) was conceptualised in 2008, formal remittances stood at only USD 6.5 billion, while an estimated USD 20 billion flowed through undocumented hawala/hundi channels, exacerbating balance of payments pressures. The PRI, launched in 2009, was a homegrown solution to shift flows to formal banking channels, offering an initial incentive of SAR 20 per transaction, approximately 2.25% of the average USD 500 transaction, which was far more viable than foreign borrowings carrying interest rates above 3.5% plus long-term repayment obligations and exchange rate risks. In contrast, PRI incentives are one-time PKR payments with no repayment liability, making them a strategic win-win for Pakistan's economy.

Banks do not profit from these incentives. In reality, they bear enormous costs to remain competitive, offering higher rebates and FX premiums to Money Transfer Operators (MTOs) and remitters abroad. These costs are only partially offset by government incentives, with the remain-

der absorbed by banks to maintain essential liquidity for import payments and economic stability. For example, banks often pay PKR 3-5 per USD premium over interbank rates to attract flows that would otherwise revert to hawala, incurring direct losses in the national interest.

Contrary to claims, banks invest heavily in compliance systems, international correspondent banking relationships, technology platforms, and customer outreach to process remittances securely and efficiently. Approximately 90% of rebates before FY25 and over 100% under FY25 schemes are passed directly to international partners, leaving no direct profit for banks. Furthermore, banks pay their partners upfront while government reimbursements are delayed by months, imposing significant working capital costs.

Banks submit monthly data of PRI remittances to SBP, duly reviewed and certified by Internal Audits of the Banks. SBP also conducts review of this certified data before making payment of incentive under the scheme.

Allegations that banks manipulate remittance data, launder undeclared funds, or facilitate tax evasion are baseless. Banks operate under strict SBP regulations, AML/CFT frameworks, and independent audits. The classification of freelancer and IT exporter earnings as remittances is a policy classification issue needing regulatory clarity, not bank misconduct.

It is telling that such narratives are often promoted by vested interests seeking to dismantle the formal banking remittance ecosystem to divert

flows back into their networks. These banking-led initiatives have been instrumental in ensuring Pakistan's compliance with global AML/CFT standards, preventing potential black-listing that would cripple the economy.

Pakistan's banks continue to offer competitive FX rates despite incurring losses, solely to preserve formal flows. Without these incentives, remittances would revert to undocumented channels, undermining fiscal sustainability and increasing dependence on costly foreign borrowing.

The suggestion that banks are subsidised ignores the economic reality that these incentives ensure secure, documented, and traceable remittance flows critical for Pakistan's economy. Banks remain among the country's largest taxpayers and employers, paying over Rs 850 billion in taxes annually, while financing every facet of national economic activity. Mischaracterising their role only weakens public trust at a time when economic unity and realism are paramount.

While modalities can be improved over time, PRI remains a strategic success story. The PBA remains committed to working with policymakers to strengthen Pakistan's economy, maintain global compliance, and safeguard financial stability, but rejects in the strongest terms any narrative driven by vested interests that undermines the banking sector's contributions and national economic security.

PRI is an essential driver striving for Pakistan's financial independence and diversion from reliance on international debt and forex assistance.



KARACHI: Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori addressing a press conference after chairing a meeting with Ulema regarding the law and order situation in Muharram ul Haram at Governor House.

CM orders 24/7 operation of district emergency centres

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has ordered for immediate operationalisation of District Emergency Operation Centres (DEOCs) across all districts of the province to effectively implement the Punjab Monsoon Emergency Plan 2025.

The plan has been activated across Punjab, and the Chief Minister is receiving minute-to-minute updates on its execution.

In line with her orders, all DEOCs will function round-the-clock to monitor and manage monsoon-related emergencies. Intensive

cleaning of stormwater drains and clearance of water pathways is also underway throughout the province.

As part of the preparedness efforts, the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) has made its helpline 1129 fully operational, allowing residents across Punjab to access emergency assistance with ease. Furthermore, the PDMA has issued Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to prevent accidents and losses during the rainy season.

The SOPs strictly prohibit swimming in canals, espe-

cially during high water levels, with a particular warning to parents to prevent children and youth from entering storm drains or flooded areas.

Authorities have also been instructed to identify and assess dilapidated buildings and advise residents to relocate to safer locations. Citizens have been urged to avoid contact with electric appliances, fallen wires, and poles during rains.

They are also advised to clean rooftops and ensure proper drainage of rainwater. People should avoid going outdoors during lightning or thunderstorms and

move to secure locations before the onset of urban flooding.

CM Maryam Nawaz instructed all Deputy Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners, Rescue 1122 teams, and other relevant agencies to remain on high alert and fully prepared. She appealed to the public to strictly follow the precautionary measures during the monsoon to ensure their safety. The CM said, ‘The protection of every life is our foremost responsibility. All available resources will be utilized to safeguard our citizens, and we will fulfill this duty with full dedication.’

Urs of Hazrat Makhdoom Bilal Shaheed begins

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The 518th annual Urs and 100th anniversary of the great Sufi saint of Sindh, Hazrat Makhdoom Bilal Shaheed (RA), was celebrated with great devotion and respect at the Jamia Masjid Dargah Hazrat Makhdoom Bilal Shaheed Dadu under the patronage of the Khateeb of the Dargah, Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Ibrahim Sial Naqshbandi, in which great scholars and scholars from all over Pakistan participated and delivered speeches, and millions of people also participated.

The Urs celebrations began by placing a wreath on the tomb of Shaheed Makhdoom Bilal. On the occasion of the Urs Sharif, a biography of Hazrat Makhdoom Sahib was also unveiled, the author of which is Maulana Muhammad Ibrahim Sial Naqshbandi and the scribe is the respected Mr. Muhammad Yousuf Kaboro.


The annual Urs celebrations began on Friday and continued until Fajr prayers. Special prayers were offered by the entire Islamic world.

On this occasion, the Sajjada Nashin of Dargah Alia Rahmatpur Sharif, Pir

Tariqat Rahbar Shariat Hazrat Khwaja Muhammad Abdul Ghaffar, also known as Pir Mitha Sain, Hazrat Pir Maulana Manzoor Ahmed Mashori, of Dargah Mashori Sharif, Pir Allama Mufti Khalil Ahmed, Dargah Vehar Sharif, Hazrat Pir Makhdoom Fazlullah Siddiqui, Hazrat Pir Makhdoom ShafiqurRehman, Hazrat Pir Makhdoom Imam Bakhsh Sani, Hazrat Makhdoom Habib-ur-Rehman, Hazrat Mufti Abdul Halim Sehwan, Hazrat Allama Maulana Obaidullah Dahri, Maulana Abdul Rab Sindhi Kandiaro Sharif, Hazrat Allama

Maulana Mufti Haq Nabi Sahib, Sikandri Shahpur Chakar, Maulana Muhammad Azim Mahesar, Maulvi Nadeem Ali, Jamia Masjid Shaheed Makhdoom Bilal Khatib, Hazrat Allama Mufti Muhammad Ibrahim Sial, Hafiz Muhammad Qasim Sial, and others delivered spiritual speeches.

Director Information Muhammad Yousuf Kaboro, DSP Abdul Khaliq Wagan, Dr. Abdul Baqi Wagan, Amir Ali Wagan and others attended the occasion. On this occasion, certificates were distributed among guests and scholars from far and wide.



PAKISTAN AIR FORCE

HEADQUARTERS NORTHERN AIR COMMAND

PRE-QUALIFICATION AND REGISTRATION OF OEM /

AUTHORISE STOCKIST / FIRMS FOR SUPPLY OF MT SPARES

ITEMS: FY 2025-26

Applications are invited for pre-qualification / registration of reputable, well-experienced, financially-sound and Income Tax - registered OEM / Authorized Stockists / Firms / Contractors for supply of MT Spares (Suzuki, Toyota, Honda, Hyundai, Nissan, Hino etc). Supplies would be delivered to PAF Bases at Peshawar, Kohat, Mianwali, Kamra, Murid, Kallar Kahar and Skardu.

Interested parties may apply on Company's / Firm's letterhead from **30 June, 2025 to 14 July, 2025**, during working hours (0830 Hrs to 1300 Hrs) along with the following information: -

- Owners / Partners Name, Address, Telephone, Mobile numbers and Fax number of the company. The properties / Owner / partners should be Pakistani National.
- Six months summary of their Bank accounts.
- Profile of the company. Status of the Firm; whether proprietorship / partnership / public or Private Limited Company. Partnership deed, in case contractor are other than proprietary/ limited / General Order Suppliers.
- Proof of property in case of partnership / proprietary.
- Memorandum and Articles of Association, in case of Ltd concern.
- Attested copies of CNIC of owner / partners / witnesses of the company are to be attached with the application.
- Details of registration with major organizations and details of agreements / contracts.
- Financial status duly verified / name of bankers and certificate of financial stability.
- Sales Tax and Income Tax Registration Certificate, details of Income Tax Returns and copy of assessment / payment of Income Tax.
- Legal action details, if any.
- Any additional information, related to the subject.
- Affidavit regarding correctness of documents and information therein.

Applications duly marked with ‘Pre-qualification / registration’ of Local supplies contractors for MT Spares items / in sealed envelopes are to be submitted to the undermentioned offices for the concerned MT Spares (Batteries, Filters, Electrical Parts, Engine Parts, Suspension Parts, Body Parts etc) by 14 July, 2025. Application received after last submission date will not be entertained.

Note: -

- Any information, if found incomplete / false at any stage, will result in immediate rejection of the application.
- Staff Officer (Support) Headquarters Northern Air Command, PAF may ask for any further information / details, if required and reserves the right to accept or reject the applications, on technical grounds.
- Selected / shortlisted parties / Firms would be required to fill up registration forms with complete details within 7 days of confirmation.

SO (Support)
Headquarters Northern Air Command, PAF
66-The Mall, Peshawar- Cantt.

Fourth phase of Drug-Free Peshawar campaign Over 600 drug addicts taken into custody



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The number of drug addicts taken into custody during the fourth phase of the ongoing "Drug-Free Peshawar" campaign has exceeded 600, officials confirmed. Commissioner Peshawar Division, Riaz Khan Mehsud, accompa-

nied by Deputy Commissioner Peshawar, Sarmad Salim Akram, conducted late-night visits to key areas of the city that were previously known hotspots for drug addicts.

According to officials, most of the locations that once saw groups of addicts gathered have

now been cleared. Commissioner Mehsud expressed satisfaction over the significant reduction in the visible presence of drug addicts in these areas.

Meanwhile, medical examinations of the individuals taken into custody have commenced at the rehabilitation centers. As

part of the process, blood samples are being collected from the addicts to conduct 29 different tests. These tests are aimed at identifying the specific substances each individual was addicted to, so that tailored treatment plans can be implemented. Additionally, screening for HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases is also being conducted.

Special isolation wards have been designated in the rehabilitation centers for patients diagnosed with contagious diseases.

Commissioner Riaz Mehsud expressed satisfaction over the progress of the operation and directed administrative officers to pay regular visits to the rehabilitation centers at different times of the day. He instructed them to closely monitor the quality of care and facilities being provided to the patients undergoing treatment.



PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister Syed Qasim Shah addressing the distribution ceremony of Jahez Fund.

21 dead, 10 injured in KP in rains, floods incidents since June 27

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has released a report detailing the human and financial losses in the province caused by rains, floods/flash floods, and landslides.

According to the report, since June 27 till date, various incidents caused by rains, strong winds, flash floods, and landslides have resulted in

the deaths of 21 people and injuries to 10 others in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Among the deceased are 7 men, 5 women, and 9 children. The injured include 6 men, 3 women, and 1 child.

The report states that a total of 57 houses were damaged due to the rains.

As many as 51 were partially damaged, while 6 were completely destroyed. These incidents occurred across

multiple districts, including Swat, Abbottabad, Lower Chitral, Buner, Swabi, Kurram, Charsadda, Malakand, Shangla, Lower Dir, and Torghar.

Swat was reported as the most affected district, with 14 deaths and 6 injuries.

PDMA has directed the concerned district administrations to immediately provide assistance to the affected families and

ensure the best medical treatment for the injured.

The rain spell is expected to continue until July 1. PDMA had already issued alerts to the district administrations to remain vigilant and take precautionary measures.

According to a PDMA spokesperson, the authority is in continuous contact with all district administrations, relevant departments, and relief organizations.

Business community rejects budgets



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The business community of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, under the leadership of the Regional Vice President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI), Aun Ali Syed, and Regional Chairman Haji Afzal, has strongly criticized the federal and provincial budgets. They expressed serious concerns over the government's decision to ignore the business community's proposals, increase existing tax rates, and impose new taxes. These policies were labeled as anti-business, anti-people, and detrimental to the national

economy.

The remarks came during a post-budget consultative meeting held at the FPCCI Regional Office in Peshawar. The meeting was attended by representatives from the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and several other chambers from across the province. Participation was also ensured through Zoom for those unable to attend physically.

Presiding over the meeting, Aun Ali Syed and Haji Muhammad Afzal emphasized the urgent need for meaningful negotiations with the government. Business leaders and industry stakeholders voiced their deep reservations about the proposed budgets,

terming them obstacles to economic growth. They warned that every business sector would be adversely affected, and the ripple effects would ultimately burden the general public.

Representatives from the newly merged tribal districts (erstwhile FATA) also expressed concerns over the withdrawal of tax exemptions and imposition of new taxes in their areas. They highlighted that taxation alone is not the solution-governments must also ensure the provision of basic infrastructure and essential services.

Aun Ali Syed and Haji Afzal instructed all chambers to submit their budget-related concerns in writing to the FPCCI. They pledged to arrange an early meeting with Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur to present the ground realities and advocate for practical corrections in the budget. Their goal is to resolve the issues faced by the business community and stabilize the provincial economy.

Firing spread fear in Gulshan Rehman Colony

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Residents of Gulshan Rehman Colony in Peshawar have expressed deep concern over a surge in firing incidents, which have become a routine occurrence in the area. Locals say they feel increasingly unsafe as a result of repeated gunfire in their neighborhood.

According to reports, the latest incident occurred after a dispute broke out in a WhatsApp group, prompting one group to open fire outside the house of their rivals. Fortunately, no casualties were reported, and children present at the scene narrowly escaped harm.

Residents complained that despite repeated incidents, police have failed to take any action against the suspects. People living in the colony say they are fed up with the continued violence and have demanded that senior police officials take immediate notice of the situation to ensure their safety.

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Former Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan, ex-Senator, and former Senior Provincial Minister Siraj ul Haq has said that the Afghan nation has proven its resilience by defeating British imperialism in 1919, Soviet imperialism in 1979, and NATO forces led by the U.S. in 2001, asserting that this region cannot be subjugated. He emphasized that mistrust between Pakistan and Afghanistan must end, and both countries should become partners in development, trade, education, and health. He made these remarks as the chief guest at a seminar titled "New Dimensions of Pak-Afghan Relations" organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) Peshawar.

Siraj ul Haq proposed the revival and extension of the Peshawar-Torkham railway line into Afghanistan,

issuance of special identity cards for Afghans, and permission for documented citizens of both countries to move freely across borders. He further stated that Pakistan and Afghanistan are two independent and sovereign neighboring nations deeply linked through religion, culture, language, and geography. Strengthening their friendship is not only in their mutual interest but also crucial for regional development. He added that history bears witness to Pakistan's consistent support for Afghans in difficult times, and stability in Afghanistan equally benefits Pakistan.

Siraj ul Haq asserted that the Pak-Afghan border is a recognized reality and any attempts to create controversy around it should not be supported. He termed the concept of "Pashtunistan" a dead issue and warned that any attempt to revive it would

fail. He also claimed that Afghans defeated American imperialism, Pakistan countered the vision of a united India, and Iran resisted the idea of Greater Israel-together asserting genuine leadership of the Islamic world. He proposed that Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey should form a united front to lead the Muslim world and reshape the future of the region.

Afghan Consul General Hafiz Mohibullah, in his address, highlighted that the first bond between Afghanistan and Pakistan is their shared Islamic faith. He expressed gratitude to the Pakistani people for their sacrifices and lamented that the U.S., during its 20-year occupation, did not build hospitals or improve Afghanistan's education and health sectors. He emphasized that, alongside government efforts, political leaders, scholars,

traders, intellectuals, journalists, athletes, poets, writers, and artists from both countries must play a role in enhancing mutual understanding through direct engagement.

Deputy Chairman of the Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce, Zia ul Haq Sarhadi, said bilateral trade, once at \$2.5 billion, had plunged to \$800 million due to recent tensions but is now gradually recovering. He urged improvements in transit trade, visa policy, and border management to ease difficulties faced by traders and transporters. Senior journalist and analyst Mehmood Jan Babar and IRS Chairman Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Khalil agreed that both countries must not only strengthen diplomatic ties but also collaborate in education, healthcare, and cultural exchange to ensure lasting peace and development in the region.

CUSIT conducts second phase of goodwill, talent scholarship test

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: City University of Science and Information Technology (CUSIT) successfully held the second phase of its Goodwill & Talent Scholarship Test at its Main Campus on Dalazak Road. Over 1,802 candidates from across the region registered for the test, aiming to secure scholarships for higher education at CUSIT.

The initiative promotes accessible quality education, supports talented students facing financial constraints, and fosters good-



ment between the university and the local community. Registrar CUSIT expressed satisfaction with the test's smooth conduct and participation level,

stating, "We're pleased to see such a positive response. Our objective is to offer financial support, identify, and nurture talent contributing meaningfully

to society." Interested students and parents can visit CUSIT's website or contact the admissions office for further information.

Blue treasures of KP: Unlocking ecotourism through lakes

PESHAWAR (APP): Blessed with an abundance of natural and mountain beauty, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) stands out as a unique province of Pakistan, home to a stunning array of lakes that offer unmatched serenity and ecotourism potential for tourists to explore.

From the legendary Saiful Malook in the Kaghan Valley to the pristine Mahodand Lake in Swat's Ushu Valley, these alpine wonders attract thousands of tourists each year seeking peace, adventure, and connection with nature especially during summer.

Framed by the majestic Malika Parbat in the Kaghan Valley, the iconic Saiful Malook lake stirs the imagination with its

crystal-clear, greenish-blue waters and mythic charm.

Situated at 3,224 meters above sea level and covering over a square mile, the lake is named after a Persian prince and immortalized in the poetic folklore of Mian Muhammad Bakhsh's fairytale of Saiful Malook. According to the tale, Prince Saiful Malook fell in love with a fairy princess, Badriul Jamal, in this magical setting and came here again to find his love.

"I have visited many lakes across Pakistan, but Saiful Malook remains unmatched for its natural beauty, waterfalls and enchanting stories," said Manzoorul Haq, a retired ambassador from Nowshera.

"It's my forth trip at

Saiful Malook and Ansu Lakes and surely won't be the last amid great excitement," Manzoor who arrived to explore the famous lakes of Mansehra district told APP.

"The Ansu lake beauty has impressed me the most due to its calm and serenity," he said.

He said Ansoo and Dudipatsar Lakes are also accessible via jeep or horseback, enhancing the area's appeal for families and adventurers alike.

Ansoo Lake is a teardrop-shaped wonder and one of the highest in the Himalayas at 4,126 meters while Dudipatsar Lake is Known for its mirror-like surface and alpine surroundings being the must visit sites.

However, visitors have

raised concerns over pollution, with litter and plastic waste marring the lakes beauty.

He urges authorities such as the Kaghan Development Authority and Wildlife Department to enforce cleanliness and introduce eco-friendly tourism practices, including parking areas located outside lake premises, a common practice in international ecotourism sites.

Manzoor said that they spent sometimes at Siri and Payala Lakes as its serene destinations ideal for camping and nature walks.

"Before these famous lakes, we visited mahodand Lake which is a jewel of the Swat Valley at 2,900 meters, famed for trout fishing and surrounded by

pine forests and camping sites.

Swat, often dubbed the tourism capital of KP, boasts seven tourism-friendly features such as snowy peaks, trout rivers, waterfalls, lakes, Swat Motorway, snowfall, and lush green valleys.

According to Muhammad Ali Syed, General Manager of the KP Culture and Tourism Authority, the province is home to around 100 lakes, including the globally ranked Karambar Lake in Chitral which is one of the world's highest natural lakes at 4,272 meters.

Significant projects are underway to improve accessibility and enhance the ecotourism experience.

Among them are Mahodand Lake develop-

ment project focuses on walking trails, wooden boats, huts, a parking area, and camping pods.

He said small bridges will connect lakes in the Mahodand area to improve scenic appeal and accessibility.

Ali Syed said a substantial amount were spent on construction of all-season jeep tracks in 16 districts, particularly in the Malakand and Hazara divisions.

Referring to integrated Tourism Zones project, he said four zones at Mankiali (Swat), Thandyani (Abbottabad), Ganol (Mansehra), and Madaklasht (Lower Chitral) will be developed with World Bank support and road connectivity to Swat and Hazara

Motorways. Saiful Malook Lake, spread over 12,026 acres, is now part of a national park designated under the 1975 Preservation and Management Act.

A mega project has been approved for its conservation, including the construction of a parking complex, gates, wildlife offices, and provision of cleaning machinery.

KP is also leading the way under the Prime Minister's Protected Areas Initiative, becoming the first province to offer national park services to the public, with dedicated DFOs managing ecological preservation, wildlife habitats, and alpine ecosystems.

While the north dominates the ecotourism land-

scape, KP's southern and central districts are not far behind. Lakes like Tanda Dam (Kohat), Khanpur (Haripur), and Kundal (Swabi) are developed for water sports, paragliding, and recreational use.

These efforts aim to distribute tourism more evenly across the province and offer year-round destinations for nature lovers.

With its kaleidoscope of lakes set against majestic peaks, KP is not just a haven for tourists but a blueprint for sustainable ecotourism in Pakistan.

Protecting these natural treasures through thoughtful development, strict environmental regulations, and public awareness is essential to preserve their magic for generations to come.



In brief

Blind murder case solved F.P. Report

KARAK: The Karak Police have successfully solved the case of a blind murder that occurred two days ago in the Sapalmay Algada area, under the jurisdiction of Nasrati Police Station. The body of a young man was found after he went missing one afternoon following lunch at home. His family filed a missing person report, prompting swift action by police. SHO Yaqub Khan Shaheed Police Station, Adil Khan, employed professional investigative skills and modern technology to trace and arrest two main suspects involved in the murder. According to police officials, the suspects have confessed to the crime during the initial investigation. Further inquiry is ongoing to determine the motive and any additional persons involved.

Peace committee head shot dead

LAKKI MARWAT (APP): Unidentified gunmen opened fire on a car, killing the head of the Shahab Khel Peace Committee and two others, Lakki Marwat police informed on Sunday. Police said, the attack took place near Wanda Kara in Lakki Marwat, where assailants indiscriminately fired at a moving vehicle. The victims were identified as Ghulam Dastagir, the president of the Shahab Khel Peace Committee, and his companions Saleem Khan and Salahuddin. Authorities stated that Ghulam Dastagir was on his way to resolve a local dispute in Qabul Khel when terrorists ambushed their car. The bodies were shifted to Sarai Naurang Hospital for post-mortem examination, and an investigation into the incident has been launched. The deceased, Ghulam Dastagir, was an active community leader who regularly conducted armed night patrols with hundreds of volunteers to prevent unrest in the region.

Aror varsity conducts test

SUKKUR (APP): Aror University of Art, Architecture, Design and Heritage, Sukkur on Sunday successfully conducted the entry test for Fall-2025 admissions (Round 02) on campus. Over 1,700 candidates applied and more than 1,500 appeared for the test to seek admission in 13 undergraduate degree programs. The University ensured a secure, transparent, and well-facilitated environment for candidates, with special arrangements for accompanying parents, including a designated waiting area and campus tours. The event was supported by Rescue 1122, police security, and medical personnel, reflecting the University's commitment to student well-being and operational excellence. The official answer key will be available on the University's website today before 6:00 PM. Aror University wishes all candidates the best of luck in their academic pursuits.

BISP chief visits Swat

SWAT (APP): In a heartfelt gesture recognizing extraordinary courage, Chairperson of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Senator Rubina Khalid, visited Swat on Sunday to honour Hilal Khan — the brave young man who risked his life to save drowning tourists during the recent Swat River tragedy. The visit was made on the special instructions of President Asif Ali Zardari and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. Just two days ago, a devastating incident unfolded in Swat when 14 members of a tourist family from Sialkot were swept away by a sudden surge in the river while having breakfast near its banks.

DC Kurram inspects areas affected by floods

F.P. Report

KURRAM: Deputy Commissioner Kurram Ashfaq Khan has paid a detailed visit to the areas affected by the recent torrential rains and floods, including Zeeran Road, Zeeran Bypass, Karakhela Road, Shlozan Road and Ghulam Jan Bridge in Upper Kurram. He on this occasion, was accompanied by the Additional Deputy Commissioner (Relief), Assistant Commissioner Upper Kurram, XEN

C&W, TMO Upper Kurram, SDO PHE and Rescue 1122 officers.

Deputy Commissioner directed the departments concerned to immediately start the work of cleaning and restoration of the affected roads and passages, make the closed roads and bridges passable without any delay and make temporary arrangements where permanent restoration is not possible so that the public does not face any kind of difficulties. He also directed the

emergency repair of water supply and drainage system. DC Kurram said that the protection of life and property of the public is the top priority of the district administration and all line departments should discharge their responsibilities in this regard promptly and effectively.

DC Kurram appealed the people to stay away from rivers, streams and water reservoirs as well as electricity poles and wires during the monsoon season.

Karak police arrest youth for obscene social media video

F.P. Report

KARAK: A mischievous youth from Karak filmed himself standing near a signboard on the main road while using abusive and obscene language. The video, which clearly violated moral and social norms, was later uploaded to social media.

Upon learning of the incident, local police and the DSB took swift action

on the special orders of District Police Officer (DPO) Karak, Shahbaz Elahi, and arrested the accused.

During the arrest, the youth expressed deep regret for his actions and apologized to both the police and the people of Karak.

DPO Shahbaz Elahi stated, "There is no place for hate, indecency, or immoral behavior on social media. Strict legal action will be

taken against such elements to promote positive values in society."

He also warned all youths in Karak that anyone involved in such immoral acts or disrespecting cultural traditions will face strict legal consequences. Karak Police have appealed to the public to report any such immoral or illegal content to their nearest police station for prompt action.

Restoration work of Mohen-jo-Daro underway

Allah Dad Chandio

LARKANA: After the damage to the relics during the torrential rains of 2022 at the ancient site of Mohenjo-Daro near Larkana district of Sindh, the Sindh government's Archaeology Department is carrying out restoration work of various sites including SD Area, HR Area, DK Area, Munir Area in a phased manner. The Archaeology Department is carrying out restoration work of the relics under the supervision of Architectural Engineer Naveed Ahmed Sangah according to the maps of Sir John Marshall and Michael R.N. Johnson for the conservation of Mohenjo-Daro.

For this, an experienced team is carrying out the restoration work under the supervision of Mohenjo-Daro Curator Ehsan Ali Abbasi and Wassil Lamb Incharge Rustam Bhutto. Speaking to the media on

this occasion, Architectural Engineer Naveed Ahmed Sangah said that on the instructions of Sindh Minister Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah, restoration work is underway after the damage caused to the historical monuments of Mohenjo-Daro due to floods in the 2022 monsoons.

The work of the SD area has been completed in the first phase, the work of the HR area is underway, while the work of the Munir area will be started in the next phase, for which materials are being used after testing the soil and water on a scientific basis.

He added that conservation work is being done on the advice of senior archaeological experts Ghulam Mustafa Shar, Kaleemullah Lashari and others so that the ancient monuments can be protected from further damage in the upcoming monsoon rains. On the other hand,

Ehsan Ali Abbasi, curator of the Archaeological Museum of Mohenjo-Daro, said that restoring the historical monuments of Mohenjo-Daro in their original form after the rains was an important task. Provincial Minister Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah visited the historical monuments of Mohenjo-Daro.

He also paid great attention to conservation in carrying out development work. He said that during the ongoing restoration work of Mohenjo Daro, traces of ancient walls and wells are being revealed and preserved.

On this occasion, Wasim Bhutto, in-charge of the Wasil Lamb of Mohenjo Daro, said that for the conservation of the relics, soil used in pointing, paving, and mud cutting is being taken from the irrigation site and water from the Dadu Canal after inspection, which can eliminate the silt and clay on the walls.

No words can describe Swat tragedy: Khawaja Asif

SIALKOT, Jun 29 (APP): Federal Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif has said that there are no words to describe the Swat tragedy.

He expressed these views while talking to the media after offering condolences to the families of those who lost their lives in the Swat tragedy, here in Daska today.

He said that children drowned in front of their mother. "I have no words to talk about this tragedy, but there is no doubt that this is a breakdown of rescue and this is not the first incident, but before this, such incidents of failure of rescuers have happened there too. The rescuers came there, but they came empty-handed and then left because they did not have any equipment," he added.

The victims say that the officers against whom action had been taken should be recalled. "We will not take any action against

them. All these people should be reinstated to their jobs. The death of our family members was written there, which took them there, so we do not want anyone to be held accountable for this accident or any action to be taken against anyone," they added.

The minister expressed strong criticism over the apparent negligence and shortcomings in addressing safety concerns. Undoubtedly, accidents come from Allah Almighty, but no steps have been taken to prevent these accidents, he added.

In response to a question, he said, "I do not want to engage in political discussions. Let the people decide for themselves or let Allah Almighty decide. Who am I to make any decision about anyone? But I will definitely say that wherever the rulers are, they must realize their responsibilities because governance is not a matter of riding a swing, but

rather a bed of thorns. Therefore, all rulers should protect public interests more than their personal and political interests.

Provincial Minister for Local Government Punjab Mian Zeeshan Rafique, Members of Provincial Assembly (MPAs) Muhammad Manshaullah Butt, Chaudhry Naveed Ashraf, Chaudhry Faisal Ikram, Coordinator Prime Minister for Overseas Hafiz Shahid Ghug, Commissioner Gujranwala Division Syed Naveed Haider Shirazi, RPO Gujranwala Tayyab Hafeez Cheema, Deputy Commissioner Sialkot Saba Asghar Ali, Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) Sialkot Muhammad Iqbal, Assistant Commissioner (AC) Daska Usman Ghani and Chief Officer Municipality Daska Ulfat Shahzad along with other senior PML-N leaders were also present.



MARDAN: Provincial Minister for Food Zahir Shah Toru talking to media.

Khanewal to have university soon: Ahsan Iqbal

KHANEWAL (APP): Federal Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal announced that a university would soon be established in Khanewal as part of the PML-N government's policy to open higher education campuses in every district of the country.

Speaking to the media at Daha House Khanewal after offering condolences to MNA Muhammad Khan Daha and his family on the death of veteran Muslim League leader and former Provincial Transport Minister Haji Irfan Khan Daha, the minister said, "Khanewal will soon have its own university campus, which will provide quality education opportunities to thousands of students, especially in underdeveloped areas."

He cited the example of Narowal University, where over 7,000 students are currently enrolled and more than 5,000 of whom are female.

Highlighting economic progress under the current government, Ahsan Iqbal said that country has successfully avoided default due to positive policies, and the economy is now showing clear signs of improvement. He also praised the armed forces for their role in Operation Azm-e-Istehkam and said the military's achievements have been acknowledged globally.

Criticizing the previous PTI government, Ahsan Iqbal stated that despite 15 years of rule in KP, the party failed to deliver basic relief in crises such as the Swat tragedy.

He said videos of flood victims have moved the nation to tears and exposed governance failures.

Referring to the recent Supreme Court verdict on reserved seats, the minister said the decision has corrected past judgments that favored the PTI and has now upheld true democratic principles.

He said the PTI is ideologically divided, stating, "One faction blindly follows a confrontational path against institutions, while the other promotes democratic values and must now decide its direction."

The minister reaffirmed PML-N's commitment to national development, educational expansion, and democratic stability.

He also promised to convey the suggestions of Provincial Parliamentary Secretary for Communications and Works, Rana Saleem Hanif, regarding tax reforms and farmers' issues, to the relevant federal authorities and the Prime Minister.

Peaceful Observance of Muharram Grand Jirga convened in Kohat

F.P. Report

KOHAT: A Grand Aman Jirga was convened on Sunday at the Commissioner House, Kohat, aimed at ensuring the peaceful observance of Muharram-ul-Haram 2025. The Jirga was attended by provincial ministers, elected representatives, senior officials, religious scholars from both Sunni and Shia communities, tribal elders, concerned Deputy Commissioners, and heads of line departments.

Provincial Law Minister Aftab Alam Advocate, Minister for Agriculture Major (R) Muhammad Sajjad Barakwal, MNAs Shehryar Afridi and Shahid Khan Khattak, MPAs Shafi Jan, Aurangzeb Orakzai, Daud Afridi, and Shah Turab Khan, Commissioner Kohat, DIG Kohat Abbas Majeed Marwat, former Chief Justice Syed Ibn-e-Ali, as well as renowned Sunni and Shia scholars and notables addressed the Jirga.

Addressing the gathering, the speakers reiterated their full commitment to

maintaining peace and sectarian harmony during Muharram-ul-Haram. They emphasized that the sacredness of this holy month is equally revered by all Muslims—Sunni and Shia—and highlighted the need for collective responsibility in safeguarding communal unity.

The speakers further stated that the enemies of the nation seek to exploit internal divisions and disrupt social harmony through malicious propaganda and conspiracies. They stressed the importance of proactive communal engagement to uphold peace, foster inter-sectarian trust, and protect the next generation from divisive elements.

The participants of the Jirga expressed their unwavering resolve that Muharram-ul-Haram—as well as all other religious observances—would be commemorated with mutual respect, unity, and understanding. They collectively affirmed: "We are all Muslims and our only identity is Pakistan."

Earlier, while outlining

the objectives of the Jirga, Commissioner Kohat Division emphasized the importance of heightened vigilance in view of the current regional security dynamics, particularly the backdrop of recent provocations from India. He cautioned against attempts by hostile forces to create unrest, underscoring the critical role of youth in thwarting such threats. He further urged participants to exercise caution in the digital sphere, especially with regard to social media, which he noted is vulnerable to external manipulation. He advised that every piece of information—whether a post, video, or news item—must be verified thoroughly before being shared or acted upon.

Concluding the event, special prayers were offered for the peace, stability, and prosperity of Pakistan. Prayers were also held for the elevation of the ranks of the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the motherland, including those of the Swat tragedy, as well as for the early recovery of the injured.

Operation against encroachment starts

SWAT (APP): On the instructions of Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, an indiscriminate operation has been launched against encroachments along the Swat River.

According to the Chief Minister's spokesperson, Faraz Ahmad Mughal, the district administration, police and relevant departments are jointly participating in the operation.

No leniency will be shown during the operation, and the actions against encroachments will be completed swiftly, he said.

The spokesperson stated that illegal mining along the river has been completely halted, and strict legal action will be taken against all those responsible.

He added that the construction of barriers along

the river will also be initiated. After the Swat River, the scope of the anti-encroachment operation will be further expanded.

He emphasized that steps are being taken to restore and preserve the beauty of tourist spots. Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has issued clear instructions that no type of encroachment will be allowed at tourist destinations.

Dir administration launches crackdown

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Lower Dir's district administration on Sunday decided to launch a strict crackdown against illegal encroachments and unauthorized constructions along the Panjkora River and other streams in the district, in the wake of the recent tragic incident in Swat. A complete ban has also been imposed on the legal and illegal extraction of sand, soil, and gravel from riverbeds.

The decision was made during an urgently called meeting chaired by Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Arif. The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner (Relief) Ishtiaq Ahmad, Additional Deputy Commissioner (Finance and Planning) Gauhaur Ali, all

Commissioners, and heads of relevant departments.

During the meeting, the DC issued special directives to ensure the implementation of orders issued by the provincial government. It was decided that, as per the clear instructions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah, all forms of construction and the extraction of materials, both legal and illegal, along the Panjkora River would be completely banned.

The meeting also decided to launch an anti-encroachment drive against illegal constructions along rivers and streams. Operations have been ordered against all types of encroachments, including hotels established within riverbeds.

Furthermore, it was decided to establish a response center at the office

of the Additional Deputy Commissioner (Relief), where officials from all relevant departments will be deployed to ensure timely coordination and response.

In line with provincial government directives, rescue teams will be equipped with drones, life-saving jackets, and other modern rescue equipment. The Executive Engineer of the Irrigation Department was directed to establish an early warning system to monitor water levels and potential flood threats.

To ensure effective monitoring of all rivers across Lower Dir, it was also decided to deploy personnel from Rescue 1122, police, Levies, and the district administration on regular patrols. These teams will also be responsible for keeping the public away from riverbanks to avoid any untoward incidents.

Commissioner, RPO Dera visit police command centre to review Muharram security

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Commissioner Dera Division Zafar-ul-Islam Khattak and Regional Police Officer (RPO) Syed Ashfaq Anwar paid a surprise visit to the Police Command and Control Centre, established at Ejaz Shaheed Police Lines, to review security arrangements for Muharram-ul-Haram. The visit aimed to ensure foolproof security for the Imambargahs and the traditional routes of mourning processions in Dera Ismail Khan.

Deputy Commissioner Abdul Nasir Khan, District Police Officer (DPO) Sajad Ahmad Sahibzada, and senior officials of the security forces accompanied them during the visit. On the occasion, DPO Dera and DSP Legal Imran Kundi, who is also in charge of the Command and Control Centre, briefed the Commissioner and the RPO about the overall security plan, including the arrangements for Majalis, mourning processions, and other religious ceremonies being held during Muharram. The dignitaries closely monitored security measures through live CCTV footage and expressed satisfaction over the preparations made for the holy month. They emphasized that maintaining peace during Muharram was a collective responsibility and urged the public to extend full cooperation with the district administration and law enforcement agencies to prevent any untoward incidents. The officials reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining law and order and ensuring a peaceful environment for all religious activities during Muharram.



Kremlin says Europe will feel the recoil from its ‘illegal’ sanctions on Russia

MOSCOW (Reuters): The Kremlin said in remarks published on Sunday that the tougher the sanctions imposed on Russia by Europe, the more painful the recoil would be for Europe's own economies as Russia had grown resistant to such "illegal" sanctions.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 triggered a wave of Western sanctions on Russia and it is by far the most sanctioned major economy in the world.

The West said that it hoped its sanctions would

force President Vladimir Putin to seek peace in Ukraine, and though the economy contracted in 2022, it grew in 2023 and 2024 at faster rates than the European Union.

The European Commission on June 10 proposed a new round of sanctions against Russia, targeting Moscow's energy revenues, its banks and its military industry, though the United States has so far refused to toughen its own sanctions.

Asked about remarks by

Western European leaders including French President Emmanuel Macron that toughening sanctions would force Russia to negotiate an end to the war, the Kremlin said only logic and arguments could force Russia to negotiate.

"The more serious the package of sanctions, which, I repeat, we consider illegal, the more serious will be the recoil from a gun to the shoulder. This is a double-edged sword," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told state

television.

Peskov told state television's top Kremlin correspondent, Pavel Zarubin, that he did not doubt the EU would impose further sanctions but that Russia had built up "resistance" to such sanctions.

President Vladimir Putin said on Friday that any additional EU sanctions on Russia would simply hurt Europe more – and pointed out that Russia's economy grew at 4.3% in 2024 compared to euro zone growth of 0.9%.

Hong Kong's last active pro-democracy group says it will disband

HONG KONG (Reuters): Hong Kong's League of Social Democrats said on Sunday that it would disband amid "immense political pressure" from a five year-long national security crackdown, leaving the China-ruled city with no formal pro-democracy opposition presence.

The LSD becomes the third major opposition party to shutter in Hong Kong in the past two years.

Co-founded in 2006 by former lawmaker Leung Kwok-hung as a radical wing of the pro-democracy camp, the LSD is the last group in Hong Kong to stage small protests this year.

Mass public gatherings and marches spearheaded by political and civil society groups had been common in Hong Kong until 2020, but the threat of prosecution has largely shut down organized protests since.

China imposed a national security law on the former British colony in 2020, punishing offences like subversion with possible life imprisonment following mass pro-democracy

protests in 2019.

A second set of laws, known as Article 23, was passed in 2024 by the city's pro-Beijing legislature covering crimes such as sedition and treason.

Current chair Chan Poying said the group had been "left with no choice" and after considering the safety of party members had decided to shutdown.

Chan declined to specify what pressures they had faced.

"We have endured hardships of internal disputes and the near total imprisonment of our leadership while witnessing the erosion of civil society, the fading of grassroots voices, the omnipresence of red lines and the draconian suppression of dissent," Chan told reporters, while flanked by six other core members including Tsang Kin-shing, Dickson Chau, Raphael Wong, Figo Chan and Jimmy Sham.

In February, the Democratic Party, the city's largest and most popular opposition party, announced it would disband. Several senior members told Reuters they had

been warned by Beijing that a failure to do so would mean serious consequences including possible arrests.

Earlier this month, China's top official on Hong Kong affairs, Xia Baolong, stressed national security work must continue as hostile forces were still interfering in the city.

"We must clearly see that the anti-China and Hong Kong chaos elements are still ruthless and are renewing various forms of soft resistance," Xia said in a speech in Hong Kong.

The League of Social Democrats is one of Hong Kong's smaller pro-democracy groups known for its more aggressive tactics and street protests in its advocacy of universal suffrage and grassroots causes including a universal pension scheme. In a 2016 incident, Leung threw a round object at former Hong Kong leader Leung Chun-ying inside the legislature.

Three LSD members were fined on June 12 by a magistrate for setting up a street booth where a blank black cloth was displayed

and money was collected in public without official permission.

Chan told reporters that the party had no assets to divest and no funds left after several of its bank accounts were shut down in 2023.

While never as popular as the more moderate Democratic Party and Civic Party, it gained three seats in a 2008 legislative election - its best showing.

The LSD's founder Leung, 69, was arrested and charged with conspiracy to commit subversion in 2021 in the landmark '47 Democrats' case. He is currently serving a sentence of six years and nine months in prison. Another member, Jimmy Sham, was also jailed in the same case and released in May.

The security laws have been criticised as a tool of repression by the U.S. and Britain, but China says they have restored stability with 332 people so far arrested under these laws.

"I hope that the people of Hong Kong will continue to pay attention to the vulnerable, and they will continue to speak out for injustice," Figo Chan said.



Kyiv: A woman pets a dog as she takes shelter inside a metro station during a Russian military strike, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Kyiv, Ukraine on Sunday.

3 killed, 6 injured in stampede at Indian chariot festival

BHUBANESWAR, India (Reuters): Three people were killed and six injured in a stampede during a festival in eastern India on Sunday, officials said.

"Three people have died and six sustained injuries; none of them are serious and all are out of danger," Y.B. Khurania, director general of

police in the state of Odisha, told Reuters.

The incident occurred at dawn as thousands of Hindu devotees gathered at an annual chariot festival in Puri, said a senior administrative officer told Reuters. He asked not to be identified as he is not authorised to speak to the media.

Stampedes occur routinely during large Hindu gatherings in the world's most-populous country, as huge crowds gather in tight spaces, often ignoring safety protocols.

In January, at least 39 people were killed in a pre-dawn stampede during the Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj, northern India.

Netanyahu ‘must go’, says former Israeli PM Bennett

JERUSALEM (AFP): Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu must leave office, his predecessor Naftali Bennett has told a televised interview, refusing to say whether he intends to challenge the country's longest-serving leader in an election.

In an interview with Israel's Channel 12 that aired on Saturday, former prime minister Bennett said Netanyahu "has been in power for 20 years... that's too much, it's not healthy."

"He bears... heavy responsibility for the divisions in Israeli society," Bennett said of growing rifts within Israel under Netanyahu, who has a strong support base but also staunch opponents

who have demanded his departure including over his handling of the Gaza war since October 2023.

Netanyahu "must go," said the former prime minister, a right-wing leader who in 2021 joined forces with Netanyahu critics to form a coalition that ousted him from the premiership after 12 consecutive years at the helm.

But the fragile coalition government Bennett had led along with current opposition chief Yair Lapid collapsed after about a year. Snap elections ensued, and Netanyahu again assumed the premiership with backing from far-right and ultra-Orthodox Jewish parties.

Bennett, who has taken time off from politics, has

been rumored to be planning a comeback, with public opinion polls suggesting he may have enough support to oust Netanyahu again.

No vote is currently planned before late 2026, however, although early elections are common in Israel.

In his Saturday interview, Bennett claimed credit for laying the groundwork for Israel's bombardment campaign earlier this month against Iranian nuclear and military sites.

The decision to launch attacks against the Islamic republic "was very good" and "needed," said Bennett, claiming that the offensive would not have been possible without the

work of his short-lived government.

In Gaza, where Israel has waged war since Hamas's October 2023 attack, Bennett said the military has displayed "exceptional" performance but "the political management of the country" was "a catastrophe, a disaster."

Criticizing the Netanyahu government's "inability to decide," the former prime minister called for an immediate "comprehensive" agreement that would see all remaining hostages freed from Gaza.

"Leave the task of eliminating Hamas to a future government," said Bennett, who also evaded several questions about whether he intends to run for office.

Ugandan leader Yoweri Museveni, 80, to seek reelection



KAMPALA (Reuters): Ugandan leader Yoweri Museveni has confirmed he intends to contest in next year's presidential election, potentially extending his rule in the east African country to nearly half a century.

In a post on the X platform late on Saturday

Museveni said he had "expressed my interest in running for... the position of presidential flag bearer," for his ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party.

The 80-year-old has been ruler of Uganda since 1986 when he seized power after lead-

ing a five-year guerrilla war. The ruling party has changed the constitution twice in the past to allow Museveni to extend his rule, and rights activists have accused him of using security forces and patronage to maintain his grip on power. He denies the accusation.

Museveni said he is seeking reelection to grow the country to a "\$500 billion economy in the next five years." Uganda's GDP currently stands at about \$66 billion, according to the finance ministry.

The country will hold its presidential election next January, when voters will also elect lawmakers.

Museveni's closest opponent will be pop star-turned-politician Bobi Wine who came second in the last presidential election in 2021 and has already confirmed his intention to run in 2026.

Wine, whose real name is Robert Kyagulanyi, rejected the 2021 results, saying his victory had been stolen through ballot stuffing, intimidation by security forces and other irregularities.

Trump says he has ‘group of wealthy people’ to buy TikTok



WASHINGTON (Reuters): US President Donald Trump said in a Fox News interview aired on Sunday that he found a buyer for the TikTok social media app, which he described as a group of "very wealthy people" whose identities he will reveal in about two weeks.

Trump made the remarks in an interview on Fox News programme 'Sunday Morning Futures' with Maria Bartiromo and said that the deal he is developing would probably need China's approval to move forward, predicting that Chinese President Xi Jinping would likely

approve it.

The US president earlier this month extended a deadline for China-based ByteDance to divest the US assets of TikTok to September 17, despite a law that mandated a sale or shutdown without significant progress.

A deal had been in the

works this spring that would have spun off TikTok's US operations into a new US-based firm — majority-owned and operated by US investors — but it was put on hold after China indicated it would not approve it following Trump's announcements of steep tariffs on Chinese goods.

"We have a buyer for TikTok, by the way," Trump said. "I think I'll need probably China's approval. I think President Xi will probably do it."

A 2024 US law required TikTok to stop operating by January 19, unless ByteDance had completed divesting the app's US assets or demonstrated significant progress toward a sale.

Trump, who credits the app with boosting his support among young voters in last November's presidential election, has extended the deadline three times.

ROME (AP): Major heat waves across Southern Europe have pushed temperatures above 40 C (104 F) in countries including Italy, Spain and Greece, as local authorities issued fresh warnings against the risk of wildfires.



Experts link the rising frequency and intensity of these heatwaves to climate change, warning that such extreme weather events are becoming increasingly common across Europe's southern region.

Severe heat waves were recorded in Italy, Greece, Spain and Portugal before the weekend, with locals and tourists alike taking shelter from the sweltering conditions.

Two-thirds of Portugal were on high alert on Sunday for extreme heat and wildfires, with temperatures expected to top 42 C (107 F) in Lisbon.

In Italy, a few regions — Lazio, Tuscany, Calabria, Puglia and Umbria — were planning to ban some outdoor work activities during the hottest hours of the day in response to the record-high temperatures. Italian trade unions pushed the government to expand such measures at a national level. On Sunday, the Italian Health Ministry placed 21 out of 27 monitored cities under its highest heat alert, including top holiday destinations like Rome, Milan and Naples.

In Rome, tourists tried to seek shade near popular spots like the Colosseum and the Trevi Fountain, using umbrellas and drinking from public water fountains to stay cool.

Similar scenes were reported in Milan and Naples, where street vendors sold lemonade to

tourists and residents to offer some refreshment from the heat.

Greece was again on high wildfire alert because of extreme weather, with the first summer heat wave expected to continue throughout the weekend.

A large wildfire broke out south of Athens on Thursday, forcing evacuations and road closures near the ancient Temple of Poseidon. Strong winds spread the flames, damaging homes and sending smoke across the sky.

Greek authorities deployed 130 firefighters, 12 planes and 12 helicopters to battle the blaze, while police evacuated 40 people, with five areas under evacuation orders.

In Spain, locals and

tourists were desperately trying to keep cool this weekend, as the country sizzled in temperatures as high as 42 C (107 F) in the southern city of Seville along with other locations in southern and central parts of the country.

Southern regions of Spain recorded temperatures above seasonal averages, prompting health alerts and safety recommendations from authorities.

The country's national meteorological service Aemet has said that June is set to break yet another record, becoming the hottest such month since records started.

Experts warned that intense heat can affect daily life, especially for vulnerable populations

such as the elderly and children.

Local authorities advised against physical activity during the hottest hours of the day, and recommended drinking plenty of fluids.

A Lancet Public Health study published last year highlighted the increasing risk of heat-related deaths because of climate change. The study predicted that heat-related deaths could more than quadruple by mid-century under current climate policies.

While more people die from cold than heat, the study stressed that rising temperatures will offset the benefits of milder winters, leading to a significant net increase in heat-related mortality.

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Abuse of ‘security’ stifles innovation, collaboration

In a statement on Friday, Germany’s Data Protection Commissioner Meike Kamp asked Apple and Google to carry out a “timely review” about whether to ban the DeepSeek app or not from their respective app stores in the country, due to concerns about data protection.

Alleging that DeepSeek unlawfully transfers German user data to China, Kamp said in a statement that the company had not provided her agency with convincing evidence that German users’ data is protected in China to a level equivalent to that in the European Union.

It is irresponsible for Kamp to speak ill of China when it comes to the operation of a private Chinese company in her country as she has no evidence that DeepSeek transfers its users’ data back to China.

Also on Friday, the Canadian Industry Minister Melanie Joly said that the Canadian government had ordered Chinese surveillance camera manufacturer Hikvision to cease operations in Canada over national security concerns.

The Canadian government has determined that Hikvision Canada Inc’s continued operations would be “injurious” to Canada’s national security, Joly said on X, claiming that the decision was taken after a multi-step review of information provided by Canada’s security and intelligence community.

Yet, similar to the DeepSeek case, no specific examples or evidence were publicly provided to show how Hikvision’s products pose a direct threat to Canada’s national interests. Once again, it seems that security concerns have become the pretext for suppressing successful Chinese companies.

The concept of national security has repeatedly been abused by some Western countries to disrupt the operations of Chinese companies in their countries. That’s despite the companies concerned firmly rebutting the allegations and the Chinese government reiterating on different occasions that it attaches great importance to the protection of data privacy and safety, and it has never required Chinese firms or individuals to transfer collected data.

In response to Canada’s ban, Hikvision said that it has always adhered to business ethics, operated in full compliance with local laws and regulations and conducted its global operations lawfully. The company urged the Canadian government to uphold the rule of law and take a fact-based approach rather than acting on speculation and prejudice.

The Chinese embassy in Canada also expressed strong opposition and deep dissatisfaction with the Canadian government’s decision, and urged it to immediately correct its wrong.

It is clear that although the Cold War ended more than three decades ago, some politicians in the West still look at economic issues through its prism. As a result, they are paranoid about Chinese companies operating in their countries and DeepSeek and Hikvision are just the latest victims of this unjustifiable scrutiny in the United States, Canada and Europe over alleged security concerns. It indicates the degree to which this paranoia is politicizing the normal business operations of Chinese companies.

Another factor behind this trend appears to be the false perception that Chinese companies, through innovation and rapid growth, pose a so-called serious challenge to the global tech dominance long held by Western companies. Instead of fostering healthy competition, some countries are choosing to suppress potential rivals under vague national security justifications.

The United States has imposed sanctions and restrictions on Hikvision since 2019, citing fabricated human rights abuses in China’s Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. However, such actions rely heavily on unverified intelligence assessments, raising questions about fairness and transparency.

It is unfair and unjustifiable for Chinese companies such as DeepSeek and Hikvision to be targeted in such ways by Western countries simply because they are from China. The unfair treatment they have received is a travesty of market rules and fair competition.

The way the concept of national security is being abused by these countries and business issues are politicized or looked at through the prism of geopolitics does a disservice to the normal development of the global economy and seriously disrupts the global industry and supply chains.

It is high time these Western countries gave up their ideological bias and stopped hitting Chinese companies. The Chinese government firmly opposes any practice that overstretches the concept of national security and the abusing of state power to discriminate against and suppress Chinese enterprises.

It will not sit idle in the face of such malicious acts and will do anything it can to protect the legitimate rights and interests of its companies.

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Why manufacturing consent for war with Iran failed this time

Ahmad Ibsais

On June 22, American warplanes crossed into Iranian airspace and dropped 14 massive bombs. The attack was not in response to a provocation; it came on the heels of illegal Israeli aggression that took the lives of 600 Iranians. This was a return to something familiar and well-practised: an empire bombing innocents across the orientalist abstraction called “the Middle East”. That night, US President Donald Trump, flanked by his vice president and two secretaries, told the world “Iran, the bully of the Middle East, must now make peace”.

There is something chilling about how bombs are baptised with the language of diplomacy and how destruction is dressed in the garments of stability. To call that peace is not merely a misnomer; it is a criminal distortion. But what is peace in this world, if not submission to the West? And what is diplomacy, if not the insistence that the attacked plead with their attackers?

In the 12 days that Israel’s illegal assault on Iran lasted, images of Iranian children pulled from the wreckage remained absent from the front pages of Western media. In their place were lengthy features about Israelis hiding in fortified bunkers. Western media, fluent in the language of erasure, broadcasts only the victimhood that serves the war narrative.

And that is not just in its coverage of Iran. For 20 months now, the people of Gaza have been starved and incinerated. By the official count, more than 55,000 lives have been taken; realistic estimates put the number at hundreds of thousands. Every hospital in Gaza has been bombed. Most schools have been attacked and destroyed.

Leading human rights groups like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have already declared that Israel is committing genocide, and yet, most Western media would not utter that word and would add elaborate caveats when someone does dare say it live on TV. Presenters and editors would do anything but recognise Israel’s unending violence in an active voice.

Despite detailed evidence of war crimes, the Israeli military has faced no media censure, no criticism or scrutiny. Its generals hold war meetings near civilian buildings, and yet, there are no media cries of Israelis being used as “human shields”. Israeli army and government officials are regularly caught lying or making genocidal statements, and yet, their words are still reported as the truth.

A recent study found that on the BBC, Israeli deaths received 33 times more coverage per fatality than Palestinian deaths, despite Palestinians dying at a rate of 34 to 1 compared with Israelis. Such bias is no exception, it is the rule for Western media.

Like Palestine, Iran is described in carefully chosen language. Iran is never framed as a nation, only as a regime. Iran is not a government, but a threat —not

a people, but a problem. The word “Islamic” is affixed to it like a slur in every report. This is instrumental in quietly signalling that Muslim resistance to Western domination must be extinguished.

Iran does not possess nuclear weapons; Israel and the United States do. And yet only Iran is cast as an existential threat to world order. Because the problem

is unfounded, is useful. If you can keep people afraid, you can keep them quiet. Say “nuclear threat” often enough, and no one will think to ask about the children killed in the name of “keeping the world safe”.

This is the modus operandi of Western media: a media architecture not built to illuminate truth, but to manufacture permission for violence, to dress state

Iran is described in carefully chosen language. Iran is never framed as a nation, only as a regime. Iran is not a government, but a threat —not a people, but a problem. The word “Islamic” is affixed to it like a slur in every report. This is instrumental in quietly signalling that Muslim resistance to Western domination must be extinguished. Iran does not possess nuclear weapons; Israel and the United States do. And yet only Iran is cast as an existential threat to world order. Because the problem is not what Iran holds, but what it refuses to surrender. It has survived coups, sanctions, assassinations, and sabotage. It has outlived every attempt to starve, coerce, or isolate it into submission. It is a state that, despite the violence hurled at it, has not yet been broken. And so the myth of the threat of weapons of mass destruction becomes indispensable. It is the same myth that was used to justify the illegal invasion of Iraq. For three decades, American headlines have whispered that Iran is just “weeks away” from the bomb, three decades of deadlines that never arrive, of predictions that never materialise. But fear, even when unfounded, is useful. If you can keep people afraid, you can keep them quiet. Say “nuclear threat” often enough, and no one will think to ask about the children killed in the name of “keeping the world safe”.

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But fear, even when

aggression in technical language and animated graphics, to anaesthetise the public with euphemisms.

Time Magazine does not write about the crushed bones of innocents under the rubble in Tehran or Rafah, it writes about “The New Middle East” with a cover strikingly similar to the one it used to propagandise regime change in Iraq 22 years ago.

But this is not 2003. After decades of war, and livestreamed genocide, most Americans no longer buy into the old slogans and distortions. When Israel attacked Iran, a poll showed that only 16 percent of US respondents supported the US joining the war. After Trump ordered the air strikes,

another poll confirmed this resistance to manufactured consent: only 36 percent of respondents supported the move, and only 32 percent supported continuing the bombardment

The failure to manufacture consent for war with Iran reveals a profound shift in the American consciousness. Americans remember the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq that left hundreds of thousands of Afghans and Iraqis dead and an entire region in flames. They remember the lies about weapons of mass destruction and democracy and the result: the thousands of American soldiers dead and the tens of thousands maimed. They remember the humiliating retreat from Afghanistan after 20 years of war and the never-ending bloody entanglement in Iraq.

At home, Americans are told there is no money for housing, healthcare, or education, but there is always money for bombs, for foreign occupations, for further militarisation. More than 700,000 Americans are homeless, more than 40 million live under the official poverty line and more than 27 million have no health insurance. And yet, the US government maintains by far the highest defence budget in the world.

Americans know the precarity they face at home, but they are also increasingly aware of the impact US imperial adventurism has abroad. For 20 months now, they have watched a US-sponsored genocide broadcast live.

They have seen countless times on their phones bloodied Palestinian children pulled from rubble while mainstream media insists, this is Israeli self-defence. The old alchemy of dehumanising victims to excuse their murder has lost its power. The digital age has shattered the monopoly on narrative that once made distant wars feel abstract and necessary. Americans are now increasingly refusing to be moved by the familiar war drumbeat.

The growing fractures in public consent have not gone unnoticed in Washington. Trump, ever the opportunist, understands that the American public has no appetite for another war. And so, on June 24, he took to social media to announce, “the ceasefire is in effect”, telling Israel to “DO NOT DROP THOSE BOMBS,” after the Israeli army continued to attack Iran.

Trump, like so many in the US and Israeli political elites, wants to call himself a peacemaker while waging war. To leaders like him, peace has come to mean something altogether different: the unimpeded freedom to commit genocide and other atrocities while the world watches on.

But they have failed to manufacture our consent. We know what peace is, and it does not come dressed in war. It is not dropped from the sky. Peace can only be achieved where there is freedom. And no matter how many times they strike, the people remain, from Palestine to Iran — unbroken, unbought, and unwilling to kneel to terror.

Partnering for prosperity: UK’s industrial strategy, Saudi Vision 2030

Neil Crompton

The UK and Saudi Arabia stand at a pivotal moment in their bilateral relationship. As we witness the remarkable transformation underway across the Kingdom through Vision 2030, I am pleased to share how the UK’s newly launched Modern Industrial Strategy creates an exceptional opportunity to further strengthen the partnership between the two nations.

This week, the UK government unveiled its comprehensive, 10-year industrial strategy, establishing a clear roadmap for economic growth focused on eight high-value sectors in which Britain has international competitive advantage.

This strategy represents our commitment to making the UK an even more attractive destination for international investment by creating a stable, open, and strategic business environment.

What makes this moment particularly exciting is how closely our industrial strategy aligns with Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030. Both national frameworks share remarkably similar objectives: economic diversification, technological innovation, human capability development, and the creation of environments that attract quality foreign investment. This alignment creates natural synergies that can accelerate mutual prosperity.

As partners in economic transformation, we recognize that prosperity requires a strategic approach. The global landscape has changed fundamentally.

In infrastructure development, British expertise is contributing significantly to projects that are reshaping the landscape of the Kingdom under Vision 2030. These include airports, aviation, rail transportation, and construction within Saudi mega-projects, with many more in the pipeline. Financial services represent another area of exceptional synergy. London’s position as a world-leading financial hub has created natural partnerships with Saudi institutions. The UK is the main location for Saudi companies and investors who want to issue green and Islamic bonds outside the Kingdom, while the LXE has 100% of Saudi market share across corporate and sovereign banks.

mentally in recent years, presenting new challenges, from supply chain disruptions to energy-security concerns. Yet within these challenges lie tremendous opportunities for collaboration on frontier industries in which both nations can excel together.

The eight growth-driving sectors of the Industrial Strategy that will power Britain’s economic future are: advanced manufacturing, clean energy industries, creative industries, defense, digital and technologies, financial services, life sciences, and professional and business services. In each of these sectors, we see clear alignment with Vision 2030’s priorities for economic diversification.

The Great Futures campaign, launched last year, has already proven to be an exceptional vehicle for delivering on this shared vision. We brought more than 450 business leaders to the Kingdom in May 2024 — the largest and most senior UK business delegation to visit any country in over a decade — and witnessed the immense appetite for partnership between our business communities. That event catalyzed partnerships worth more than £7.7 billion (\$10.6 billion) and delivered more than 50 agreements across priority sectors.

These are not merely commercial transactions; they represent transformative collaborations that advance the strategic interests of both nations. Take clean energy, for instance. UK firm HYCAP has partnered with leading Saudi companies to invest more than £750 million in hydrogen-powered transport, securing more than 1,000 jobs across both kingdoms.

In infrastructure devel-

opment, British expertise is contributing significantly to projects that are reshaping the landscape of the Kingdom under Vision 2030. These include airports, aviation, rail transportation, and construction within Saudi mega-projects, with many more in the pipeline.

Financial services represent another area of exceptional synergy. London’s position as a world-leading financial hub has created natural partnerships with Saudi institutions. The UK is the main location for Saudi companies and investors who want to issue green and Islamic bonds outside the Kingdom, while the London Stock Exchange has 100 percent of Saudi market share across corporate and sovereign banks.

Human capability development stands at the heart of both our strategies. The recent Great Futures UK-Saudi Skills Forum brought together our governments to accelerate their partnership on technical and vocational education. Working with Saudi ministries, the UK is identifying sustainable opportunities to develop the skills vital for the economy of tomorrow.

As we look ahead, the announcement of the UK-Saudi Sustainable Infrastructure Assembly marks an important next step in our partnership. This initiative will boost collaboration between the UK’s financial and professional services sectors and Saudi Arabia’s sustainable infrastructure developers, ensuring that British

expertise can contribute effectively to Vision 2030 projects.

The Industrial Strategy has been international from the start, built on lessons learned from what works in other countries, and designed for the global context. This is evident in our diplomatic engagement approach, which prioritizes mutually beneficial partnerships rather than competition.

We seek to deepen economic collaboration with partners such as Saudi Arabia to increase reciprocal investment and trade, foster innovation, and bolster the resilience of supply chains critical to our frontier industries.

Later this year, Great Futures will mark a year of successful partnerships with a leadership summit in London. Bringing together senior UK and Saudi ministers, alongside representatives from key industries in both nations, this celebration will showcase the tangible achievements of our campaign while setting the agenda for future collaboration. I hope many Saudi business and government leaders will join us on this important occasion.

The relationship between the UK and Saudi Arabia has never been stronger, with bilateral trade exceeding £17 billion annually and more than 1,300 UK firms operating in the Kingdom.

But I believe the opportunities before us are even greater. By aligning the ambitions of the UK’s Modern Industrial Strategy with Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030, we can create a model for international economic collaboration that delivers prosperity for both our nations.

Together, we can build a future of shared innovation, sustainable growth, and mutual success. The UK stands ready as your committed partner on this journey.

Missile exchanges may have ended — but questions remain

As befits 21st century diplomacy, US President Donald Trump announced a complete and total ceasefire between Iran and Israel on social media, congratulating “everyone” for this, especially himself. After regrettable violations within the first few hours of the truce, which needlessly caused more loss of life, the deal to end this 12-day war seems to be holding. It is probably the first good news for the region in months, as both sworn enemies have given way to pressure exerted by Washington and are holding fire, at least for now.

Until the ceasefire was agreed there was a danger the region might become embroiled in a long war of attrition. Now that the missile and drone exchanges have ended, one inevitable question is whether this costly affair could have been prevented — not just as a hypothetical exercise, but as a lesson in how to avoid another military confrontation between two of the most powerful militaries in the region. Could diplomacy have achieved the same, or even better, results, without inflicting death, destruction, and psychological scars on both combatants?

The build-up to these 12 days of hostilities began more than a quarter of the century ago, and some might argue as far back as 1979 when the Iranian revolution rather artificially marked Israel, for its close relations with both the toppled shah and the US, as an enemy.

History will look back at this deep enmity and might struggle to find objective reasons for it. Initially this hostility served the revolution as a tool for consolidating its hold on power at home and suppressing opposition. In turn, it also helped to propel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to power as Israel’s defender against the Iranian threat, both conventional and potentially nuclear.

Time will possibly reveal how close Iran was to assembling a nuclear bomb, and most analysts

agree that the US decision to withdraw from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action nuclear deal in 2018, during Trump’s first term, removed the shackles from Iran’s uranium enrichment program, bringing it closer to weapons grade. It is hardly believable that the Tehran regime should have invested such huge resources only for civilian use. It is also the case that in forming and leading the so-called axis of resistance,

The latter then gained the upper hand, enabling Trump, in a matter of days, to potentially inflict a decisive blow against Iran’s nuclear program, especially in Fordow, where it is believed more than 400 kg of uranium enriched to 60 percent was stored, and then lean on both sides to stop the hostilities. When both violated the ceasefire, Trump was furious, telling the media in no uncertain terms that “we basically have two countries that have been fighting so long and so hard that they don’t know what... they’re doing.” Yet, his criticism of Israel was far more robust, including a demand that Netanyahu order its pilots to return from another mission immediately. Allowing Iran a symbolic attack on US military bases in Qatar without any loss of life permitted an act of theater that allowed Tehran to save face after weeks of humiliation during which it lost many of its military chiefs and top scientists, exposing the level of Israel’s penetration to nearly every government department, scientific institution, and military command. Nevertheless, Israel’s vulnerability was also exposed by its failure to sufficiently protect its civilian population, revealing a severe shortage of adequate shelters as their enemy hit hospitals, the main international airport, and even oil refineries in Haifa.

Iran, through its proxies in the region, posed a threat to stability sufficient to eventually merit a response. Ultimately, despite being a source of major disruption, even a lethal one in the case of Hamas, and to a lesser extent Hezbollah, it could not match Israel’s military capabilities, especially when the latter was backed by the US and other allies.

On this occasion, Netanyahu managed also to

lure Trump to act against his instincts and use military force. For the US leader the dilemma was between maintaining his posture as a president who brings an end to wars, and the temptation to deliver an almost risk-free strike against Iran’s main nuclear sites against Israel’s air force had eliminated the country’s air defense capabilities.

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Allowing Iran a symbolic attack on US military bases in Qatar without any loss of life permitted an act of theater that allowed Tehran to save face after weeks of humiliation dur-

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main international airport, and even oil refineries in Haifa.

What emerged quickly was the difference between the open-ended conflict that Israel embarked on and Washington’s priorities. Israel had many far-reaching objectives beyond Iran’s nuclear program, including degrading its conventional military power, and instigating regime change. For Trump, however, it was simply about setting back the nuclear program and returning to the negotiating table.

The war with Iran gave Netanyahu a new lease of life. A man who had barely talked to the Israeli media or mixed with people in public, especially since Oct. 7, suddenly could not stop himself from doing both, including visiting sites that were hit by Iranian missiles. But 21 months after the massacre, incapable and unwilling to take responsibility, he still has not visited the communities that were destroyed there. Yet the destruction caused by Iran gave him much-needed justification to continue the war before Trump put a stop to the conflict, and the photo-ops were exactly what he needed considering his high level of disapproval among voters.

After this brief bout of fighting, Netanyahu’s Likud party is doing slightly better in the polls, which might tempt him to call a snap election, but in the meantime, he will have to convince Israel’s voters that the outcome of this war justified the unprecedented terrifying 12 days that they endured.

Can he, together with Trump, also translate military achievements into a diplomatic success, one that ensures both that future uranium enrichment is limited to what is needed for civil use, and that Tehran ceases its meddling in the affairs of other countries? This remains an open question, but the next task for Israel’s prime minister is to explain to the electorate why the war in Gaza is still raging and 50 hostages are still in captivity.

Sacrificing tomorrow’s survival in favor of today’s foreign exchange

Hafed Al-Ghwel

Countries in the Mediterranean appear trapped in a calculated, self-inflicted crisis. Those on southern shores systematically drain finite-scale aquifers to cultivate luxury exports for foreign consumers, while simultaneously surrendering their food security to volatile global grain markets.

This is not environmental misfortune but an engineered outcome of decades of policy choices prioritizing export revenues and external interests over national water resilience and domestic sustenance. The sheer magnitude of this engineered dependency defies sustainability.

Consider Egypt, for instance, which is already categorized as a water-scarce country. It holds the dubious distinction of being the planet’s single largest importer of wheat, spending billions in precious foreign currency simply to secure the basic flour it needs for its state-subsidized bread, a cornerstone of social stability consumed by millions daily.

Yet, simultaneously, Egypt ranks among the world’s Top 12 exporters of citrus fruits, potatoes, strawberries, and cotton. Each of these crops demands a staggering amount of irrigation in an environment where every drop of water is contested.

Exporting a single tonne of strawberries or a bale of Egyptian cotton effectively ships thousands of precious cubic meters of the nation’s dwindling water reserves, primarily to European supermarkets.

What emerges is a financial calculus that reveals a profound distortion; the collective annual revenue generated by these “high-value” agricultural exports falls drastically short of covering the colossal, ever-increasing bill for imported wheat.

This gap is further widened by population growth and the immense fiscal burden of bread-subsidy programs, which are essential, yet unsustainable, props for fragile social contracts.

It is a pattern replicated across other parts of the Mediterranean’s southern shores. Morocco, for instance, in the midst of persistent droughts severe enough to mandate water rationing in urban areas, paradoxically functions as a mega-exporter of water-thirsty tomatoes, citrus, melons, berries, and avocados.

Its primary trading partner for this exchange is Europe, eerily perpetuating an extractive dynamic disguised as free trade. Meanwhile, lucrative profits flow to private exporters and satisfy European consumer demand for off-season luxury produce, but the true cost is borne by depleted aquifers and communities facing shrinking water quotas.

Similarly, Jordan, drawing down the shared Al-Dissi aquifer that is under the strain of scarcity, channels high-quality groundwater into growing peaches and nectarines, again for export. A common trend begins to emerge in which water-thirsty goods are prioritized over achieving relative domestic food sovereignty.

Historians of the region have cautioned that applying a Western lens to local texts heightens the risk of misinterpreting indigenous perspectives. In the 18th and 19th centuries, Indonesia’s colonial administrators frequently read their own understanding of Javanese chronicles into translated reproductions. As a result, many biased British and European observations of Southeast Asians have come to be treated as valid historical accounts, and ethnic categorizations and stereotypes from official documents have been internalized. If AI is trained on this data, the biases could end up further entrenched.

Data is not knowledge. Since language is inherently social and political — reflecting the relational experiences of those who use it — asserting agency in the age of AI must go beyond the technical sufficiency of models that communicate in local languages. It requires consciously filtering legacy biases, questioning assumptions about our identity and rediscovering indigenous knowledge repositories in our languages.

We cannot project our cultures faithfully through technology if we barely understand them in the first place.

the dismantling of farming subsidies, and wholesale reorientation toward foreign exchange generation.

This created an agricultural aristocracy: large-scale agribusinesses and politically connected landowners who secured preferential access to subsidized water and prime land.

In Egypt, while smallholders faced crippling energy price hikes for irrigation pumps following subsidy cuts mandated by the International Monetary Fund, forcing many to abandon farming, elite exporters flourished by cultivating water-guzzling strawberries bound for European supermarkets, using state-subsidized infrastructure.

This contrasts sharply

basic survival would be exponentially higher than the water that is effectively, and recklessly, exported today in every tonne of off-season berries or citrus fruit.

The end result is a system that functions as a slow-motion crisis transfer, extracting irreversible natural capital from the South to subsidize stability and abundance in the North. European consumers gain year-round access to affordable luxury: Moroccan winter strawberries retailing for 2.50 (\$3) a kilogram in Parisian supermarkets; Israeli avocados shipped to Dutch tables; all irrigated with water sourced from aquifers that might require millennia to replenish.

Beginning in the 1970s and accelerating into the 1980s, international financial institutions imposed structural adjustment programs that demanded the privatization of state assets, the dismantling of farming subsidies, and wholesale reorientation toward foreign exchange generation. This created an agricultural aristocracy: large-scale agribusinesses and politically connected landowners who secured preferential access to subsidized water and prime land. In Egypt, while smallholders faced crippling energy price hikes for irrigation pumps following subsidy cuts mandated by the International Monetary Fund, forcing many to abandon farming, elite exporters flourished by cultivating water-guzzling strawberries bound for European supermarkets, using state-subsidized infrastructure. This contrasts sharply with the diffuse, long-term societal cost of depleted aquifers and a staggering national food import bill. Egypt’s annual wheat expenditure alone dwarfs the collective revenue from its famed citrus and potato exports. Today, exporters form a potent lobby, thereby ensuring policies continue to prioritize their water-intensive cash crops over staples for local consumption, directly undermining national food resilience.

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Secondly, a dangerous technological fatalism appears to have invaded the region’s policy-setting circles. Wealthier countries have conjured a myth of infinite hydrological adaptation through massive, energy-intensive seawater desalination projects. This creates a convenient illusion for leaders in less affluent, and increasingly parched, countries that future megaprojects will absolve them from the need to confront the unsustainable water exports of today.

This partly explains why drought-stricken Morocco continues to expand its water-thirsty avocado orchards. And, why Jordan continues to extract water from non-renewable aquifers at rates far exceeding the ability to replenish, to supply farms growing fruit for export while clinging to hopes of large-scale desalination, despite lacking the fiscal capacity or sources of sustainable energy to deploy it meaningfully.

Such cognitive dissonance is jarring, since present-day policymakers actively accelerate water depletion for short-term export gains, while banking on unaffordable or ecologically questionable technologies to bail them out later.

This “magical thinking” ignores a harsh arithmetic: the energy cost and environmental footprint of desalinating seawater for

Simultaneously, Southern Mediterranean elites and transnational agribusinesses secure reliable profits. Moroccan tomato exporters and Egyptian cotton magnates operate with state-subsidized water allocations that distort true resource costs.

Meanwhile, the ecological and economic foundations of water-stressed countries undergo systematic erosion. Fossil aquifers are drained. Local food systems atrophy as once-thriving milling industries across Iraq, Syria and Palestine have collapsed, forcing “Fertile Crescent” countries to become flour importers despite their proximity to the historical heartlands of wheat.

Water flows perpetually uphill toward power and capital. The true cost of this — which can be measured in depleted water reserves, escalating import bills, lost agricultural resilience, and the deepening vulnerability of the majority — is borne by the populations and the very ecological stability of these countries.

Each tonne of exported citrus uses 560 cubic meters of irreplaceable Egyptian groundwater. Each hectare of Moroccan avocados consumes 1.5 million liters a year, while the taps of the local population run dry.

It is a system that sacrifices tomorrow’s survival in favor of today’s political quietism and foreign exchange — a slow-bleed crisis in which the most vulnerable are the first to pay as aquifer levels fall, deserts advance and soaring bread prices rip up social contracts. Addressing this requires a dismantling of the political economy that privileges water exports over conservation and local nourishment — a task that demands much more courage than simply investing in the next desalination plant.

What it means to build local AI

Elina Noor

Following OpenAI’s public launch of ChatGPT in November 2022, the underpinnings of artificial intelligence large language models seemed firmly “WIRED” — Western, industrialized, rich, educated, and democratic. Everyone assumed that if large language models spoke a particular language and reflected a particular worldview, it would be a Western one. OpenAI even acknowledged ChatGPT’s skew toward Western views and the English language.

But even before OpenAI’s US competitors (Google and Anthropic) released their own large language models the following year, Southeast Asian developers had recognized the need for AI tools that would speak to their own region in its many languages — no small task, given that it has more than 1,200 of them.

Moreover, in a region where distant civilizational memories often collide with contemporary, post-colonial histories, language is profoundly political. Even seemingly monolingual countries belie marked diversity: Cambodians speak nearly 30 languages; Thais, roughly 70; and Vietnamese, more than 100. This is also a region where communities mix languages seamlessly, where nonverbal cues speak volumes, and where oral traditions are sometimes more prevalent than textual means of capturing the deep cultural and historical nuances that have been encoded in language.

Not surprisingly, those trying to build truly local AI models for a region with so many underrepresented languages have faced many obstacles, from a paucity of high-quality, high-quantity annotated data to a lack of access to the computing power needed to build and train models from scratch. In some cases, the challenges are even more basic, reflecting a shortage of native speakers and standardized orthography or frequent electricity supply

disruptions.

Given these constraints, many of the region’s AI developers have settled for fine-tuning established models built by foreign incumbents. This involves taking a pretrained model that has been fed large quantities of data and training it on a smaller dataset for a specific skill or task. Between 2020 and 2023, Southeast Asian language models such as PhoBERT

Still, just as Southeast Asian developers previously had to account for a latent Western bias in the available foundation models, now they must be mindful of the ideologically filtered perspectives embedded in pretrained Chinese models. Ironically, efforts to localize AI and ensure greater agency for Southeast Asian communities could deepen developers’ dependence on much larger players, at least in the initial stages. Nonetheless, Southeast Asian developers have begun to address this problem, too. Multiple models, including SEA-LION (a collection of 11 official regional languages), PhoGPT (Vietnamese) and MaLLaM (Malay), have been pre-trained from scratch on a large, generic dataset of each particular language. This key step in the machine-learning process will allow these models to be further fine-tuned for specific tasks. Although SEA-LION continues to rely on Google’s architecture for its pre-training, its use of a regional language dataset has facilitated the development of homegrown models such as Sahabat-AI, which communicates in Indonesian, Sundanese, Javanese, Balinese, and Bataknese. Sahabat-AI proudly describes itself as “a testament to Indonesia’s commitment to AI sovereignty.”

(Vietnamese), IndoBERT (Indonesian) and Typhoon (Thai) were derived from much larger models such as Google’s BERT, Meta’s RoBERTa (later LLaMA) and France’s Mistral. Even the early versions of SeaLLM, a suite of models optimized for regional languages and released by Alibaba’s DAMO Academy, were built on Meta, Mistral, and Google’s architecture.

But in 2024, Alibaba

Cloud’s Qwen disrupted this Western dominance, offering Southeast Asia a wider set of options. A Carnegie Endowment for International Peace study found that five of the 21 regional models launched that year were built on Qwen.

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Pak Pavilion inaugurated at China-Eurasia Expo

— Pakistani mangoes in great demand

F.P. Report

BEIJING: Ambassador Khalil Hashmi, along with Zhu Lifan, Vice Chairman of the Xinjiang People's Government inaugurated the Pakistan Pavilion at the China-Eurasia Expo in Urumqi.

The pavilion's showcase of premium Pakistani mangoes drew hundreds of visitors, making it one of the most popular exhibits.

The fruit's popularity highlighted Pakistan's agri-

cultural excellence and potential for growth.

Another highlight was participation in the Expo for the first time by National Logistics Corporation and Green Pakistan Initiative.

The Pakistan Pavilion also displayed a rich array of products, including jewelry, leather garments, luxury bags, and contemporary clothing, reflecting the country's cultural heritage and manufacturing capabilities.

Speaking on the occa-

sion, Ambassador Khalil Hashmi briefed Zhu about the robust Pakistan-China ties, and Pakistan's enhanced focus on increasing trade and investment relations with China, including Xinjiang.

He gave the Vice Chairman a tour of the Pavilion, elaborating the high-quality of Pakistani products. The Chinese VIP also praised the taste of Pakistani mangoes.

The Ambassador also introduced the functioning

of NLC and its role in ensuring the functionality of border integration between Pakistan and China. He also briefed Zhu about the Green Pakistan Initiative and its role in further augmenting people-to-people ties with Xinjiang.

During his stay in Xinjiang, the Ambassador also met different levels of Xinjiang leadership, interacted with Chinese enterprises and media, and visited the Urumqi branch of Habib Bank Limited.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor arranging and displaying vegetables to attract customers at Sunday Bazaar in Aabpara.

Furniture sector holds vast potential for employment

LAHORE (APP): PFC Chief Executive Officer Mian Kashif Ashfaq on Sunday emphasized the importance of strong industry-academia linkages to align education with market needs and better equip the youth for the rapidly evolving job market.

Addressing participants of the second batch of the 2025 Summer Internship Program organized under the aegis of ChenOne, he stressed the need to restructure traditional academic models.

"Educational institutions must incorporate practical training, internships, and collaborative research initiatives that reflect real-world industrial demands," he said.

He added that closer collaboration between academia and the furniture industry would not only bridge the skills gap but also foster innovation and entrepreneurship among students.

He urged universities to introduce specialized programs in furniture design, wood technology, digital marketing, and export management to enhance Pakistan's competitiveness in global markets. He said the furniture sector holds vast potential for employment generation and foreign exchange earnings, but its growth hinges on a consistent supply of skilled and creative professionals.

Earlier, ChenOne's GM Maria Taqir said that investing in industry-academia collaboration is essential for building a skilled workforce and steering Pakistan towards a knowledge-based economy.

Excise Department fines Rs2.78 million

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Excise and Taxation Department of Islamabad on Sunday held a monthly performance review meeting, chaired by Director General Irfan Memon.

The meeting was attended by Excise Director, Additional Deputy Commissioner East, and other senior officials.

The session focused on recent enforcement actions against violations related to vehicle regulations. Officials briefed the meeting on fines imposed over the past month, particularly targeting vehicles using non-standard number plates and dark-tinted windows.

According to the briefing, action was taken against 68 vehicles using non-standard number plates that did not meet official standards. A total fine of Rs 831,000 was collected in this regard. Similarly, 164 vehicles with tinted windows were fined Rs1.955 million.

The meeting also reviewed actions against those who failed to pay their

token tax. Departmental teams have stepped up efforts to ensure vehicle owners clear their dues, with several enforcement drives conducted across the city.

Another key issue discussed was the presence of agents outside the Excise Office. DG Irfan Memon directed officials to launch strict action against such agents operating without authorization. He also announced departmental action against any Excise employees found cooperating or maintaining contact with these agents.

The DG emphasized that public services are now accessible online, allowing citizens to register their vehicles, pay taxes, and apply for number plates without visiting the office. He stated that additional service counters have also been set up at Excise offices to assist citizens more efficiently.

While speaking on the issue of unauthorized agents, Irfan Memon stated that public cooperation is

essential to eliminate the influence of such groups. He urged citizens to avoid using non-standard number plates or tinted windows, warning that such violations would result in penalties.

He reiterated the department's commitment to transparency and public facilitation, adding that Excise officials would continue operations to maintain traffic discipline and prevent any misuse of vehicle registration laws.

The meeting concluded with a renewed resolve to enhance enforcement and improve service delivery by ensuring accountability within the department and addressing public complaints effectively.

DG Irfan Memon said the department will continue to modernize its operations while ensuring the law is upheld across the board. He requested the public to support the department's initiatives and report violations when noticed.

Pakistan must tap blue economy for sustainable growth, economic sovereignty, says Iftikhar Malik

LAHORE (APP): SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry former President Iftikhar Ali Malik has said that Pakistan can generate billions of dollars annually by fully leveraging its vast blue economy potential, rooted in a 1,000-kilometer-long coastline, strategic access to the Arabian Sea, and three major commercial ports.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, he said Pakistan's geographical location positions it as a key player in both regional and global maritime economies.

"At a time of economic challenges, harnessing the blue economy is no longer optional, it is a strategic imperative," he asserted.

With strong political will, regional collaboration, and visionary leadership, the country can transform its maritime assets into a major driver of national development and economic sovereignty.

He stressed the need for a comprehensive national maritime strategy, enhanced marine scientific research, and the strengthening of institutions like the Pakistan National Shipping Corporation and the Ministry of Maritime Affairs.

Improved maritime security and international cooperation, particularly through initiatives such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), can further accelerate progress in this vital sector.

He said that a well-developed blue economy could contribute billions to Pakistan's GDP, generate millions of jobs, and promote inclusive development in coastal regions, especially in Balochistan and Sindh.

He added that modernizing the fishing industry with upgraded storage, processing, and export infrastructure could significantly boost foreign exchange earnings.

Additionally, the promotion of marine tourism, protection of coastal ecosystems, and expansion of public-private partnerships in ports and shipping can reshape Pakistan's economic future.

He said that the blue

economy encompasses a diverse range of ocean-related industries, including coastal tourism, shipbuilding, offshore energy, and marine biotechnology.

Pakistan's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), covering approximately 290,000 square kilometers, holds rich reserves of marine resources, minerals, and hydrocarbons, most of which remain untapped due to insufficient investment, limited research, and outdated infrastructure.

"Pakistan holds immense yet underutilized potential in its maritime domain. Fully developing the blue economy is essential for long-term, sustainable economic growth and national prosperity," he remarked.

Pakistan's seafood exports to Vietnam rise 20%, reaching \$9m

KARACHI (APP): Pakistan and Vietnam have agreed to expand cooperation in the Halal seafood industry, signaling a new chapter in bilateral trade relations between the two countries.

To this end, a key meeting was held between the Ambassador of Vietnam to Pakistan, Pham Anh Tuan, representatives of the Pakistan Fisheries Exporters Association, and Pangasius fish importers with Director General of Marine Fisheries Department (MFD), Dr Mansoor Ali Wassan.

Dr Wassan informed the participants that Pakistan's

seafood exports to Vietnam reached USD 9 million in 2024, a 20% increase over the previous year.

He also highlighted Pakistan's expanding capabilities in aquaculture and Halal-certified fish processing.

Dr Wassan noted that with steady efforts in policy coordination, trade facilitation, and infrastructure development, especially in cold chain systems and Halal certification, Pakistan has the potential to match or even exceed Vietnam's seafood exports to Pakistan.

"Setting an annual export target of \$25-30

million within next five years is not only realistic but also strategically advantageous for diversifying Pakistan's marine export portfolio, he remarked."

Ambassador Pham Anh Tuan emphasized the importance of strengthening coordination between Vietnamese and Pakistani stakeholders through regulatory harmonization and technical cooperation.

He reaffirmed Vietnam's adherence to Halal standards for seafood exports to Pakistan and welcomed deeper institutional collaboration.

Dr Wassan expressed Pakistan's readiness to

enhance bilateral engagement to further develop its fisheries and aquaculture industries, pointing to Vietnam's success in aquaculture as a valuable model for learning and investment.

Executive Committee Member of the Pakistan Fisheries Exporters Association, Asim Abrar noted that while Pakistan has exported raw seafood for over four decades, the country is now making strides in value-added segments such as shrimp farming drawing inspiration from Vietnam's successful development in this area.

SCCI delegation meets with Railways officials

SUKKUR (APP): A delegation of Sukkur Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) led by Convener of the Railway Committee, Khurshed Azam Shamsi, held an important meeting with senior officials of Pakistan Railways here Sunday and discussed several key issues with the railway officials.

The delegation demanded that the departure time of Sukkur Express (Up) be fixed at 10:30 PM and that the existing schedule for the Down train be strictly adhered to. They also called for the elimination of unnecessary stops to improve the train's performance and punctuality.

Additionally, the delegation requested that all coaches be repaired, and non-repairable ones be replaced with new ones. They also demanded that permanent coaches be allocated to Sukkur Express and not attached to other trains.

The officials assured the delegation that all points would be considered, and cooperation would be provided. The meeting aimed to improve rail services and address the concerns of passengers and traders in Sukkur.



MULTAN: A vendor displaying freshly harvested mangoes to attract customers at market.

Sewerage issue irks businessmen in Multan

MULTAN (APP): South Punjab's largest industrial zone, the Multan Industrial Estate, spanning 1,410 acres, is facing a severe crisis due to a faulty sewage system. Overflowing, foul-smelling wastewater has inundated some parts of the estate, posing a serious threat to operations of around 500 small and large industries located in Phase-I and Phase-II.

Industrialists have raised concerns and said if immediate steps are not taken, the estate could face a shutdown.

The estate was established in 1962 under the Industry Department to promote industrial growth in the region. In 2005, a Board of Management (BoM) was formed to oversee its affairs.

According to the BoM, the original sewage system was laid in 1985, with an expansion project launched in 2015.

The 36-inch main sewer line, which stretches 2,700 meters and drains waste into the river, has ruptured multiple times and is now in a state of collapse.

Wastewater has accumulated across the estate and even seeped into factory premises.

Factory owners and workers describe the situation as unbearable. Malik Faheem, a factory owner, said, "We have written several letters to the Punjab Industrial Estates Development and Management Company (PIEDMC) over the past decade, but no action was taken. If the situation persists, we'll have

no choice but to shut down."

Sheikh Amjad, who runs a plastic factory, said raw material deliveries have stopped and machinery is getting damaged due to dirty water.

"We're suffering losses worth millions daily," he added.

Factory worker Abdul Rehman shared that he walks to work daily through stagnant sewage water.

Pak envoy, CG attend Khorkafan Mango Festival

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador Faisal Niaz Tirmizi, Pakistan's Envoy to the United Arab Emirates and Hussain Muhammad, Consul General of Pakistan in Dubai, attended the 4th Mango Festival held at the Expo Hall in Khorkafan.

For the first time, Pakistan participated in the Khorkafan Mango Festival, showcasing the country's rich and diverse varieties of mangoes, said a press release on Sunday. Ambassador Tirmizi underscored the importance of such events in promoting Pakistani mangoes and enhancing their export potential across the region.

The Pakistan Business Council Sharjah set up a dedicated Pakistani pavilion, attracting attention from visitors of various nationalities. The display celebrated Pakistan's reputation as one of the world's leading producers of high-quality mangoes.

Abdul Waheed Waheed

Israel and Iran waged a hidden war for years, marked by cyberattacks, covert assassinations, and proxy militias operating across the region. In 2025, that indirect conflict exploded into direct confrontation.

This was no sudden eruption. It was the slow burn of so called preemptive measures and proxy warfare that culminated in open war, the result of unchecked strategic ambition, critical miscalculations, and repeated diplomatic failures. Both sides, overestimated their deterrence capabilities, pushed the limits until the line between proxy and direct engagement disappeared entirely.

Israel, emboldened by unconditional and unlimited

Western backing, conducted extraterritorial strikes, sabotaged nuclear sites, and targeted Iranian personnel, actions cloaked as "defensive," but intended to preserve military dominance. Iran, in turn, cultivated proxy networks across the region, using them to exert influence while avoiding direct accountability. Its strategy blurred the line between national defense and the worst type of interference.

Over time, aggression escalated. Israel expanded operations beyond its borders; Iran shifted from covert deterrence to overt retaliation, including drone strikes and maritime attacks. In the absence of diplomacy, tit-for-tat spiraled into all-out conflict, likely beyond either side's intent.

Contrary to simplified

narratives, neither side merely reacted. Israel deliberately intensified the confrontation, believing it could manage escalation. It misjudged the consequences. The region, already fragile due to shifting US engagement, growing Arab-Israeli ties, and expanding Iranian influence, was ultimately pushed to the brink.

The rockets struck Israeli cities like Tel Aviv, were launched by groups such as Hamas, the Israeli response was brutal and indiscriminate. As Israel unleashed its full military arsenal on Gaza, one of the most densely populated and impoverished territories in the world. Entire neighborhoods were erased, infrastructure decimated, and humanitarian corridors blocked. Tens of thousands, mostly women and chil-

dren, were killed under the rubble or in targeted strikes on homes, shelters, and even hospitals.

The Israeli airstrikes struck Beirut also, but it was Gaza that bore the weight of total war. The asymmetry was undeniable: Israel experienced disruption; Gaza was razed. Entire neighborhoods were flattened, and civilians including women, children, and the elderly became the primary victims. This was not just targeting of armed groups but of a besieged population with nowhere to flee. The line between battlefield and home was erased. As borders lost meaning, and proxy fronts dissolved, the region descended into chaos. Palestinians suffered most, but Lebanese, Syrians, and Israelis, too, were drawn into a storm unleashed by

both state and non-state actors. What began as a calculated proxy confrontation has spiraled into a region-wide humanitarian catastrophe.

Both nations, ironically, mirrored each other's methods. Israel's security doctrine, once rooted in pre-emption, increasingly resembled the very tactics it condemned in Iran: covert strikes, political interference, and the instrumentalization of deterrence. The doctrine of deterrence on both sides became a language of escalation, not restraint.

At the heart of this breakdown lies a shared miscalculation. Iran overestimated its alliances and asymmetric tools, misjudging Israel's technological edge and willingness to strike. Israel exaggerated Iran's threat, treating every

maneuver as existential while underestimating Tehran's ideological resilience and strategic depth. In this feedback loop, each side viewed the other's actions as provocations and framed its own responses as justified defense, reinforcing a cycle of mutual mistrust and escalation.

Though a ceasefire has been brokered, the aftermath is grim. Israel, despite its technological edge, now faces internal dissent, regional isolation, and a weakening deterrence posture. Iran, though defiant, is economically broken, diplomatically cornered, and increasingly questioned for turning proxy war into chaos.

The Arab world, once edging toward normalization with Israel, is now rethinking its course as public anger surges against

both foreign aggression and domestic repression. The United States, once a potential mediator, shattered its neutrality by backing Israel in destruction of Gaza and striking Iranian nuclear sites. Its role has shifted from diplomacy to direct war. Its credibility lies in ruins.

Trump's ultimatum, calling for Iran's unconditional surrender, the evacuation of Tehran, and the prospect of regime change, amounted to little more than political theater. They neither altered Iran's leadership nor broke its resolve. What they did reveal, however, was the decline of American strategic influence and the growing disconnect between rhetoric and reality. By issuing threats Trump could not enforce, but weakened Washington's deterrent credibility and handed

Tehran a propaganda victory. Far from isolating Iran, the spectacle galvanized resistance, fractured global diplomacy, and exposed the hollowness of a superpower that speaks loudly but stands alone.

This war was not inevitable. It became so through arrogant militarism, unaccountable policy, and global silence. Both Iran and Israel must now face an uncomfortable truth: security built on domination breeds endless war, not peace.

The path forward lies not in louder threats or smarter weapons, but in mutual recognition, respect for sovereignty, and the moral imperative to protect civilian life. If these lessons go unheeded, the next war will be broader, deadlier, and even harder to contain.



In brief

Paul cruises past Chavez

A N A H E I M (Agencies): YouTuber-turned-boxer Jake Paul cruised to victory over Mexico's Julio Cesar Chavez Jr on Saturday in a one-sided cruiser-weight bout in California. Paul, whose last fight was a controversial clash with 58-year-old former heavy-weight champion Mike Tyson in November, dominated from the outset to win by unanimous decision. The 28-year-old influencer, who has earned millions from a string of lucrative contests in a ring career that has spanned 13 fights, had too much speed and power for Chavez Jr. The three judges at ringside scored the 10-round fight 99-91, 97-93, 98-92 in Paul's favour. Chavez Jr, the 39-year-old son of Mexican boxing great Julio Cesar Chavez, barely looked capable of mustering a response during a one-sided bout. Chavez Jr failed to land a single punch in the opening round, a pattern that followed the remainder of the contest, with Paul easily outscoring the veteran of 63 professional fights. Paul, who reportedly pocketed around \$40 million for his made-for-Netflix fight with Tyson last year, received around \$300,000 guaranteed from Saturday's bout. However the American is expected to earn around \$8-10 million from the fight once earnings from pay-per-view and sponsorships are taken into account.

Bonmati out of hospital

MADRID (AFP): The Spanish football federation (RFEF) announced on Sunday that Spain midfielder Aitana Bonmati had left hospital after treatment for viral meningitis. The two-time Ballon d'Or winner missed Spain's friendly win over Japan on Friday in the women's world champions' last warm-up match before the start of Euro 2025 next week. The RFEF statement revealed that the Barcelona player would now link up with Spain's Euro squad "in the coming days", although she is unlikely to figure in their opening matches. Spain begin their Women's Euro 2025 campaign against neighbours Portugal next Thursday in Bern. They are also drawn with Belgium and Italy in Group B. Meningitis is an infection of the protective membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord. Viral meningitis is less serious than the rarer bacterial variant, which can lead to death within 24 hours.

James opts in with Lakers

LOS ANGELES (AFP): LeBron James is exercising his \$52.6 million player option to rejoin the Los Angeles Lakers next season, hoping to challenge for his fifth NBA title, according to multiple reports on Sunday. ESPN and The Athletic reported James, a four-time NBA Most Valuable Player who turns 41 in December, will be watching the Lakers' off-season roster moves as he prepares for a record-setting 23rd NBA campaign. "LeBron wants to compete for a championship," James's agent, Rich Paul, told ESPN. "He knows the Lakers are building for the future. He understands that, but he values a realistic chance of winning it all. "We understand the difficulty in winning now while preparing for the future. We do want to evaluate what's best for LeBron at this stage in his life and career. He wants to make every season he has left count, and the Lakers understand that, are supportive and want what's best for him."



BULAWAYO: Codi Yusuf picked three wickets on Test debut, Zimbabwe vs South Africa, 1st Test, day 2.

Pakistan thrash Korea to remain unbeaten

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan delivered a stunning performance to crush Korea 91-6 in their third league match of the Asian Youth Girls Netball Championship 2025, held at Jeonju Hwasan Gymnasium, Jeonju-si, South Korea on Sunday. According to information received here, Pakistan dominated the entire match, leading each quarter with overwhelming margins: 1st Quarter: Pakistan 23 – Korea 2 2nd Quarter: Pakistan 45 – Korea 3 3rd Quarter: Pakistan 70 – Korea 4 4th Quarter: Pakistan 91

– Korea 6

Leya Raza Shah, Alisha Naveed, Haleema, Sarina Hussain, Jasmine Farooq, Farah Rasheed, Amani, Parisa, Sumayya Ahmed, and Alina showcased outstanding skills throughout the match, contributing to Pakistan's massive win.

Chairman of the Pakistan Netball Federation, Mudassar Arain, President Sameen Malik and Secretary General Muhammad Riaz congratulated the national team on their emphatic victory.

With this third consecutive win, Pakistan solidified their position at the top of

Pool-B. The Green Shirts will next face Japan in their fourth group match on Monday (June 30), followed by their final league game against Maldives on July 1.

The championship features eleven teams divided into two groups. Group-A includes Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Hong Kong, and India. Group-B comprises Pakistan, Chinese Taipei, Japan, Korea, Maldives, and Saudi Arabia.

Organized under the auspices of the Asian Netball Federation, the Asian Youth Girls Netball Championship 2025 is being held from June 27 to July 4.

Exx-Indian player slams Gautam Gambhir

NEW DELHI (Agencies): Former Indian cricketer and commentator Aakash Chopra has openly criticised Gautam Gambhir's initial stint as the head coach of the Indian men's cricket team, pointing specifically to the team's lacklustre performances in Test matches.

The remarks came during a recent video on Chopra's YouTube channel, where he discussed the challenges facing Indian cricket under Gambhir's leadership. "There is a lot of pressure on Gautam Gambhir. The pressure is mounting," Chopra said.

"If you look at his performances in red-ball cricket, you'll find that he hasn't won many matches."

Chopra emphasised that Gambhir cannot escape accountability for the team's red-ball struggles.

"His performance in white-ball cricket has been good. The team has been playing well. But in Test cricket, I think the questions are going to be there," Chopra added. He pointed out that despite having most of his demands met by the selectors and team management, Gambhir's team has struggled to produce consistent results in the longest format.

"If this series doesn't go well, God forbid, then there will be serious concerns. The selectors are backing the team management by providing the players they ask for. In return, results must follow. There can be no excuses."

The team has played 11 Test matches under Gambhir's coaching tenure, managing to win just three, two against Bangladesh and one against Australia, while losing seven and drawing one.

Chinese Taipei crush Pakistan in AFC Women's Asian Cup qualifier opener

JAKARTA (Monitoring Desk): The Pakistan women's football team endured the worst defeat in its history on Sunday, suffering an 8-0 loss to Chinese Taipei in the AFC Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers held in Indonesia.

Despite fielding nine overseas-based players, the national side failed to offer meaningful resistance against a well-drilled Chinese Taipei team, which is ranked nearly 100 places higher in the FIFA rankings.

Only two local players were included in the starting lineup, underscoring

the team's continued dependence on foreign-based talent.

Chinese Taipei dominated the Group D match from the outset, piling pressure on Pakistan's defence throughout the game.

Goalkeeper Zeeyana Jivraj managed a few early saves, but the defensive line's lack of experience allowed the opposition to take control.

After netting three goals in the first half, Chinese Taipei added five more in the second half — four of them coming in the final six minutes.

This result marks the

heaviest defeat ever recorded by Pakistan in women's international football and further highlights the ongoing struggles within the country's footballing structure.

Reports suggest that the players have not yet been paid for previous tours, including those to Singapore and Saudi Arabia. The financial mismanagement continues to impact player morale and overall performance.

Pakistan will aim to regroup before their next qualifier on July 2 against hosts Indonesia, followed by a clash with Kyrgyzstan on July 5.

Saudis the next test for the new version of 'Pepball'



MIAMI (AFP): The main appeal of the Club World Cup so far has been the chance to see South American and African clubs and their fans offer a reminder that football thrives outside of Europe too.

But as the tournament moves towards the business end, FIFA's new competition is also providing the opportunity to see one of the game's greatest coaches in the midst of rebuilding and recreating his dynasty.

Pep Guardiola's Manchester City have won six of the last eight Premier League titles along with a host of Cups including the 2023 Champions League.

But last year they looked like an empire in decline, finishing 13 points behind Liverpool with performances that were even less inspiring than the results they generated.

At times it felt like the end of the Guardiola era but the Spaniard has set about re-building his team and the 5-2 demolition of Juventus on Thursday indicated the process is moving along swiftly and successfully.

"I'm really pleased because the most important thing is the players have to realise what we have to do to get back to what we were the last decade," said Guardiola.

It is tempting to view the

City rebuild project purely in terms of personnel and certainly astutely recruited new arrivals Tijjani Reijnders and Rayan Cherki in midfield and Rayan Ait-Nouri at left-back showed against Juve that they have the profiles to fit into the City mould immediately.

But after success built on his trademark relentlessly dominant possession football, is Guardiola also undergoing a change in his approach?

Overloads Certainly, against the Italians - and despite the Florida heat -- City played at a high tempo and with an aggressive, attacking intent, particularly down the flanks.

With the two full-backs, Matheus Nunes and Ait-Nouri, pushing forward in support of wingers Savinho and Jeremy Doku, City created overloads in the wide areas that Juve struggled to cope with.

Since the arrival of centre-forward Erling Haaland in 2022, City have evolved away from near constant short-passing towards a more mixed approach and the willingness to go long, even when Omar Marmoush led the line, adds another dimension.

It was noticeable that the City coach was quick to

praise his goalkeeper for his accurate long passes to his strikers.

"Ederson was an incredible quarterback, making incredible long balls for Omar and Erling, and especially after we had the patience to make a lot of passes to be calm," he said.

Perhaps the reports of the death of 'Pepball' were greatly exaggerated?

Guardiola's principles, forged at Barcelona, remain in place but they are evolving and adapting to a game where relentless pressing, as well as high-speed passing are essential -- as Luis Enrique's Paris Saint-Germain showed in their triumphant Champions League campaign.

It would be interesting to watch City evolve in pre-season friendlies but it is even more instructive to see them do it in a competitive environment.

Saudi club Al-Hilal may not have the history of City's usual rivals, but the team coached by Italian Simone Inzaghi, were unbeaten in the group stage drawing with Real Madrid and Salzburg and beating Mexico's Pachuca.

Their defence features former City full-back Joao Cancelo and ex-Napoli centre-half Kalidou Koulibaly while Portugal international Ruben Neves brings control and quality to their midfield.

They will set out, like so many teams in Europe, to frustrate City and will hope to do a better job at that task than Juventus.

But there is a swagger around City again, a confidence and a quiet determination to end a season of disappointment with a trophy and a statement of intent.

Norris resists Piastri to lead dominant McLaren 1-2 in Austria

SPIELBERG BEI KNITTELFELD (AFP): Lando Norris resisted vigorous attacks from teammate and championship leader Oscar Piastri to claim a masterful McLaren 1-2 in Sunday's Austrian Grand Prix.

In torrid heat at the Red Bull Ring, the 25-year-old Briton came home 2.695 seconds clear of the 24-year-old Australian to trim his lead in the title race by 15 points It was Norris's first win in Austria, his third win this year and the seventh of his career.

It was McLaren's first win in Austria since David Coulthard triumphed in 2001. The McLaren pair battled throughout the race to provide thrilling racing for the packed crowd and put behind them their collision in Canada two weeks earlier. Charles Leclerc was third ahead of his Ferrari team-mate seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton, their best result of the year, with George Russell finishing fifth for Mercedes.

"It was a tough race," said Norris.

"Pushing the hot way through... tricky, whole thing, but the perfect result for us as a team, a 1-2 again. We had a great battle, that's for sure." For Piastri, it was equally demanding.



"Intense!" he said. 'Hard work' "I hope it was good watching because from inside the car it was hard work. Yeah, I tried my absolute best."

Liam Lawson came in a career-best sixth for RB on a desultory day for the senior Red Bull team after four-time champion Max Verstappen retired on the opening lap after being hit by Mercedes' teenage rookie Kimi Antonelli. He is now 61 points behind Piastri.

Two-time champion Fernando Alonso was seventh ahead of Gabriel Bortoleto and his Sauber team-mate Nico Hulkenberg, the future Audi outfit showing their huge potential, with Esteban Ocon finishing 10th for Haas.

After a frantic prelude, during which Carlos Sainz's Williams failed to leave the grid and then

caught fire in the pit lane, the race was delayed for 10 minutes -- before delivering immediate drama at the second attempt. Norris made a clean start while, behind him, Piastri passed Leclerc on the outside of Turn One before Antonelli locked up and lost control at Turn Three and hit Verstappen's Red Bull.

A safety car was deployed as both drivers retired on lap one ending, for the defending champion a run of 31 races in the points. "I got hit," said the Dutchman on team radio.

The teenage rookie apologised. "I locked the rear. Sorry about that," he told Mercedes. The race resumed after a two-minute slowdown and Norris was forced immediately to defend as Piastri, looking sharp, attacked as also did Russell on Hamilton for fourth. Both were thwarted by defensive driving.

By lap 12, the McLaren duo were four seconds clear and delivering a show of their own. Unhampered by any embarrassing hangovers from their collision in Montreal, they raced side by side and wheel to wheel, but each time the Australian attacked, the Briton hung on.

In scorching heat of 32 degrees (air) and 55 (track), it was a perfect advertisement for the historic venue in the Styrian Alps which had secured a 16-year contract extension to 2041 before the race. Norris pitted, taking hards, after surviving another Piastri lunge, at turn four, on lap 20. Piastri then followed suit, emerging fourth until Leclerc pitted.

After the leaders out on track also changed tyres Norris led Piastri by 6.5 seconds. Red Bull's misery intensified on lap 30 when Yuki Tsunoda hit Colapinto, sending both to the pits for repairs.

The Japanese rejoined 16th and last of the runners with a new front wing before being handed a 10-second penalty.

As the field settled Norris led Piastri by 3.2s. Russell began the second round of stops on lap 46, followed by the rest of the leaders, leaving Norris to complete a near-perfect day in the Styrian mountains.

Smith on track to return and reclaim No. 4 spot

PERTH (INP): Steven Smith is on track to be fit for Australia's second Test against West Indies in Grenada after the compound dislocation he suffered against South Africa at Lord's during the World Test Championship final.

Smith has spent the last week in New York where he has had a net against a tennis ball and an "incredible" (a soft cricket ball) and rejoined the squad in Barbados on Saturday evening following their three-day victory in the opening Test.

He still needs to tick off a few protocols with the medical staff, with Tuesday's training session in Grenada likely to be the key day, but head coach Andrew McDonald expected him to be ready to return at No. 4, which is likely to see Josh Inglis drop out of the XI.

"It's really about functionality around the finger rather than anything else," McDonald said. "There'll be no risk to long-term health of that finger. He'll return and I think it's likely he'll play. Leading into the next game, he'll have the main session two days out. "He'll [also] train the day before [the match]. If that all goes well, then I'd expect Steve to resume at No. 4."

When Smith suffered the injury, dropping a catch

offered by Temba Bavuma on the third day at Lord's, he was told he would need to wear a splint for eight weeks. He won't be able to field in the slips on his return and will need to patrol the outfield somewhere, which may need some management given the problems he has had with his elbow. "We want to keep him [Smith] at four and build around that rather than potentially risking too many moves in the order"

While there is no question that Smith, if fit, will resume his role at No. 4 the problems at the top of Australia's order have prompted the debate about whether he should resume the No. 3 job to allow Cameron Green to come in a position lower.

"In terms of why we see him as No. 4, I think we've settled on that," McDonald said. "We could slide him up higher if we wanted to. He's been excellent at number three. But I think if you look at the last 12 months at No. 4 and his ability to stabilise that position, two down, arguably our greatest batter, we want to keep him at four and build around that rather than potentially risking too many moves in the order."

Knowing that Smith may only miss the first Test, McDonald was also keen not to create further uncer-

tainty in the batting order which is why Travis Head has not moved from his No. 5 position despite being a senior player.

Marnus Labuschagne's run of low scores in Tests continued, Australia vs South Africa, World Test Championship final, 1st day, Lord's, June 11, 2025

Marnus Labuschagne could be released from the squad if Steven Smith is available•Getty Images

Should Smith be available for the remainder of the series, there is a possibility that Marnus Labuschagne, who was dropped for the first time in the format since 2019 ahead of the first Test, may be released from the squad in order to play some cricket, either for Glamorgan or in the Australia A series against Sri Lanka A in Darwin, which starts next month. The first four-day game of the 'A' series begins on July 13, which would run concurrently with the final Test in Jamaica.

"If we do have a surfeit of batters then we'll explore match opportunities for sure," McDonald said. "I think we've done that with the fast bowlers over time. We've sent Scott Boland back from India. So if we feel as though we're carrying too many, we'll look for game time.



In brief

Police held two fake lawyers

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested two fake lawyers following a complaint filed by the Secretary of the District Bar Association Rawalpindi. A case has been registered against the suspects, who were reportedly posing as lawyers and deceiving people. According to police, the accused used to wear lawyers' uniforms and pretending to be as legal professionals. They were allegedly involved in cheating people by filing fake cases and minting money from clients. SP Potohar Talha Wali commended police team and said that the arrested suspects will be presented in court with solid evidence. He added that strict legal action will be taken against them. No one will be allowed to cheat the general public, he concluded.

Brother kills sister

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested a man accused of killing his real sister for honor in the jurisdiction of Dharmyal police station here on Sunday. According to police, the suspect used a knife to brutally stab his sister to death. Soon the tragic incident occurred, police responded swiftly. Dharmyal Police launched an immediate operation and arrested the accused. Police also recovered a blood stained knife from the crime scene. SP Saddar Muhammad Nabeel Khokhar said that the accused will be presented in court with solid evidence. "He will face strict legal punishment for this heinous crime," the SP added. He condemned the brutal act and said justice will be ensured without delay.

6 gamblers booked

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested six gamblers and recovered stake Rs 16,390, 03 mobile phones and playing cards from their possession during crackdown here on Sunday. According to police, Wah Cantt Police conducted an operation and arrested the gamblers. Police have registered separate cases against all of them and further investigation was in progress. SP Potohar Talha Wali appreciated the performance of police team and said that the arrested persons will be challanged with solid evidence, gambling is the root of other social evils, he added.

Anti-beggar's squad

RAWALPINDI (APP): As per the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi has established a special Anti-Beggars Squad to end begging in public places and provide a cleaner, safer environment for citizens. According to CTP spokesman, beggars were found at key locations in the city, including Mall Road, Murree Road, and Old Airport Road. Their presence not only disrupted the smooth flow of traffic but also posed a security risk. On the instructions of Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Rawalpindi Beenish Fatima, the dedicated squad has started mega operations against begging across the city. So far, 16 beggars including men and women have been booked during the campaign, while 04 underage children found begging were handed over to the Child Protection Bureau for care and rehabilitation. "The operations are conducting daily so that the social problem of begging can be controlled," said CTO Beenish Fatima. "Beggings is a social issue that disturbs the public and also leads to the exploitation of children.



ISLAMABAD: A monkey eating food after picking from garbage container near Margalla Hills in the Federal Capital. —APP Photo

Years on the run end in Spain Talal Chaudhry's diplomacy brings back wanted fugitives

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a significant diplomatic breakthrough, two dangerous fugitives wanted by Pakistan have been arrested in Spain, following sustained efforts by the Ministry of Interior and the personal intervention of Minister of State for Interior, Talal Chaudhry. The arrested individuals include Nawazish Ali Hanjra, who was wanted in 23 high-profile cases involving terrorism, murder, and kidnapping for ransom, and Haroon Iqbal, another suspect wanted in a separate serious case. Both were apprehended in Spain on the basis of Interpol Red Notices issued at Pakistan's request.

The arrests come in the wake of Minister Talal Chaudhry's recent official visit to Spain, during which he held an important meeting with Spanish Interior Minister Fernando Grande-Marlaska. During this meeting, Chaudhry formally requested

the immediate arrest and extradition of Pakistani fugitives residing in Spain, emphasizing the importance of mutual cooperation in combating transnational crime and terrorism.

In response, the Spanish Minister of Interior issued urgent directives to relevant authorities to act on the Interpol Red Notices issued by Pakistan. This swift diplomatic engagement and follow-up have now resulted in the first successful arrests, with more expected in the coming weeks.

Pakistan has long been seeking the arrest and extradition of 38 fugitives from Spain, most of whom are wanted in serious criminal and terrorism-related cases. These individuals had managed to evade justice for years, exploiting legal loopholes and lack of coordination between international enforcement agencies.

Speaking on the development, Minister Talal Chaudhry thanked the Spanish government and Interior

Minister Marlaska for their prompt action and cooperation. He expressed confidence that this success marks the beginning of a broader crackdown on fugitives who flee Pakistan to avoid legal consequences.

"This is a major step forward in our commitment to justice. I am grateful to the Spanish authorities for understanding the gravity of the situation and taking swift action. We hope to see the remaining fugitives arrested and extradited soon," said Chaudhry in a statement.

Legal proceedings are now underway to facilitate the extradition of the arrested individuals to Pakistan, where they will face trial under the country's anti-terrorism and criminal laws. The development is being hailed as a milestone in international law enforcement cooperation, and a sign that Pakistan is intensifying efforts to bring back criminals who have found refuge abroad.

ITP finalizes traffic plan for Ashura Muharrum processions

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP), Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Captain (R) Syed Zeeshan Haider on Sunday reviewed the traffic plan for Muharram-ul-Haram and issued key directives to officers to ensure smooth vehicular flow and public safety during religious processions in the federal capital.

An official told APP that the CTO Zeeshan visited the central Imambargah Asna Ashari in G-6/2 and inspected the routes designated for processions. He instructed officers to implement foolproof measures to maintain order during the mourning period. CTO Zeeshan said no vehicle would be allowed to park near the main procession routes, and parking zones should be designated at least 100 meters away from all entry and exit points.

CTO said strict action would be taken against illegal parking, and citizens should cooperate by parking their vehicles only in designated areas. He said concrete barriers and barbed wire should be installed along the procession routes to enhance security.

3400 shopkeepers fined, 2200 beggars detained

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration on Sunday released its annual performance report, unveiling a sweeping crackdown across the federal capital — from penalising thousands of shopkeepers for overpricing to detaining professional beggars, shutting illegal cafés, and sealing unhygienic food outlets.

Talking to APP, Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon said that from sealing illegal cafés to removing street beggars, the report of the district administration, showing a broad range of actions taken between July 1, 2024, and June 24, 2025.

The report outlines administrative efforts in public safety, price regulation, food quality, transport, environment, taxation, and labor welfare, he added.

According to the report, over the past year, action was taken against 3,431 shopkeepers for selling items at inflated prices. Of these, 1,933 were penalized by courts, and fines were imposed on 2,491 violators.

In a campaign against professional begging, 2,213 professional beggars were taken into custody from various parts of the city. The administration aimed to clear roads, markets, and

intersections of beggars operating in organized networks. While, the administration sealed 100 outlets involved in illegal petrol and open LPG sales. Legal cases were also registered against 101 violators.

To control pollution, five brick kilns found contributing to environmental pollution were closed as part of the city's anti-smog and environmental protection measures. As part of city beautification and legal enforcement, 156 individuals were detained for violating the ban on wall chalking.

Meanwhile, the district administration teams took action at 315 locations found to be breeding grounds for dengue larvae. These operations were carried out to curb the spread of the disease.

Furthermore, the administration issued 14,252 domicile certificates during the year to residents seeking verification for education, employment, and other legal requirements.

A total of 76 indoor sheesha cafés operating without legal clearance were shut down across the capital. These actions were taken for non-compliance with smoking regulations.

District assistant commissioners granted 41 permits for terrace usage, a

requirement for restaurants and cafés operating rooftop services.

For food safety in the federal capital, the Islamabad Food Authority inspected 13,595 food-related establishments during the year. Out of these, 370 were sealed due to serious hygiene violations.

Fines totaling over Rs. 330 million were imposed on 1,427 restaurants for breaching food safety rules. The authority also issued 2,513 licenses to food businesses across Islamabad.

During various inspections, over 97,000 kilograms of unsafe food items were confiscated and destroyed.

Similarly, the Islamabad Transport Authority collected Rs. 1.216 million through the issuance of route permits.

Meanwhile, the Excise Department contributed Rs. 20.66 billion to the national treasury through multiple revenue streams including Rs. 8.542 billion from vehicle registration, Rs. 587.1 million from hotel fees and Rs. 4.235 billion from road tax while Rs. 489 million from excise duty. The Industries Department registered 1,135 partnership firms and 40 non-governmental organizations during the year.

Over 16,000 personnel deployed to secure 181 Majalis, 965 Muharram processions

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police have finalized an extensive security plan for Muharram-ul-Haram, deploying over 16,000 personnel to ensure the safety of 181 religious gatherings (Majalis) and 965 processions across the federal capital.

A public relations officer told APP on Sunday that the plan was formally approved by Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, after a detailed review, while DIG Muhammad Jawad Tariq has been tasked with supervising its implementation.

He said that over 16,000 personnel from Islamabad Police, Pakistan Rangers, Lady Police, Traffic Police, and the Special Branch will be deployed to maintain law and order during the month of Muharram. The security deployment aims to ensure the peaceful conduct of 181 Majalis and 965 processions scheduled in various sectors of Islamabad.

DIG Tariq has issued strict directions to all Zonal SPs, SDPOs, and SHOs to

maintain close liaison with the organizers of Majalis and peace committees. They have been instructed to ensure cooperation in maintaining security and to secure the routes of all processions.

He said that walkthrough gates and metal detectors will be installed at the entry and exit points of all Majalis and processions, while participants will be professionally checked by police officials. Peace committees have been asked to assist in identifying participants and ensuring no unknown persons are allowed to stay inside worship places.

DIG Tariq emphasized the importance of clearing bushes and improving lighting arrangements around worship places, in coordination with relevant departments. Patrolling has also been enhanced, and commando vehicles will be deployed in sensitive areas.

DIG said that special focus will be placed on traffic arrangements to ensure smooth vehicular flow across the city. Parking areas will be set up at a safe distance from the main pro-

cession routes, with strict security checks in place.

DIG Tariq said that rooftops of buildings along procession routes will be covered by police officials, while special arrangements have been made for female gatherings with the deployment of Lady Police officers. Volunteers assisting in security duties will be registered with complete biodata collected by local SHOs.

DIG said that additional deployment of Rangers and elite commandos will be made at sensitive Imambargahs, which will remain on high alert. Rope lines will be used to secure processions from all directions. He said that strict measures have also been directed to prevent wall chalking, display of illegal posters, and the distribution of any material that could incite sectarian tension.

DIG Tariq said that the Islamabad Police will perform their duties with full dedication and professionalism to ensure the safety of citizens and the peaceful observance of Muharram-ul-Haram rituals.

Murree district admin issues monsoon alert

RAWALPINDI (APP): The district administration of Murree has issued an important alert in view of the ongoing monsoon season. Citizens have been advised to take safety measures to protect themselves and their loved ones from possible dangers caused by heavy rains or possible floods.

People traveling to or within Murree are appealed to drive carefully. Roads can become slippery during rain, increasing the risk of accidents. There is also a danger of vehicle brake failure due to moisture, so

extra caution is needed while driving. If there are signs of lightning or a storm, avoid taking shelter inside vehicles, as this can be dangerous too.

The administration has also appealed citizens not to throw garbage into nullahs and canals. Such steps block the flow of water and could lead to flooding.

The public is strongly advised not to build or live in houses located in low-lying areas. Old and damaged houses are also unsafe during heavy rains and should not be used for liv-

ing. Proper drainage arrangements should be ensured to prevent water accumulation around homes.

The presence of moisture increases the risk of electric shocks from metal objects and electrical appliances. Therefore, people are urged to stay away from electric poles and avoid touching metal items during rain. The district administration has also appealed to the citizens to follow all safety instructions and stay updated through official channels or media.

Motorbike law enforcement to end road fatalities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director General of the Punjab Road Safety Authority Manzar Javed Ali said on Sunday that the Punjab Chief Minister is actively taking steps to improve enforcement, raise awareness, and encourage the adoption of electric vehicles in a bid to reduce road accidents, particularly those caused by motorbikes, which account for 70% of fatalities.

In a recent conversation with PTV News, DG Manzar Javed Ali emphasized that the Punjab Chief Minister's uncompromising enforcement of EV transport policies and stricter motorbike laws is crucial to ending the alarming rate of road fatalities across the province.

He stressed that the CM is committed to cracking down on violations, aiming to improve road safety and reduce the growing number of accidents. The DG highlighted that a significant portion of these fatalities is caused by motorbikes, making it a key focus of the

provincial government's efforts.

Javed Ali further revealed that out of the 24 million vehicles registered in Punjab, over 20 million are motorbikes, with a concerning 46% of riders lacking proper licenses.

This lack of regulation contributes to the rising number of accidents, prompting the CM's strict enforcement measures. The crackdown on unlicensed riders and the promotion of electric vehicles are part of a comprehensive strategy to address road safety issues and reduce the number of deaths on Punjab's roads.

In response to a question, DG Manzar Javed Ali stated that underage motorbikers will be dealt with an iron hand, and the CM has ordered full action against their parents for allowing illegal riding.

To another question, DG Manzar Javed Ali disclosed that the CM is introducing a new project to deploy electric buses and scooters across Punjab, aiming to

reduce reliance on motorbikes, not only in urban areas but also in rural regions.

He said that, in collaboration with 1122, the Road Safety Authority has established a data center and is actively enforcing laws for motorbikers to improve road safety across the province. He also mentioned promoting cycling habits among youngsters, encouraging them to adopt healthier and safer modes of transport, which could help reduce the reliance on motorbikes and improve overall road safety.

He emphasized that the CM's vision encompasses a wide range of initiatives including e-challan cameras, cycle tracks, eco-friendly transport solutions, route optimization with transport companies and fitness programs, all designed to create a safer, more sustainable and tech-driven transportation network in Punjab, with a focus on reducing accidents and improving public health across the province.



ISLAMABAD: An elderly vendor displaying handmade items while sitting at roadside to attract the customers in Federal Capital. —APP Photo

Three held with narcotics

GHAZNI CITY (Pajhwok): Security forces have arrested three individuals and seized 15 kilograms of narcotics in Ghazni, a police official said on Sunday. Police spokesman Abu Khalid Sarhadi told Pajhwok that the suspects were involved in trafficking drugs from Helmand province to be sold in Kabul and Ghazni. The men were apprehended in Ghazni City with 15 kilograms of crystal meth, a Kalashnikov rifle, two pistols, a luxury car, and a large amount of cash.

Teenage girl rescued

MAIDAN SHAHR (Pajhwok): A 13-year-old girl has been rescued from kidnappers, and a suspect detained in connection with the case in central Maidan Wardak province, police said on Sunday. The teenage girl, originally from Nawar district in Ghazni province, currently resides in the Koh-i-Chel Dokhtaran area of the 13th police district in Kabul. She was abducted from Kabul and taken to the Surkhabad area of Behsud district in Maidan Wardak.

UNOPS backs infrastructure projects

GHAZNI (TOLOnews): Three public infrastructure projects have been launched in Ghazni city with a total budget of 24 million afghanis. These projects, which include the construction of two roads and a retaining wall, are being implemented with the support of the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and are expected to be completed within three months, providing employment to nearly 300 people.

Fazl Ahmad Madani, Director of Technical and Professional Affairs at the Ghazni Municipality, stated: "The two road projects are in Arbab Sahib and Qala-e-Shada areas, and the retaining wall project, measuring 580 meters in length, is located in the Sakoot market. Construction began today, with a

total cost of 24 million afghani."

Engineer Abdul Wali Shirzad said: "Each project will run for approximately three months and provide jobs to up to 100 workers. We are committed to completing the work with high quality." Residents of Ghazni welcomed the launch of the projects but also voiced concerns about the lack of electricity and clean drinking water.

Ramazan, a local resident, said: "This is a large area that was in urgent need of a road. Ninety percent of the residents use this route for transportation."

"We are facing serious problems due to the lack of electricity and clean water. We urge the government and organizations to address these basic needs," said Aziz Ahmad, another resident. Some of the work-

Schools in cold regions get five-day holiday

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Ministry of Education (MoE) has announced that all schools in the cold regions of the country will observe a holiday from July 1 to July 5 due to extreme heat. The ministry said that midterm exams in these regions will begin on July 6.

This announcement follows an earlier warning from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which forecasted a heatwave across Afghanistan between June 30 and July 2, with temperatures expected to rise 2 to 10 degrees Celsius above average.

In the southern, eastern, and northern regions, temperatures may exceed 45 degrees Celsius.

In a statement on Sunday, the MoE said: "Due to the high temperatures in recent days, from July 1 to July 5, all students of madrasas, Darul Ulooms, Darul Hifaz, religious institutions, and general schools in the colder provinces will be granted a five-day holiday."

The ministry added that midterm exams for grades 1 to 14 will begin on July 6 in all Islamic and general educational institutions—both public and private—in the colder provinces, and will continue until the end of July.

According to the MoE, summer holidays for all Darul Ulooms, Darul Hifaz, religious seminaries, and general schools will be observed from July 22 to August 1. All school administrators, teachers and students are required to return to classes on August 2 without delay or absence following the summer break, the statement concluded.

Over 1m Afghans return from Iran, Pakistan: UN

KABUL (Pajhwok): The United Nations says that over one million Afghans have returned from Iran and Pakistan in the past seven months—a number that continues to rise.

Acting Minister Maulvi Abdul Kabir met with key UN representatives, including Indrika Ratwatte, UNAMA Deputy Special Representative, Arafat Jamal from UNHCR, and Mihyung Park, Chief of IOM in Afghanistan.

In a statement, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) said the meeting focused on Afghan returnees and strengthening cooperation between the caretaker government and UN agencies on migration issues.

Ratwatte noted that the number of returnees is steadily increasing, with a significant rise in forced deportations from Iran, while Pakistan has somewhat reduced its scale of deportations.

He said UNAMA is working to mobilize financial resources to support returnees in coordination with the Afghan caretaker government.

"UNAMA aims to persuade Iran to end forced deportations and promote



voluntary returns through a structured and humane process," Ratwatte added.

He emphasized the importance of reintegrating returnees and proposed the formation of a joint technical committee to identify long-term migration solutions.

UNHCR representative Arafat Jamal reported that non-food items had been dispatched to Islam Qala port in Herat province following a field assessment.

He urged the UN leadership to expand assistance for returnees and announced that the UN High Commissioner for Refugees is expected to visit Kabul in the near future.

Mihyung Park, IOM

Chief in Afghanistan, highlighted the rising influx of returnees from Iran and the urgent need for increased funding. Although IOM has scaled up its cash assistance, she said the surge in forced deportations has reduced the effectiveness of their support.

Park also presented several proposals to address the crisis, though specific details were not disclosed.

In response, Maulvi Abdul Kabir expressed appreciation for the UN agencies' ongoing efforts.

He confirmed that the Islamic Emirate had already dispatched essential supplies and technical teams to Islam Qala and

had prepared to support returnees from both Iran and Pakistan. All relevant institutions, he said, are mobilized to provide necessary services.

Kabir also called for a tripartite meeting with Iran to resolve refugee-related concerns and reaffirmed the caretaker government's commitment to full cooperation with the UN on these issues.

Previously, officials at the Islam Qala border crossing reported that more than 10,000 Afghan refugees return from Iran daily—approximately 70 percent voluntarily and 30 percent through forced deportations.

Pension decree ignored for months, says retirees



KABUL (TOLOnews): Once considered the backbone of the state, Afghanistan's retired civil servants now suffer in silence, overlooked and impoverished, their voices barely heard despite their growing desperation.

A number of retirees have again gathered, empty-handed but hopeful, in front of the pension office, saying they haven't received their pensions in nearly four years and can no longer afford basic necessities of life.

Mirwais, also retired, said: "The decree said it should be implemented in 24 hours, but it's been five months and nothing has happened. Every day we are told maybe tomorrow."

Among the protesters were also retired women, their eyes filled with tears and their voices choked with grief and hardship.

Hamira, a retired woman, said: "My children fight over a pencil. I don't even have ten afghani to buy one. What can I do? No notebook, no pen."

Sahra, another retired woman, said: "I am the sole breadwinner of my family. I have four children, each going to school. We have rent to pay, and I'm sick myself."

Although retirees gather every Saturday to protest the unpaid pensions, the caretaker government has yet to provide any clear update on when these long-delayed payments will be made.

Kabul City road network reform plan approved

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Kabul Municipality has announced that the "Reform Plan for the Road Network of Kabul City" has been officially approved and endorsed.

In a statement, the municipality said the plan aims to address the current and future needs of residents while laying the groundwork for balanced and sustainable development in the capital.

Over the past two decades, Kabul has faced serious challenges—particularly in unplanned areas—due to an unprecedented population increase, unregulated urban sprawl, and the delayed implementation of urban master plans.

Eng. Faiq Ahmad Tasal, Director of Urban Infrastructure at Kabul Municipality, stated that to overcome these challenges, the road network outlined in the Kabul Urban Design Framework Plan (approved in 2017) was reviewed and revised. He noted that the previous plan contained multiple shortcomings and failed to meet the city's real and evolving needs.

"This process was carried out in collaboration with the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing. Following the completion of all legal procedures, the Reform Plan for Kabul's Road Network has now been officially approved," he said.

According to the state-

23-year-old man allegedly commits suicide

JALALABAD (Pajhwok): A young man reportedly addicted to drugs has committed suicide in the Surkhrod district of eastern Nangarhar province, police said on Sunday.

In a statement, police headquarters said the incident took place in Sayaf family area of Surkhrod district on Saturday.

It said, "The statement reads: 'A 23-year-old man, originally from the Garikhel area of Pachiragum district and currently residing in the mentioned area of Surkhrod, who was addicted to narcotics and mentally unstable, hanged himself to death with a rope in his room.'"

According to the statement, at the time of the incident, no one was present with him, and his wife had been taken away by her in-laws for some time.

Suicide is strictly prohibited in Islam and is considered a major sin. Religious scholars emphasize that individuals should not resort to taking their own lives, even in the face of life's challenges.

Kandahar's Lora dam study project launched, says MoEW

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Ministry of Energy and Water (MoEW) has announced the launch of the initial study and detailed design phase of the Lora Dam project in Arghistan district of southern Kandahar province, with an estimated value of 102 million afghanis.

According to a statement from the ministry, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, speaking at the inauguration ceremony, said the project reflects the caretaker government's commitment to water resource management and national economic development.

He reaffirmed the Islamic

Emirate of Afghanistan's (IEA) dedication to advancing prosperity and development across all sectors, noting that significant steps have already been taken toward this goal.

Acting Minister of Energy and Water, Maulvi Abdul Latif Mansour, explained that the current phase involves a pre-construction assessment and detailed technical design of the dam. The next phase will begin with actual construction.

He also said that, alongside the Lora Dam project, work is ongoing on two additional check dam projects in the same region, which are expected to be completed and operational

in the near future.

Highlighting the government's broader achievements, Mansour explained that the IEA has established a Sharia-based governance system, and despite limited resources, has delivered progress in national security, economic stability, and infrastructure development.

He urged the public to remain vigilant against "enemy conspiracies" and to support the Islamic system as part of their religious and national responsibilities.

Also speaking at the ceremony, Acting Minister of Information and Culture Mullah Khairullah Khairkhwah hailed the Lora Dam project as a positive

step toward improved water management.

He emphasized the IEA's continued efforts in promoting national development and infrastructure growth.

According to the ministry, the Lora Dam project is intended to support water management, agricultural irrigation, electricity generation, flood control, and groundwater replenishment in Arghistan district.

The initial study and detailed design will be carried out over a period of 18 months by the Afghan-German Bakhtar Company, under a resource-for-investment agreement, with a total contract value of 102 million afghanis.

Hotak returns to Kabul after Belarus victory

KABUL (Pajhwok): Afghan mixed martial arts (MMA) fighter Ahmad Wali Hotak returned to the country on Sunday after defeating Russian opponent Saiged Zirkov in Belarus.

Hotak secured the win in the Global Series Open competition held Friday at Prime Hall Stadium in Minsk. Competing in the 70-kilogram weight class, he gained victory via submission.

Speaking to Pajhwok Afghan News, Hotak said he had prepared extensively

for the bout, which played a key role in his performance. "My opponent was strong, but I had developed a solid tactical plan," he said. "I stuck to that plan and managed to defeat him."

The victory marks Hotak's first since returning to professional MMA after a three-year hiatus, improving his career record to 11 wins. It was also his debut match in the current Global Series Open.

Meanwhile, fellow Afghan MMA fighter



Wahidullah Nazhand triumphed over his Tajik opponent, Faridun Shokhnazrov, in a separate bout held in Germany on Saturday night.

Seven killed and two injured in Afghanistan last week

KABUL (Pajhwok): Last week, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan strongly rejected claims that the country has become a "safe haven for terrorist groups".

Meanwhile, the return of Afghan refugees from Iran surged, calls were made for increased support in treating drug addicts and returnees, and Norway pledged over four million dollars in aid to Afghanistan.

Casualties:

Last week, seven people were killed and two others injured in various incidents across Afghanistan.

Local officials reported that unidentified individuals killed a man in Ghazni province's Giro district, a man killed his wife in Andar district, and one person died in Nawur district during a clash between nomads (Kuchis) and local residents over grazing land.

Additionally, reports indicate that three people were killed and one woman injured in Bamyán and Panjshir provinces due to personal disputes. In

Parwan, a "misunderstanding" during a security forces operation led to one person's death and another being injured.

In the previous week, two people had been killed and nine others injured in Afghanistan.

Before the regime change in 2021, hundreds of civilians, insurgents and security personnel would get killed and maimed in clashes and bomb blasts every week.

Safe haven claims, IEA response

Last week, Bill Huizenga, chairman of the US House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on South and Central Asian Affairs, claimed Afghanistan has become a "safe haven for terrorist groups" four years after the withdrawal of American forces.

According to his claim, these groups are increasing their capabilities and forces to carry out attacks in the region and around the world.

However in response to this claim, Islamic Emirate spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid wrote on his X-Page today (Friday) that Afghanistan has a unified and strong government.

"Afghanistan has a strong and unified government that controls the entire geography of the country and does not allow anyone to use Afghan soil against any country."

He rejected the Michigan Republican's claim and said: "We strongly reject the claim made from the address of the US Congress that there are foreign groups in Afghanistan or that there is a threat to anyone."

Afghan refugees return from Iran

According to officials, more than 60,000 Afghan refugees returned from Iran through the Islam Qala crossing on Wednesday and Thursday.

Earlier, authorities at the Islam Qala in Herat reported that over 10,000 Afghan refugees return from Iran to Afghanistan daily.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) stated that since the start of this calendar year, one million Afghans have returned to the country, while seven million others remain refugees abroad, primarily in Iran and Pakistan.

UNAMA added that without urgent assistance, these returnees will face numerous challenges.

OIC, SCO meetings

Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs Maulvi Amir Khan Muttaqi, addressing the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) foreign ministers' meeting in Istanbul, Turkey, said Muslim nations now have the opportunity to unite around their shared values and deeply reflect on the challenges they face and the causes of their backwardness.

Muttaqi told the meeting that Afghanistan was ready to play a vital role in transit, trade and economic connectivity among Islamic countries.

He assured: "We are prepared to play a constructive role within the framework of the OIC's strategic economic agenda in the areas of regional connectivity, energy, logistics and investment."

He emphasised the caretaker Afghan government's foreign policy was based on the principles of mutual respect and balanced engagement.

The Indian Defense Minister has reiterated his country's firm support for peace, security and stability in Afghanistan at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit and emphasized India is Afghanistan's largest development partner in the region.

Rajnath Singh reaffirmed India's steadfast support for peace, security and stability in Afghanistan while addressing the SCO Defence Ministers' meeting in Qingdao, China.

Deputy spokesman of the IEA, Hamdullah Fitrat, described the Indian Defense Minister's remarks

as truthful, saying, "We welcome this genuine stance. Lasting stability in Afghanistan benefits the entire region. We hope all countries will recognize Afghanistan's current realities and embrace a spirit of cooperation with ongoing developments."

Combating narcotics

Last week, on the International Day Against Drug Abuse, officials from Afghanistan's Ministry of Public Health announced that over the past four years, 20 new treatment centers for drug addicts have been established, 30 existing centers upgraded, and 80,000 addicts have received treatment and now lead normal lives.

Acting Minister of Public Health, Maulvi Noor Jalal Jalali, urged the international community to support Afghanistan in addiction treatment efforts.

On International Day Against Drug Abuse, the Ministry of Interior announced that tens of thousands of operations

have been conducted over the past four years to combat the production, trafficking, and use of narcotics.

Abdul Matin Qani expressed concern over the lack of sufficient cooperation from international institutions and urged the global community for more support in addiction treatment and prevention.

The spokesperson said: "In all our meetings, one key point is always noted: there should be cooperation with us."

Unfortunately, no such cooperation has occurred. The Afghan nation must realize that billions of dollars are spent on fighting narcotics, collecting, treating addicts, and related areas. This is a hallmark of a responsible system that funds its own efforts."

Achievements:

98,000 anti-narcotics operations conducted

Over 20,000 drug production factories destroyed

Over 38,000 acres of land cleared

Over 28,000 traffickers

and criminals arrested

More than 8,500 tons of narcotics destroyed

150,000 addicts collected

Polleak Ok Serei, the head of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Afghanistan, has reported a 90% decrease in the cultivation and production of narcotics in the country.

Last week, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) stated that the social and health problems caused by drug use in Afghanistan are significant, and that limited access to treatment—especially in rural areas—prevents recovery for individuals who use high-risk narcotic substances.

Meanwhile, a recent UNODC report states that by 2023, around 27,000 people, including women and children, were involved in drug use.

Aid

Norway has contributed \$4.25 million to the United Nations Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan.

NEOC issues multi-region weather alerts for rain, flash flood risks

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: National Emergencies Operation Center (NEOC) of NDMA has issued multiple impact-based weather alerts in view of expected widespread rain-wind/thundershowers, accompanied by isolated heavy falls, across various regions of Pakistan from 29th June to 5th July 2025.

According to NEOC anticipated significant rainfall activity in Kashmir, Northeast Punjab, Potohar region, Islamabad and Upper and Central parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa between 29th June to 3rd July. This may result in urban flooding in low-lying areas of Central Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly in the cities of Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera, and Kohat.

In the Potohar region, including Attock, Chakwal, Rawalpindi, and Islamabad, there is a high likelihood of urban flooding, especially during the nighttime hours from 9:00 PM to 4:00 AM on 29th June. Rain emergencies may also occur in the low-elevation areas of North Eastern Punjab, covering Jhelum, Mandi

Bahauddin, Gujrat, Sialkot, Gujranwala, Narowal, and Lahore.

Similarly, areas within Faisalabad and Sargodha Divisions may experience significant rainfall, increasing the risk of localized flooding and rain-related emergencies.

NEOC has also cautioned against possible flash flooding in the northern parts including Hazara and Malakand Divisions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, lower parts of Jhelum and Poonch Valleys in AJK, and the Pir Panjal range in northeastern Punjab. Low-level flooding is anticipated in River Kabul at Nowshera and its tributaries, along with medium flows in Swat River.

Similar low-level flows are expected downstream of Tarbela Dam and in the Chenab River at Khanki and Qadirabad.

Additionally, flash floods are likely in tributaries and streams of River Chitral and Hunza, such as Kunjrab, Ghujerab, Kilik, Chapursan, and Shimshal Braldu Rivers. These conditions could lead to disruption of transportation in hilly and mountainous regions, landslides, and interruption of communication and

electricity services.

Furthermore, heavy to very heavy rainfall is forecasted in southern Sindh, particularly affecting Hyderabad, Badin, Thatta, and Karachi from 29th June to 5th July. The risk of urban flooding in low-lying areas of Karachi Division is expected to increase significantly from 2nd July onward, particularly in the districts of Hyderabad, Thatta, and Badin, where rainwater accumulation may trigger localized flooding and emergency conditions.

NDMA urges all provincial and district administrations to remain on high alert, activate contingency plans, and ensure timely dissemination of warnings in local languages. Citizens, especially those in high-risk areas, are advised to stay updated through official advisories, avoid unnecessary travel near glacial streams, riverbanks, and flooded roads, and keep emergency kits ready.

For real-time alerts and preparedness guidelines, download the Pak NDMA Disaster Alert App and follow NDMA's official communication channels.



TEHRAN, IRAN: A damaged car is seen amid the destruction of a residential property, in northern Tehran, Iran, after it was hit during an Israeli airstrike on the last day of the fighting between Israel and Iran last week. Iranians have been surveying the damage in Tehran following 12 days of trading aerial attacks with Israel, after the latter launched a preemptive strike on Iran's nuclear program, military leadership and other sites starting on June 13.

Ukraine F-16 pilot killed in large-scale Russian attack

Zelenskiy calls for US help

KYIV/LVIV, Ukraine (Reuters): A Ukrainian F-16 fighter pilot died in a crash while repelling a Russian air attack that involved hundreds of drones, cruise and ballistic missiles, authorities said on Sunday, as Moscow intensifies night-time air barrages in the fourth year of war.

President Volodymyr Zelenskiy called for more support from Washington and Western allies to bolster Ukraine's air defences after the attack, which damaged homes and infrastructure across the country and injured at least 12 people, according to local authorities.

In Kyiv, families huddled in metro stations for shelter after air raid sirens rung out. Machine-gun fire and explosions were heard across the capital and in the western city of Lviv, where such attacks are less common.

The governor of the Lviv region, bordering Poland, said the raid targeted critical infrastructure.

Ukraine has now lost three F-16s since it began operating the U.S.-made jets last year. Kyiv has not revealed the size of its F-16 fleet, but they have become

a central and heavily used part of Ukraine's defences.

The pilot flew the damaged jet away from a settlement but did not have time to eject before it crashed, the Ukrainian Air Force said.

"The pilot used all of his onboard weapons and shot down seven air targets. While shooting down the last one, his aircraft was damaged and began to lose altitude," the Air Force said on Telegram.

The Ukrainian military said in total Russia launched 477 drones and 60 missiles of various types to Ukraine overnight. Ukrainian forces destroyed 211 of the drones and 38 missiles, it said, while 225 more drones were either lost due to electronic warfare or were decoys that carried no explosives.

"Moscow will not stop as long as it has the capability to launch massive strikes," Zelenskiy said on X. He said Russia had launched around 114 missiles, 1,270 drones, and 1,100 glide bombs just in the past week.

Russia's state-run RIA Novosti news agency said one person was killed by a Ukrainian drone in the Russian-controlled part of

Ukraine's Luhansk region.

Ukraine says recent attacks highlight the need for further support from Washington, which under President Donald Trump has not committed to new military aid for Ukraine.

Trump said he was considering a Ukrainian request for more Patriot missile, opens new tab batteries after he met Zelenskiy at a NATO summit last Wednesday.

"This war must be brought to an end - pressure on the aggressor is needed, and so is protection," Zelenskiy said in his X post on Sunday after the attack. "Ukraine needs to strengthen its air defence - the thing that best protects lives."

He said Ukraine was ready to buy the American air defence systems and it counts on "leadership, political will, and the support of the United States, Europe, and all our partners."

Russia has launched large scale strikes on Ukrainian cities every few days in recent weeks, causing widespread damage, killing dozens of civilians and injuring hundreds more.

During the latest barrage, explosions were heard

in Kyiv, Lviv, Poltava, Mykolaiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Cherkasy and the Ivano-Frankivsk regions, witnesses and regional governors said.

The Ukrainian military said air strikes were recorded in six locations.

Eleven people, including two children, were injured in the central Cherkasy region, the governor Ihor Taburets said on Telegram. Three multi-storey buildings and a college were damaged in the attack, he said. One woman was injured in western Ivano-Frankivsk region.

Rescuers evacuated residents from apartment blocks with charred walls and broken windows, images released by authorities in Cherkasy showed.

Industrial facilities were hit in the southern Ukrainian Mykolaiv and central Dnipropetrovsk regions, officials said. Railway infrastructure was damaged in Poltava city in the centre of the country.

Reporting by Pavel Polityuk in Kyiv and Andriy Perun in Lviv; Additional reporting by Alina Smutko, Gleb Garanich and Frank Jack Daniel in Kyiv; Editing by Susan Fenton

Israel's attack on Tehran's Evin prison

Iran's judiciary says at least 71 killed

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP): At least 71 people were killed in Israel's attack on Tehran's Evin prison, a notorious facility where many political prisoners and dissidents have been held, Iran's judiciary said on Sunday.

Judiciary spokesperson Asghar Jahangir posted on the office's official Mizan news agency website that those killed on Monday included staff, soldiers, prisoners and members of visiting families. It was not possible to independently verify the claim.

The June 23 attack, the day before the ceasefire between Israel and Iran took hold, hit several prison buildings and prompted concerns from rights groups about the safety of the inmates.

It remains unclear why Israel targeted the prison, but it came on a day when the Defense Ministry said it was attacking "regime targets and government repression bodies in the heart of Tehran."

The news of the prison attack was quickly overshadowed by an Iranian attack on a U.S. base in

Qatar later that same day, which caused no casualties, and the announcement of the ceasefire.

Jahangir did not break down the casualty figures but said the attack had hit the prison's infirmary, engineering building, judicial affairs and visitation hall, where visiting family members were killed and injured. On the day of the attack, the New York-based Center for Human Rights in Iran criticized Israel for striking the prison, seen as a symbol of the Iranian regime's repression of any opposition, saying it violated the principle of distinction between civilian and military targets.

Over the 12 days before a ceasefire was declared, Israel claimed it killed around 30 Iranian commanders and 11 nuclear scientists, while hitting eight nuclear-related facilities and more than 720 military infrastructure sites. More than 1,000 people were killed, including at least 417 of them civilians, according to the Washington-based Human Rights Activists group.

In retaliation, Iran fired

more than 550 ballistic missiles at Israel, most of which were intercepted, but those that got through caused damage in many areas and killed 28 people.

Abbas Araghchi, Iran's foreign minister, said in a Saturday letter to United Nations officials that the international body should recognize Israel and the U.S. "as the initiators of the act of aggression" against Iran over the war and that their targeting of sovereign country and its people should require "compensation and reparation. The Security Council should also hold the aggressors accountable and prevent the recurrence of such heinous and serious crimes to enable it to maintain international peace and security," Araghchi said in the letter obtained by The Associated Press.

At the same time, advocates have said that Iran was legally obligated to protect the prisoners held in Evin, and slammed authorities in Tehran for their "failure to evacuate, provide medical assistance or inform families" following the attack.

PM urges nation to strengthen parliamentary institutions

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister (PM) Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif urged the nation to renew resolve to strengthen parliamentary institutions, safeguard democratic values, and ensure that the voices of the citizenry were truly reflected in the lawmaking process.

In a message on the International Day of Parliamentarism, he said, "The International Day of Parliamentarism, observed every year on June 30, reaffirms our global commitment to strengthening democratic institutions."

"The day also celebrates the vital role of Parliaments in promoting inclusive governance, ensuring meaningful representation of women and youth, and embracing technological innovation in legislative practices," he said adding, "Our Parliament occupies a central place in our democratic framework. Through its legislative authority and the vigilant work of its standing committees, Parliament ensures accountability, transparency, and oversight of the executive."

"The Constitution of Pakistan enshrines representation of women through reserved seats under Articles 51 and 59. Our women parliamentarians have also risen to leadership positions: currently, eight women Senators and four women Members of the National Assembly serve as Chairpersons of Parliamentary Committees, breaking glass ceilings and setting an example of inclusive and empowered leadership," he remarked.

The prime minister said, "Parliament has also remained proactive in enacting progressive legislation, particularly to advance gender equality and social protection."

ISLAMABAD (APP): Kashmiri leaders Sunday strongly condemned India's repressive measures in Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), accusing the Indian government of using these tactics to silence the local population while diverting attention from its growing international decline.

While in a fresh conversation with PTV news channel, they argued that India's heavy-handed approach, particularly ahead of the Amarnath Yatra, was an attempt to mask its faltering global influence and shift focus away from its deteriorating international image.

Syed Manzoor Ahmad,

senior leader of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), expressed that India's increased deployment of security forces in IIOJK is a deliberate tactic to cover up its failures after being outmanoeuvred by Pakistan.

He stated that the move is a desperate attempt to distract from India's international setbacks and project an image of control, all while further oppressing the Kashmiri people.

He also highlighted that India has deployed 180 companies of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) in IIOJK, adding, Kashmiris have always been hospitable and have

consistently cared for their guests.

He criticized the move as unnecessary and unjust, especially given the region's long-standing tradition of warmth and hospitality and accused India of using force as a cover-up for its international failures.

Another senior Kashmiri leader and analyst, Abdul Hameed Lone, also strongly criticized the Indian government for its increasing military and police presence in Srinagar and other parts of IIOJK ahead of the Amarnath Yatra.

He argued that this heightened security is nothing but a ploy to further militarize the region

and intimidate the local population.

Lone condemned the move as an unjustified action aimed at stifling the voices of Kashmiris, who have long resisted foreign occupation.

He further pointed out that the Indian government's focus on security forces, rather than addressing the legitimate political demands of the people, reveals its failure to address the core issues of Kashmir.

Lone further expressed deep concern over the environmental impact of India's policies in Kashmir, particularly the large-scale deforestation and destruction of natural resources.

Grief in the Swat Valley

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

SOME events pierce the heart so deeply that their echoes remain long after the floodwaters recede, the cries die down, and the dust settles. They do not merely pass; they imprint themselves upon our collective conscience-if, indeed, we still possess one. Among such tragedies was the recent incident in Swat, where joy turned into mourning in a matter of moments, and a dream of leisure ended in an irreversible nightmare.

On that Friday afternoon, the heavens bore witness to a calamity that no heart could endure. The blue skies of Swat, known for their serenity, suddenly watched helplessly as a savage torrent of water surged through the valley and snatched away human lives in the blink of an eye. The laughter of children turned into frantic screams, the chatter of friends into cries for help, and the calm of nature into a scene of utter devastation.

A group of 35 tourists from Daska had set out in the hope of finding solace in the lap of nature. They were families,

friends, brothers and sisters-ordinary people seeking a brief escape from the burdens of life. But some 16 of them never returned. The Swat River, fed by the glacial veins of the north, became their unmarked grave. The final moments of these precious lives were captured by bystanders-cameras recorded the horror, and social media broadcasted the tragedy to the world. But for all the clarity of those visuals, what generally unseen were the figures who should have been there first-the rescuers, the officials, the system.

The affected families kept calling for help for hours. Voices cracked with desperation, phones trembled in wet hands, prayers were whispered with every breath-and yet, no one came.

The delay was fatal. It was not just a failure of administration; it was a betrayal of responsibility, a brutal silence in the face of suffering. We often say that only Almighty Allah knows what lies in the hearts, but we must also say-only Allah knows what these people felt as they were swept away, glancing one last time at the shore, hoping someone,



somewhere, would arrive.

This is not the first time that such helplessness has been documented. This is not the first time that our governance has failed to rise in time. Sympathy replaces swift action, condolence substitutes accountability, and compensation is offered like a balm to a bleeding wound that never heals.

Will this be another one of those tragedies that fade into the archives of forgetfulness?

A few officials may be suspended, financial aid may be announced, carefully worded statements will be issued-but will that bring back the lives lost to the river?

The real tragedy is not just the drowning-it is the apathy that follows. Didn't such incidents happen before this? Have we not seen tourists lost to flash floods, families perishing in rivers, and roads washed away before? What did we learn then? What did we fix?

Or did we just pass the blame to fate, shrugging our shoulders as if human life is so cheap that it can be written off by saying, this was destined?

There is a cruel repetition in our response. We will mourn, yes. We will share photos of the deceased with broken captions. We will conduct meetings, prepare reports, and nod solemnly in conferences. But then we will move on. And the bereaved families? They will live with a hollow that no

time can ever fill. They will bury not only their loved ones but also a piece of their own souls.

There is no compensation for the pain of a mother who waited for her son to return with laughter and instead received his lifeless body; for a father who told his children to be careful, never knowing their smiles were their last. But unfortunately, this incident is completely different, in which all family members lost their lives.

In other nations, when a single child goes missing or an animal facing trouble, entire systems and machinery are activated. Roads are blocked, alerts are issued, and helicopters are dispatched. Here, dozens drown, and the machinery yawns awake only after it is too late. Social media becomes the first responder, and the administration lags behind, watching through the lens of detachment.

If we are to prevent such heartbreaks in the future, we must abandon the ritual of reactive mourning and adopt proactive planning. We need a comprehensive national strategy that includes real-time

warning systems, riverbank surveillance, emergency drills, and public awareness campaigns tailored for tourists. It should not be difficult in an age of satellite data and instant communication to monitor water levels and forecast surges. But such tools are useless unless paired with the will to act.

The Swat River will continue to flow, indifferent to the tears it has caused. Tourists will return again, drawn by its beauty, unaware of the history that runs beneath its surface. If we do nothing now, another group of innocents will someday meet the same fate, and we will again be spectators-mute, late, and full of excuses.

Let us not deceive ourselves with poetic fatalism. Let us not cover up our failures with hollow prayers and staged sympathies. The people who died in Swat were not statistics. They were lives-full of love, stories, and dreams-snatched away not just by water, but by neglect.

And if we cannot change after this, then perhaps the real flood is not in our rivers-but in our hearts, drowning our sense of duty, compassion, and humanity.