



Regulatory harmonization, IMO compliance critical to unlock maritime potential

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: As Pakistan seeks to align itself with evolving global maritime standards, there is an urgent need for structural modernization, regulatory harmonization, and sustained compliance with International Maritime Organization (IMO) regulations. Achieving this will require cohesive legal reforms, inter-ministerial coordination, and greater private-sector engagement to position the country as a competitive and sustainable maritime nation.

These views were shared during a roundtable titled "Navigating IMO Regulations: Opportunities and Strategies for Pakistan's Shipping Industry," held at the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Islamabad, in observance of World Oceans Day. The session featured speakers, including Cdre (r) Jawad Akhtar, maritime policy advisor, Ministry of Maritime Affairs, Cdre (r) Irfan Taj, maritime strategist and consultant, Ali Tauqueer Sheikh, member, National Climate Change Council, Shahzad Atta, director (legal), Ministry of Maritime Affairs, Khalid Rahman, chairman, IPS, and Ambassador (r) Syed Abrar Hussain, vice chairman, IPS.

Cdre (r) Jawad Akhtar outlined Pakistan's recent maritime achievements and its progress toward aligning with IMO standards, emphasizing the potential to expand maritime trade to over \$100 billion through structural modernization and regulatory reforms. He highlighted the revival plan for the Gadani ship-breaking yard, which generated revenue of \$6 billion last year, down from \$21 billion in 2020-21, as it is not in full compliance with the Hong Kong Convention. Key developments include Pakistan's first unified fishing policy, approval for PNSC to acquire four IMO-compliant ships, accession to the Hong Kong Convention, and legal reforms for key port and shipping ordinances.

Akhtar stressed the need for gradual but sustained IMO compliance and addressed outdated laws, lack of engagement, and data reporting gaps. He called for modernized port procedures and public maritime surveys to restore global confidence, especially ahead of IMO Council elections. He advocated a harmonized approach involving think tanks, inter-ministerial coordination,



updated legal frameworks, and full accession to pending IMO conventions to ensure sustainable maritime growth.

Shahzad Atta endorsed these views and pointed to significant legal ambiguities and institutional disconnects that complicate enforcement and hinder investment in green shipping infrastructure. He emphasized the political and constitutional complexities introduced by the 18th Amendment, noting that the federal government cannot override provincial jurisdiction without proper consultation. He added that international conventions do not address internal divisions of responsibility, complicating their domestication. Atta praised the successful domestication of the Hong Kong Convention without foreign technical assistance but cautioned against underestimating the challenges of future ratifications.

Cdre (r) Irfan Taj emphasized that meeting IMO greenhouse gas targets is not just a climate obligation but vital for Pakistan's maritime competitiveness. Non-compliance, he warned, could lead to dependence on foreign shipping lines and exclusion from global trade routes. He advocated treating PNSC as a commercial entity, revitalizing seafarer development, and modernizing port infrastructure to support green fuels. Taj proposed privatizing port operations, fostering international partner-

ships, and establishing a national carbon credit framework. He also stressed the need for policy continuity, regulatory clarity, and cross-sector coordination to drive a business-led, resilient, and sustainable maritime transition that aligns with global standards.

Ali Tauqueer Sheikh made a strong business case for engaging the private sector in Pakistan's maritime transition. He noted that a climate-smart maritime sector is not only an environmental necessity but also an economic imperative. Citing international examples from Belgium, Norway, India, and Sri Lanka, he advocated for public-private partnerships and digitization as essential for fostering innovation, efficiency, and green investment in the port and shipping sectors. He also emphasized the need for an inclusive and consultative policy framework.

Concluding the roundtable, Khalid Rahman welcomed the diversity of perspectives and the growing momentum for reform in the maritime sector. He stressed that policy consistency and regulatory predictability are crucial for building investor confidence, attracting long-term investment, and sustaining meaningful reform. He also underscored the importance of involving the private sector in policymaking to ensure a smooth and effective maritime transition.

Victim pardons Farooqi before court

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sudheer, a victim in DHA assault case, on Thursday pardoned Karachi businessman, Salman Farooqi before a local court. During proceedings at the South Judicial Magistrate's Court, a case related to the assault of a young man in Karachi's Defence area saw a key development as the victim, Sudheer, appeared before the court and identified the accused involved in the incident.

The victim informed the court that he was unaware of the summons and only appeared after being informed by his lawyer earlier that day. During the hearing, when the court inquired if he was under any form of pressure, Sudheer stated he did not wish to pursue legal action.

"I have forgiven the accused," Sudheer told the court, adding that he had no objections to whatever decision the court may reach. The court recorded his statement and noted that the victim had identified the accused but expressed no desire to proceed further with the case.

MQM flays attack on workers

F.P. Report

KARACHI: In a shocking and tragic event, the Central Committee of MQM Pakistan has denounced the murderous assault on its workers in Liaquatabad, which resulted in the martyrdom of Town Member Adeel Ali and left Joint UC In-charge Mustafa injured. The committee described these vicious attacks as part of sinister plots aimed at destabilizing the city's tranquility. In response, MQM has called for calmness among its members and requested prayers for the recovery of their injured colleagues.

Provincial push for nutrition reforms in Sindh gains momentum

F.P. Report

KARACHI: A significant call for integrated action to tackle malnutrition in Sindh dominated discussions at the Provincial Consultative Seminar on Nutrition, held in Karachi under the joint efforts of the Sindh Human Rights Commission (SHRC) and the NARI Foundation.

The event convened policymakers, law-makers, technical specialists, and civil society representatives to forge a more unified approach to food and nutritional security. Mr. Iqbal Detho, Chairperson of SHRC, highlighted the Commission's expanding role in advocating for the right to food and nutrition as an essential human right. He stressed the critical need for collaboration across sectors, coherent policies, and strong local leadership to integrate nutrition-sensitive initiatives into district-level planning. Additionally, he announced SHRC's pilot project for implementing the Sindh Protection and Promotion of Breastfeeding and Young Child Nutrition Act 2023, commencing in Sukkur.

In his concluding remarks, Rajveer Singh Sodha, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister on Human Rights, fully supported the multi-sectoral, nutrition-focused strategies proposed by various stakeholders. Commending SHRC's integrated rights-based approach, which encompasses nutrition, legal rights, and corporate responsibility, he promised to relay the consultation's main recommendations to the Chief Minister for further policy development and institutional action. "Access to nutrition is a constitutional right. Malnutrition in areas like

Tharparkar requires immediate, focused intervention," he asserted. The technical sessions featured vibrant exchanges among experts from health, education, agriculture, social welfare, women development, and human rights sectors, highlighting systemic obstacles and overlooked opportunities in nutrition programming. Mr. Kashif Siddiqui, a public health authority, pointed out critical deficiencies such as insufficient funding, unclear regulations under the Food Fortification Act 2021, and weak enforcement of legal frameworks.

Participants lauded current initiatives like the Mumtaz Program under Social Protection and government birth registration efforts, while advocating for increased budget allocations, inter-agency collaboration, gender-sensitive nutrition policies, and robust transparency and accountability systems. Dr. Fozia Khan from the Education Department reaffirmed that nutrition is now part of the curriculum and emphasized the need for financial support for its effective implementation. Legislators including Dr. Fouzia Hameed, MPA, and member of the Standing Committee on Health, and Dr. Sham Sundar, MPA and Parliamentary Secretary for Transport & Mass Transit, echoed these concerns. Dr. Fouzia advocated for the creation of nutrition and daycare centers across all government departments, including the Sindh Assembly, to set a standard for institutional backing. Dr. Sham Sundar emphasized the necessity for cross-sectoral accountability and pledged to pursue this within parliamentary structures.

Punjab govt unveils Eid sanitation plan

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Punjab's Minister for Local Government, Zeeshan Rafiq, has said that the province is fully prepared to ensure cleanliness and sanitation during Eid-ul-Azha, with detailed planning already underway.

Addressing the public, he said the sanitation strategy will be shared transparently and implemented rigorously. Under the "Suthra Punjab" initiative,

a vast network of machinery and manpower is now active across cities and villages. Rafiq added that 180 sales points have been set up through the organization of free cattle markets, with the Shahpur Kanjran Model Market serving as a prime example. Punjab chief minister inaugurated the model market, where both sanitation and security arrangements are notably efficient.

To assist citizens in proper disposal of animal

waste, the government plans to distribute around 12 million waste bags. These will be made available at union councils, special camps, and can also be requested through the 1139 helpline. Over the three days of Eid, more than 380,000 tons of animal waste will be managed by approximately 180,000 sanitation workers. Over 36,000 vehicles will be deployed for waste collection, along with 292,000 brooms and handcars.

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This notice also applies to those defaulters who may not have received prior communication due to change of address or other reasons.

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Nisar Ahmed	100025	Peshawar Chowk Yadgar	0276
Mian Abdul Baseer	100062	Peshawar Chowk Yadgar	0276
Hafeez Ullah Paracha	200284	Peshawar Chowk Yadgar	0276
Aqeel Ahmed S/o Danish Gu	100018	Peshawar Chowk Yadgar	0276
Khadim Hussain S/o Tilla	100027	Peshawar Chowk Yadgar	0276
Naeem Gul	100028	Peshawar Chowk Yadgar	0276
Salahud Din.	100004	Peshawar Chowk Yadgar	0276
City Telecom	100001	Peshawar Chowk Yadgar	0276
Tania	200229	Peshawar Chowk Yadgar	0276
Syed	200235	Peshawar Chowk Yadgar	0276
Kh. Imtiaz Ahmed Sethi	100009	Peshawar Chowk Yadgar	0276
Nasrun Minullah	200267	Peshawar Chowk Yadgar	0276
Al-Mushtaq And Co.	200237	Peshawar Chowk Yadgar	0276
Najeeb Ur Rehman	100028	Peshawar Cantt	0277
Kamal Ud Din	400084	Peshawar Cantt	0277
Mussarat Khalid	400103	Peshawar Cantt	0277
Khawaja Tanveer Iqbal	100057	Peshawar Cantt	0277
Farzana Rehman	500139	Peshawar Cantt	0277
Haji Ghulam Ahmad Bilour	500135	Peshawar Cantt	0277
Sohail Ahmad	74	Peshawar Khyber Bazar	0278
Sohail Ahmad	74	Peshawar Khyber Bazar	0278
Golden Printing Press	42	Peshawar Khyber Bazar	0278
Aamir Haroon Qureshi	4	Peshawar Khyber Bazar	0278
Raza Muhammad Khan	7	Peshawar Khyber Bazar	0278
Naveed Ahmad	73	Peshawar Khyber Bazar	0278
Amir Gul	77	Peshawar Khyber Bazar	0278
Wasif Ullah	100006	Sunehari Masjid Road Peshawar Cantt	0862
M/s Rehman Traders	100037	Sunehari Masjid Road Peshawar Cantt	0862
Kulsoom	100030	Sunehari Masjid Road Peshawar Cantt	0862
Zahid Hussain Rathore	100025	Sunehari Masjid Road Peshawar Cantt	0862
Khalidullah Mr.	100058	Sunehari Masjid Road Peshawar Cantt	0862
Hakeem Muhd Aslam & Muhd	100044	Sunehari Masjid Road Peshawar Cantt	0862
Nasreen.	100034	Sunehari Masjid Road Peshawar Cantt	0862
Faridoon Khan	300518	Peshawar University Town	0957
Sher Akbar S/o Fazal Akba	300462	Peshawar University Town	0957
Mohammad Arif	200394	Peshawar University Town	0957
Jehan Zeb Khan & Shabnam	200384	Peshawar University Town	0957
Farooq Khan S/o Tarab Kha	300506	Peshawar University Town	0957
Nagina Rehman	100368	Peshawar University Town	0957
Salma Khalid W/o Khalid K	200407	Peshawar University Town	0957
Sa. a Gul Shireen	500225	Peshawar University Town	0957
Aliya Hissam D/o Hissam U	300488	Peshawar University Town	0957
Jalil Ur Rehman	200425	Peshawar University Town	0957
Anwar Rehman	400217	Peshawar University Town	0957
Zahur-ul-haq.	100365	Peshawar University Town	0957
Mir Wais Khan.	200424	Peshawar University Town	0957
Aftab Ahmad Butt	300524	Peshawar University Town	0957
Suhail Ahmad S/o Faridul	100354	Peshawar University Town	0957
Manzoor Ahmad	100361	Peshawar University Town	0957
Iftikhar Ahmed	300508	Peshawar University Town	0957
Faisal Sarwar Abbasi	300476	Peshawar University Town	0957
Assad Ullah Khan Lodhi	200436	Peshawar University Town	0957
Anjum Afshan.	200403	Peshawar University Town	0957
Humaira Arbab & Farah Ara	200431	Peshawar University Town	0957
Humayun Khan Khalil	300510	Peshawar University Town	0957
Kaïmullah	200392	Peshawar University Town	0957
Kashif Ullah	200447	Peshawar University Town	0957
Saima Andaleeb	200429	Peshawar University Town	0957
Haider Hayat Khan	100030	Peshawar Char Sadda Road	1123
Syed Zia Ur Rahman	100039	Peshawar Char Sadda Road	1123

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Seema Aman	100059	Peshawar Char Sadda Road	1123
Wajiha Anwar	412	Hayatabad Peshawar	1448
Khurram Ayaz	100348	Hayatabad Peshawar	1448
Shaukat Ali Lodhi	200028	Hayatabad Peshawar	1448
Lal Zaman	100014	Hayatabad Peshawar	1448
Sher Bahadur S/o Zarwar K	100067	Hayatabad Peshawar	1448
Ahmad Hussain & Roedar Be	100019	Hayatabad Peshawar	1448
Abdul Samad & Anisa Masud	100058	Hayatabad Peshawar	1448
Maryam Babar	300259	Hayatabad Peshawar	1448
Urme Laila	100056	Hayatabad Peshawar	1448
Nauman Khan	100347	Hayatabad Peshawar	1448
Momina Shah	100304	Hayatabad Peshawar	1448
Muhammad Ayaz & Haneefa A	100336	Hayatabad Peshawar	1448
Muhammad Iqbal Muqeem	100367	Hayatabad Peshawar	1448
Sana Ejaz	200024	Hayatabad Peshawar	1448
Jan Muhammad	100045	Hayatabad Peshawar	1448
Muhammad Ishaq	100024	Hayatabad Peshawar	1448
Qazi Muhammad Anwar	409	Hayatabad Peshawar	1448
Ali Abdullah Rizvi	200022	Hayatabad Peshawar	1448
Ambaree Gul W/o Muhammad	100062	Hayatabad Peshawar	1448
Shamim Nazli	100355	Hayatabad Peshawar	1448
Shahzadi Rehman	100339	Hayatabad Peshawar	1448
Mercy Pharmaceuticals.	232	Hayatabad Peshawar	1448
Muhammad Haris Gul	100006	University Road Peshawar - 10148	8052
Adnan Ali Khan	76	University Road Peshawar - 10148	8052
Makhtoom Rahman	100030	University Road Peshawar - 10148	8052
Saima Mir Kamran	70	University Road Peshawar - 10148	8052
Syed Zain Ul Abidin	96	University Road Peshawar - 10148	8052
Rizwan Qureshi	71	University Road Peshawar - 10148	8052
Industrial Printers	75	University Road Peshawar - 10148	8052
Shehla Iftikhar	61	University Road Peshawar - 10148	8052
Kamran Hussain	73	University Road Peshawar - 10148	8052
Aamir Samad	152	Fakhar-e-alam Road- 10145	8054
Muhammad Kamran Khan	130	Fakhar-e-alam Road- 10145	8054
Saad Alam	252	Fakhar-e-alam Road- 10145	8054
Sudais Printers	114	Fakhar-e-alam Road- 10145	8054
Locker Account	40	Fakhar-e-alam Road- 10145	8054
Locker Account	32	Fakhar-e-alam Road- 10145	8054
Locker Account	10	Fakhar-e-alam Road- 10145	8054
Locker Account	420	Fakhar-e-alam Road- 10145	8054
Farah Naz	120	Fakhar-e-alam Road- 10145	8054
Zeeshan Khan Afridi	2	Fakhar-e-alam Road- 10145	8054
Muhammad Salman	66	Fakhar-e-alam Road- 10145	8054
Syed Naeem Rahat Ali	389	Fakhar-e-alam Road- 10145	8054
Faheem Ullah Khan	138	Fakhar-e-alam Road- 10145	8054
Sadia Ali	116	Fakhar-e-alam Road- 10145	8054
Syed Nizar Shah	251	Fakhar-e-alam Road- 10145	8054
Mir Alam Khan	135	Fakhar-e-alam Road- 10145	8054

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PESHAWAR: Newly appointed Director General Information Ansar Khilji in a group photo with a delegation of journalists.

Arrangements finalized for Eid cleanliness drive

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In preparation for Eid ul Adha, the Local Government, Elections and Rural Development Department (LGE&RDD) has finalized a comprehensive and well-coordinated cleanliness and waste management plan to ensure a hygienic and smooth festive period across the province. The initiative aims to facilitate the public, maintain sanitation, and respond efficiently to any cleanliness-related issues during the holidays.

As part of the plan, special emphasis is being placed on cleanliness of Eidgahs, public spaces, and areas designated for animal slaughter. Eidgahs across the province will be thoroughly cleaned and swept ahead of prayer timings. Moreover, biodegrad-

able bags are being distributed among residents to encourage responsible waste disposal and reduce environmental impact.

A major feature of this year's campaign is the launch of a province-wide public awareness drive through print and electronic media. These campaigns aim to educate citizens on the importance of cleanliness and proper waste management, especially during religious festivities when waste generation spikes.

To effectively manage the anticipated increase in waste, a detailed collection and disposal schedule has been drawn up. Temporary waste collection points will be set up in densely populated areas, while transfer stations will assist in the swift movement of waste to designated dumping sites. Specialized sanitation teams will be deployed to clean roads, public spaces, and animal slaughter points throughout the Eid period.

In a proactive step to ensure real-time monitoring and prompt response to complaints, the Secretary LGE&RDD has designated the IT Cell at the Civil Secretariat, Peshawar, as the central Control Room for all civic coordination. The Control Room will function around the clock during Eid days, acting as the nerve center for communication between various civic agencies, handling public complaints, and overseeing field operations. Citizens can register their concerns at Phone No. 091-9214067 or Cell No. 0346-5607528.

All relevant formations have been instructed to nominate duty officers to be stationed at the Control Room on a 24-hour roster during Eid. These officers will ensure efficient coordination and swift resolution of any issues reported by the public.

Additional measures include the establishment of local complaint centers, deployment of tracking systems to monitor sanitation workers' performance, and availability of emergency services to handle any unforeseen situation. Disinfection efforts such as road sweeping and cleaning of public spaces will continue throughout the holiday to ensure a healthy environment.

Authorities have also urged the public to cooperate by following issued guidelines for waste disposal, using designated dumping points, and refraining from throwing waste in drains, open areas, or forests.

PCP holds 3-day CDP workshop for persons with disabilities



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A 3-day career development training program was successfully conducted here Thursday at the Paraplegic Center Peshawar (PCP) for persons with disabilities. Organized in collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the program engaged 15 participants from different parts of KP.

The training was led by

Ms. Sarah Naimat (Clinical Psychologist, PCP), Engr Salman Khan (In-charge Media Cell, PCP) and Mr. Muhammad Iqbal (Disability Inclusion Advisor, ICRC). It was aimed to equip persons with disabilities with essential skills, awareness, and confidence to enable them to explore employment opportunities across various sectors.

Participants received practical training in both technical and soft skills, including who am i?, game plan (to know yourself), networking, CV Resume, effective use of social media & interviewing. They were also guided in setting realistic goals, exploring diverse professional pathways and developing personalized growth plans.

Dr. Syed Muhammad Ilyas, CEO PCP, while addressing the closing ceremony, stated that PCP is

not only a trusted institution for the medical, physical and psychological rehabilitation of persons with disabilities but is also committed to their economic and social empowerment and reintegration into society.

He added that this training is a testament to that vision, substantiated by the fact that Engr Salman Khan, once a rehabilitated graduate of the center, now serves as a trainer in the same program. Similarly, another graduate of the center, Ihsan Danish, is now a Paralympian representing Pakistan globally and earning accolades that bring pride to the nation.

Aziz Ahmad, Program Manager PRP at ICRC, appreciated the initiative and thanked the management of the center and the participants for making it a success event. This training marks an important milestone toward empowering persons with disabilities and providing them inclusivity and equal opportunities in society.

Over 35mln Pakistani children online without supervision

PESHAWAR (APP): With an estimated 35 million children under the age of 18 in Pakistan accessing the internet, many without adequate guidance or supervision, concerns are mounting over their vulnerability to online exploitation, cyber bullying, and identity theft.

This alarming statistic took center stage at a two-day event here aimed at promoting digital safety and empowering children in the online space.

Experts warned that without digital literacy and proper parental guidance, children remain highly susceptible to harmful content and exploitation.

The event, titled "Empowering Every Child Online - Safety, Access, and Expression", was held at the Business Incubation Centre (BIC), and brought together government officials, child protection experts, academia, and community representatives.

It was jointly organized by the Department of Social Welfare (Merged



Districts), UNICEF, Telenor, and the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA).

Minister for Social Welfare, Special Education, Zakat & Land Ushr, and Women Empowerment Syed Qasim Ali Shah served as the chief guest.

In his remarks, the minister highlighted the growing challenge of protecting youth in the digital world, pointing to rising concerns over mental health, online harassment, and digital exploitation.

"With the growing use of digital platforms, safeguarding our children and youth from online threats has become a national challenge," he said. "Through this partnership, we are working to educate not only children but also parents and teachers about online risks and reporting mechanisms."

Other notable attendees included Arshad Qayum Berqi, Director of Social Welfare, Merged Districts, Obaid Ur Rahman, Deputy Director; UNICEF representatives Sohail Ahmad and Sumbal Gilani, Amjid Mehmood, Program Manager for Child Protection, Kainat Farooqi, Project Coordinator PMU, and Dr Shakeel, Director BIC-UOP, alongside various stakeholders from government departments, UN agencies, academia, and local communities.

Field experiences were shared regarding the widespread use of platforms like TikTok, Facebook, and WhatsApp, and their impact on youth behavior.

The event focused on practical tools to enhance online safety, such as using parental controls, recognizing harmful digital behavior, and understanding privacy protections.

Organizers stressed the importance of awareness among parents and caregivers to mitigate these risks.

The initiative was part of a broader effort to roll out digital protection awareness programs across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, aiming to create safer online environments for children throughout the province.

Fourth Phase of 'Drug-Free Peshawar' drive in second week of June

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The fourth phase of the "Drug-Free Peshawar" campaign is set to launch in the second week of June. Under this initiative, the remaining drug-addicted individuals found on the streets of Peshawar will be taken into custody and transferred to rehabilitation centers for treatment.

For the first time, transgender individuals will also be included in the treatment program. Separate rehabilitation centers have been established for children, women, men, and transgender individuals to ensure focused and effective recovery services.

Those who relapsed after receiving treatment during the third phase will also be provided free treatment again. As per the agreement, rehabilitation centers were bound to offer free treatment for up to four months to such individuals.

To facilitate this phase, all Station House Officers (SHOs) in Peshawar have been assigned the responsibility of identifying and



transferring drug-addicted individuals in their respective areas to the Social Welfare Department. A control room has been established at the Deputy Commissioner's Office in Peshawar for the monitoring and coordination of the campaign.

A high-level meeting chaired by Commissioner Peshawar Division, Riaz Khan Mehsud, was held to finalize preparations. The meeting was attended by SSP Operations Peshawar Masood Bangash, Deputy Commissioner Rao Hashim Azeem, Director Excise Imad Ahmed, Assistant Commissioner Peshawar City Daud Salimi, District Officer Social Welfare Noor Muhammad Mehsud, and administrators of rehabilitation centers, among others.

The participants reviewed the outcomes of the previous three phases and devised a comprehensive strategy for the upcoming one.

Under the first three

phases - part of what is considered the world's largest rehabilitation campaign of its kind - over 3,800 drug-addicted individuals, including women and children, were successfully treated. The initiative has received widespread national and international acclaim.

Officials expressed optimism that the fourth phase will lead to the complete removal of drug addiction from the provincial capital, making Peshawar the first drug-free city in Pakistan.

KMU hosts provincial task force meeting on higher education reforms



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In accordance with the directives of Ali Amin Gandapur, Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Khyber Medical University (KMU) Peshawar convened a high-level meeting of the Provincial Task Force on Higher Education Reforms.

The initiative, supervised by the Minister for Higher Education, Mr. Meena Khan Afridi and Secretary HED Mr. Kamran Afridi is focused on driving transformative changes within the province's higher education sector.

The primary agenda of the meeting was to review the comprehensive report prepared by the Task Force, which consolidates feedback and suggestions from academic experts, university leaders, and relevant stakeholders.

The report aims to improve quality assurance, governance mechanisms, and financial sustainability across public sector universities in the province.

The meeting was attended by Mr. Ghulam Saeed, Secretary of the Higher Education Department (HED), vice chancellors from major public sector universities, distinguished educationists, and senior government officials.

Participants engaged in rigorous discussions around key challenges facing the higher education sector, including financial constraints, administrative bottlenecks, declining academic standards, governance issues, and the need for greater institutional autonomy.

In his address, Secretary HED Mr. Ghulam Saeed commended the efforts of the Task Force, especially Convener Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Haq, along with members Prof. Dr. Usman Ghani, Prof. Jamil, Dr. Ureed, Prof. Gul, Mr. Imran Marwat, and others. He emphasized that uplifting the quality of higher education remains a top priority of the provincial government.

He also acknowledged the serious structural and fiscal difficulties facing public universities and assured that robust short-, medium-, and long-term strategies are being developed, with final recommendations to be submitted shortly to the provincial leadership.

The participants appreciated the clarity and practicality of the report, noting its relevance to the province's unique socio-economic realities and security environment. They expressed strong support for the urgent implementation of evidence-based reforms.

Experts applauded the government's political commitment to this cause and expressed confidence that the proposed changes would lead to meaningful improvements in institutional performance, academic excellence, and broader societal development.

The meeting concluded with a joint commitment from all stakeholders to work collaboratively across universities, the Higher Education Department, and associated institutions—to ensure timely and effective execution of the recommended reforms.

Alkhidmat Foundation KP North announces new cabinet

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Alkhidmat Foundation Khyber Pakhtunkhwa North Thursday announced new cabinet. After consultations with the Board of Management, the Foundation's president, Fazal Mahmood, confirmed the appointments.

Dr. Khalid Farooq, former president Alkhidmat Foundation Swat, has been appointed the General Secretary of Alkhidmat Foundation Northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Professor Dr. Abdul Malik, a renowned cardiologist and former provincial vice president AKF KP, has been appointed as one of the vice presidents. Joining him as vice presidents are Muhammad Zada from Swat, Sohail Ahmed Khattak from Malakand, and Mir Makhzanuddin, former Tehsil Nazim of Dir Upper.

The new cabinet aims to strengthen the Foundation's work in Northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa through dedicated teamwork and community service.

HED hosts crucial consultation

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Higher Education Department (HED) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) today convened a pivotal stakeholder consultation on the proposed KP Higher Education Strategic Framework and Action Plan. The session, held under the esteemed chairmanship of the Secretary HED KP, brought together Vice Chancellors from all public sector universities across KP, alongside senior faculty and management representatives from various higher education institutions.

The primary objective of the consultation was to gather valuable insights and feedback on the comprehensive strategic framework and action plan designed to elevate the quality of higher education in KP and align it with international standards.

Participants lauded the diligent efforts of the task force committee responsible for developing the framework.

They engaged in robust discussions, offering constructive input and recommendations aimed at fostering academic excellence, enhancing research capabilities, and improving overall

institutional effectiveness within KP's higher education landscape.

Among the distinguished attendees was Professor Dr. Muhammad Tahir Khalily,

Vice Chancellor of Khushal Khan Khattak University (KKKU), who actively participated in the deliberations.

Professor Khalily presented valuable perspectives on

advancing the quality of higher education and reiterated KKKU's unwavering commitment to continuous improvement and betterment of the university.

Attention: Locker Holders (Defaulters)

All locker holders of MCB Bank Limited, Kohat Cantt and Hangu Road Kohat branches, who have been previously issued reminders regarding overdue locker rent payments and have not cleared their dues despite the lapse of the notice period, are hereby informed through this public notice to settle their outstanding dues within **thirty (30) days** from the date of this publication.

This notice also applies to those defaulters who may not have received prior communication due to change of address or other reasons.

Failure to comply within the given timeframe will result in the **forcible opening of lockers in accordance with applicable laws**, in the presence of an authorized committee. Any contents recovered will be securely held by **MCB Bank Limited**, and the Bank reserves the right to recover all outstanding amounts through legal proceedings.

Locker Holder Name	Locker Number	Branch Name	Branch Code
Shah Nawaz Khan	100338	Kohat Cantt.	1103
Kashif Ibrar	100327	Kohat Cantt.	1103
Rawish Hina D/o S.Mujtaba	100332	Kohat Cantt.	1103
Sana Ullah Jan	100302	Kohat Cantt.	1103
Talha Mansoor Paracha	7	Hangu Road Kohat	8030
Maqsood Ahmed	14	Hangu Road Kohat	8030

By order of the Management
MCB Bank Limited
Kohat Cantt and Hangu Road
Kohat Branch





In brief

RPO calls for interfaith harmony F.P. Report

ATTOCK: Regional Police Officer (RPO) Rawalpindi Babar Sarfaraz while reviewing the overall security measures in Attock has stressed upon the members peace committees to promote harmony, brotherhood for the maintenance of law and order situation in the district. The visiting RPO during his meeting with the all stakeholders has ensure their coordination for the best public interest. The meeting was also attended by district police officer Attock Dr Sardar Ghyas Gul Khan along with the representatives of different walks of life including religious, clerics, community as well as other people of civil society. Speaking on the occasion, RPO said that promotion of peace and instability are the joint responsibility of police and entire society while the effective role of members peace committees is most significant. The district police officer while briefing the session has said that the police is intact with the peace committees to ensure inter faith harmony and unity at district level, spokesmen of Attock police added. Meanwhile, in line with other parts of the country World Environment Day was also observed in the interprovincial bordering district Attock on Thursday to eradicate environmental pollution in the air. The impressive ceremony led by Additional Deputy Commissioner General Attock Aneel Saeed was held in district council Attock which was also participated by Deputy Director Environment Attock Dr Rabia Nosheen, District Education Officer elementary Syed Taqi Abbas, district population officer Attock Zafar Iqbal Rehmani and other relevant officers of the provincial departments. While addressing the session the speakers stressed upon the responsibility of eradication of environmental pollution rest with the developed countries but the consequences and after effects are being faced by the under developed countries and Pakistan is also worst effected country.

Pakistani scientist presents research F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: Dr. Adnan Arshad, a young climate science scientist from Toba Tek Singh, currently employed as International Research Fellow at Lanzhou University in China, presented his groundbreaking research work on climate-smart rangeland management at the International Rangelands Congress in Adelaide, Australia. A press release issued in this regard stated that the research focuses on nature-based solutions to restore degraded rangelands in China and Pakistan, emphasizing their critical role in biodiversity, soil ecology, and supporting millions dependent on livestock. Dr Arshad highlighted the potential of legume species cultivation to enhance native grasslands, boost soil organic carbon (SOC), and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. "Sustainable rangeland management ensures high agricultural productivity while preventing soil erosion," he stated. His approach integrates traditional knowledge with modern science, offering scalable solutions for arid and semi-arid regions. The congress, attended by global experts, underscored the urgency of restoring degraded lands to combat climate change. Dr. Arshad's work aligns with global sustainability goals, positioning rangelands as vital carbon sinks and economic assets.

249th American Independence Day celebrated



Saqib Mushtaq

LODHAN: The unrelenting freedom struggle of American people ended on 4th July 1776. If we delve deep into history, it will become evident that American were first to challenge and win the British colonial war, and American independence enshrined the ideals of liberty, equality, and sovereignty.

The commitment of American people to the ideology of democracy, sovereignty, and freedom is real-

ly remarkable, and it goes without saying that American played key role in addressing global challenges and paved the way for many developing countries like Pakistan in avenues like economic growth, health, education and democracy through the US agency for international development (US AID).

I have had the honour of participating in 2023 IVLP American sponsored programme. I have seen and studied the American people in close quarters. The

majority of American are philanthropists and are very eager to help the suffering humanity.

The US, since its independence, struggled to promote global peace, freedom, and democracy and protection of human rights around the globe. The US policy to defy aggression globally and helping the oppressed nation is a commitment of American people to the world in promoting democracy, human rights to secure stable and prosperous world.

Wali of Swat anniversary celebrated

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: Swat Relief Initiative (SRI) organized the prestigious Wali of Swat Award ceremony at the historic Wadudia Hall in Saidu Sharif, celebrating the academic achievements of top-performing students from government schools in Swat for the session 2024.

The event was held in connection with the anniversary of the Wali of Swat, honoring his legacy of peace, education, and development in the region.

The ceremony was graced by Zebunisa Arshad Jilani, the granddaughter of the late Wali of Swat and Chairperson of SRI, along with Sheheryar Amir Zeb, a prominent member of the Wali family. Together, they distributed awards among the highest-achieving students, recognizing their

hard work and dedication.

A large number of students, teachers, parents, and community members attended the ceremony, turning it into a vibrant celebration of education and cultural heritage. The Wali of Swat Award recognizes academic excellence and aims to inspire youth by highlighting the value of education—a vision deeply rooted in the legacy of the former princely state of Swat.

Speaking at the occasion, Zebunisa Arshad Jilani emphasized the importance of continuing the legacy of the Wali of Swat in promoting education, particularly for the youth in rural and underserved areas. She stated that the Wali's era was a golden period for education in Swat, marked by the establishment of schools, colleges, and a commit-

ment to modern learning for both boys and girls.

Sheheryar Amir Zeb, in his address, reflected on the visionary leadership of the Wali of Swat, who prioritized peace, education, and development. He encouraged students to take pride in their heritage and contribute to the progress of the region through knowledge and service. Renowned Pashto poet Aabseen Yousafzai also participated in the event and paid tribute to the Wali's era. He said:

The era of the Wali Sahib was one of peace, education, and justice, where schools and hospitals had reached every village. We must learn from the shining history of that time. The event concluded with cultural performances by students, followed by refreshments for the guests.

Rescue conducts exercises in Khyber

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Combine emergency tackling exercises were carried out here in Sor Kamar hills of Jamrud district Khyber last day. Organized by the Rescue 1122, officials of departments of forest, C&W, irrigation and the organizer participated in the day long rescue and relief drills.

Emergency Officer Muhammad Nauman Khan thoroughly briefed the participants' of the aim and purpose of the initiative and highlighted the importance of joint efforts of the concerned department to



provide relief in time of natural disaster. He pointed out how available resources can be utilized in the best interest of the effectees with collective efforts of the concerned departments.

The participants' were apprised of the modern

techniques of rescue and relief in dealing incidents like landsliding, building collapse and medical aid etc. In-charge Emergency Officer Muhammad Imtiaz Khan also examined the exercises and expressed professional abilities of the officials.

TMA Gadezai plans for Eid

F.P. Report

BUNER: Gadezai Tehsil Municipal Officer (TMO) Anwar Shamim Khan on Thursday distributed biodegradable bags at Pacha Bazaar and General Bus Stand and sent a message to the people to collect the waste on Eid-ul-Adha in these bags.

He asked people to keep the bags at a specific collection point outside the village so that the sanitation staff can pick it up in vehicles and safely dump it at a pre-prepared dumping site. He spread awareness, saying, protection of the environment from pollution and keep the environment and air clean and healthy, is the common responsibility of everyone.

TMO Anwar Shamim Khan told the media that besides an awareness campaign has been launched

among the people and biodegradable bags handed over to villages chairmen for distribution among villagers and collection points and dumping sites have been ensured at all places and the holidays of the sanitation staff have been canceled and the sanitation staff will be busy disposing of the sacrificial waste for three days of Eid. He appealed to the people to cooperate with the TMA sanitation staff.

He appealed to the people of remote and mountainous areas to help by digging a pit outside the villages and throwing the sacrificial waste dispose of safely and do not leave it open under the sky and avoid throwing it into rivers and canals so that the environment and air do not become polluted and do not cause harm to human health and other living beings, and so that our

Sunnah act of sacrifice does not become a threat to our lives and put us accountable on domes day, he concluded.

Several tenders granted in open cemras: Tehsil Municipal Administration, Daggar, after long time, opened the formal tender for various development projects worth Rs 65.8 million on Wednesday. The media cameras the contractors were present at the TMA Office, Daggar during opening ceremony. The TOI announced the names of the successful contractors who paid the lowest rates. Tehsil Nazim Haji Rozi Khan and TMO Zahoor Ahmed, TOI Umar Asad opened the sealed envelopes and loudly called out the names of the tender participants and the rates given. The officials kept taking notes on paper while the media also recorded the action through the camera.

Land sliding blocks KKH at Diamer F.P. Report

DIAMER: A sudden flash flood caused by heavy rainfall in Thor Myar, Diamer district, has blocked the Karakoram Highway (KKH), a vital international route connecting Pakistan and China. The highway has been temporarily closed to all types of traffic, causing significant disruptions to trade and travel.

Eyewitnesses reported that the flash flood came suddenly from the Myar Nullah, bringing with it a massive amount of mud, rocks, and water that made the road impassable. Long queues of vehicles have formed in the area, and passengers are facing severe difficulties.

District administration, Frontier Works Organization (FWO), and other relevant authorities have reached the site and are working to clear and restore the road. According to officials, if the weather remains favorable, the road is expected to be reopened to traffic within a few hours.

Assistant Commissioner Chilas stated that the administration is making every effort to restore traffic as soon as possible. He urged the public to avoid unnecessary travel and follow government instructions.

Addressing the media in Manogi village during a visit to the abandoned site of the channel, Sirajul Haq said the three-year closure of the 76-kilometre-long irrigation channel had devastated agriculture across Balambat tehsil. "The once fertile lands now lie barren. Springs and wells have dried up, and people are being forced to purchase water through tankers," he said.

A delegation of the JI including its provincial secretary information Engineer Yaqub ur Rehman, district general secretary Shuiab Ahmad, deputy general secretary Miraj Khan, district secretary information Malik

Armed men gang raped woman F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: In a deeply disturbing and tragic incident near Hafizabad, three armed men allegedly gang-raped a woman in front of her husband in the village of Mangat Uncha. The assailants reportedly forced the couple to perform sexual acts at gunpoint while one of the suspects filmed the ordeal. The incident has sparked public outrage after the video was leaked on social media.

According to initial reports, the couple Ali Raza, a resident of Shahdara Town, Lahore, and his wife Gulnaz Shehzadi was returning from visiting Ali's sister in Nowsheera Virkan when they stopped near Madina Sugar Mills for a short break. While Gulnaz stepped aside to relieve herself, they were ambushed by seven armed men. The attackers included Ikram son of Riyasat Ali, Laeeq son of Maqsood, and Khawar son of Fayaz, all residents of Mangat Uncha, along with four unidentified accomplices.

The victims were taken at gunpoint to a deserted area behind the Government High School in Mangat Uncha, where the woman was reportedly raped by three men one after the other. The perpetrators also stripped both husband and wife, beat them, and forced them to perform explicit acts in front of a camera. A suspect named Chand was reportedly responsible for filming the entire incident.

An FIR has now been registered against eight suspects, but no arrests have been made so far. Police have reportedly cordoned off the entire village in a bid to apprehend the culprits. The incident has caused widespread grief and anger among the citizens, who are demanding immediate justice. Civil society and local residents have appealed to the Punjab IG and the Chief Minister to ensure that all involved, including negligent police officials, are held accountable and that the perpetrators are given exemplary punishment to deter such heinous crimes in the future.

Alleged murderer in double killing escaped from police custody: In a tragic and disturbing development in the Kassoki double murder case, the main suspect, Inzimam, reportedly escaped police custody and died by suicide by jumping into a canal.

The case first came to light when the bodies of two young children were found concealed inside a metal trunk in a house located in the Kassoki area of Hafizabad. Initial investigations revealed that the children had been brutally murdered.

Closure of Balambat Irrigation Channel

JI threatens street agitation



Haleem Asad

LOWER DIR: Former Jamaat-e-Islami chief and ex-Senator Sirajul Haq has warned the provincial government to immediately restore the Balambat Irrigation Channel after Eid ul Adha, or else the party will mobilize affected farmers and their families for protest demonstrations.

Addressing the media in Manogi village during a visit to the abandoned site of the channel, Sirajul Haq said the three-year closure of the 76-kilometre-long irrigation channel had devastated agriculture across Balambat tehsil. "The once fertile lands now lie barren. Springs and wells have dried up, and people are being forced to purchase water through tankers," he said.

He recalled that the Balambat Irrigation Project was launched during the MMA government with a budget of Rs. 757.5 million. "It was a multipurpose development scheme that boosted crops and orchards, bringing prosperity to the region. But since 2022, the project has been halted

Sher Bahadar, former tehsil nazim Imran ud Din advocate, former JI candidate for provincial assembly Shad Nawaz Khan and other party workers accompanied Mr Haq. The Balambat Irrigation Channel project was launched and built by the MMA led provincial government when Siraj ul Haq was senior minister and also served as provincial minister for finance.

Sirajul Haq blamed the PTI-led government for what he called criminal negligence. "This is not just mismanagement; it's an insult to the people. The channel is in ruins, and it reflects the incompetence of those in power," he deplored.

He recalled that the Balambat Irrigation Project was launched during the MMA government with a budget of Rs. 757.5 million. "It was a multipurpose development scheme that boosted crops and orchards, bringing prosperity to the region. But since 2022, the project has been halted

Sirajul Haq demanded urgent restoration of the Balambat canal and resumption of water flow. "If the government fails to act right after Eid ul Adha, Jamaat-e-Islami will lead the local communities in street protests," he warned.

under the pretext of 'renovation and expansion,' and nothing has been done since," he stated.

Sirajul Haq said it was shameful that not a single mega development project had been completed in Lower Dir during the PTI government. "Even existing schemes have been abandoned. The elected representatives only expanded their bank balances — the people got nothing."

He also cited the example of the Japanese bridge over the Panjkora River in Khal, which was destroyed in floods. "In the absence of government support, the public had to collect millions in donations for its reconstruction. This is the reality of governance today," he said.

Sirajul Haq demanded urgent restoration of the Balambat canal and resumption of water flow. "If the government fails to act right after Eid ul Adha, Jamaat-e-Islami will lead the local communities in street protests," he warned.

Blacktop road inaugurated at KKKU campus

F.P. Report

KARAK: Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak (KKKUK) celebrated a significant milestone in its ongoing campus development with the official inauguration of a newly constructed blacktop road within its main campus. The ribbon-cutting ceremony was performed by the esteemed Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Tahir Khalily.

The inauguration ceremony was graced by the presence of key university officials, including Registrar Dr. Ghani Ur Rehman, Director Planning & Development Muhammad Rashad, Director Works Faisal

Nawab, Treasurer Hafiz Muhammad Ismail, Director Administration Dr. Rafi Ullah, along with other dedicated university employees.

In his inaugural address, Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Tahir Khalily reiterated his unwavering commitment to the holistic development of the university's infrastructure. He emphasized the importance of providing modern and well-maintained facilities for the benefit of students, faculty, and staff. The Vice Chancellor also took the opportunity to issue directives for the prompt initiation of other planned developmental projects and the efficient progress of existing works.

Prof. Dr. Khalily expressed his sincere appreciation and gratitude to all stakeholders involved in the successful completion of the new road, acknowledging their hard work and dedication in bringing this crucial project to fruition. The new blacktop road is expected to significantly improve accessibility and convenience within the main campus, enhancing the overall campus experience for everyone.

The inauguration of this road underscores KKKUK's continuous efforts to create a conducive and modern learning environment, laying the groundwork for further advancements in its facilities and services.

IGP inaugurates police station new building

Fazal Haq

MARDAN: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Zulfiqar Hameed, paid a special visit to Mardan District, where he inaugurated the newly constructed building of Rustam Police Station, established in 1836.

During the inauguration ceremony, IGP highlighted the historical significance of the police station, saying, "Rustam Police Station is a very important police station established during the Sikh era and remained important during the British era as well, which can be gauged from the historical impressions written

by the British officers during their visit to the police station. Even in the present era, this police station has considerable importance due to its proximity to the mountainous area of Buner district."

The IGP inspected the newly constructed building of Rustam Police Station, which included the SHO office, ladies desk & restroom, Muharrar office, kot, lockup and barracks. He emphasized the importance of people-friendly policing and directed the police to convert police stations into citizen-centric service centers.

During the inspection of SHO office, ladies desk, and restroom, he appreciat-

ed the performance of women police officers. The IGP also presented certificates of appreciation and prizes to high-performing police officers and personnel in the Mardan region. He stressed that public service with dedication and honesty is the real identity of the police.

IGP Hameed later met with members of the Dispute Resolution Council (DRC) Rustam and Katling, appreciating their valuable services in promoting social peace and brotherhood. He acknowledged the significant role of DRCs in resolving disputes amicably and reducing pressure on the judicial system.

Pharmacy Union blames operation of medical store as illegal

Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: The Qazi Medical Complex Peshawar Pharmacy Union has strongly objected to the decision of extending the contract period for the pharmacy at Qazi Medical Complex, terming it unlawful and a violation of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Rules (KPRA).

According to them, the pharmacy contract was initially awarded in 2019 for a period ending in 2021. Despite the contract's expiration, the former contractor contin-

ues to operate the pharmacy from a container in the hospital's lawn, which the union considers illegal.

The union disputes the extension of the contract, claiming it was done without proper authority and goes against the rules. The administration's inaction on this matter is seen as significant, especially since the High Court of Peshawar and the Assistant Commissioner of Nowsheera have ruled that operating a pharmacy from a container within the hospital premises is against the law.

The union demands that the hospital administration should invite fresh tenders for the pharmacy contract after Eid-ul-Azha or implement a "fair-for-all" pharmacy system that would benefit both patients and the hospital. The Qazi Medical Complex Peshawar Pharmacy Union emphasizes that the hospital administration's decision to extend the contract without following due process is unacceptable and demands immediate attention to resolve the issue in a fair and transparent manner.



KYIV: A woman kneels by a victim of a Russian attack on the Sumy region of Ukraine.

Canada, US warn of air quality hazards

OTTAWA (AFP): Canada's wildfires, which have already forced evacuations of more than 26,000 people, continued their stubborn spread, with heavy smoke choking millions of Canadians and Americans and reaching as far away as Europe.

Alerts were issued for parts of Canada and the neighboring United States warning of hazardous air quality. A water tanker air base was consumed by flames in Saskatchewan province, oil production has been disrupted in Alberta, and officials warned of worse to come with more communities threatened each day.

"We have some challenging days ahead of us," Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe told a news conference, adding that the number of evacuees could rise quickly.

Every summer, Canada grapples with forest fires, but an early start to the wildfire season this year and the scale of the blazes -- over two million hectares (494,000 acres) burned -- is worrying. The provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba have been hardest hit. Both declared wildfire emergencies in recent days. "This has been a very difficult time for many Canadians," federal Emergency Management Minister Eleanor Olshewski told reporters in Ottawa. "This wildfire season has started off more quickly, and it's stronger, more intense," she said, adding that the

Canadian military has deployed aircraft to evacuate remote towns in Manitoba and was ready to also assist Saskatchewan and Alberta with fire-fighting. Climate change has increased the impact of extreme weather events in Canada, which is still recovering from the apocalyptic summer of 2023 when 15 million hectares of forests were scorched. There were 208 active fires across Canada. Half of them were listed as out of control, according to the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre.

Many of the affected populations are Indigenous, and some small communities have burned to the ground. Heavy smoke from the fires, meanwhile, has engulfed part of the continent, forcing residents of four Canadian provinces and the US states of Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska and Wisconsin to limit outdoor activities. "Smoke is causing very poor air quality and reduced visibility," Environment Canada said in a statement.

Wildfire smoke is comprised of gaseous pollutants such as carbon monoxide, along with water vapor and particle pollution, which can be particularly hazardous to health. Some of the worst smoke was in Alberta where three major oil sands producers -- Canadian Natural Resources, MEG Energy Corp, and Cenovus Energy -- this week evacuated workers and temporarily shut

down hundreds of thousands of barrels of production per day. Huge plumes of smoke even reached Europe, the European Union's climate monitoring service said.

Due to their very high altitude, they do not pose an immediate health risk, according to the Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service (CAMS), but are likely to result in hazy skies and reddish-orange sunsets. Additional plumes are expected to shade both continents in the coming days. "Central regions of Canada have experienced a very intense few weeks in terms of wildfire emissions," noted Mark Parrington, scientific director at CAMS. Canadian authorities have forecast a more intense fire season than usual in central and western Canada, due in particular to severe or extreme drought. "The significant reduction in snowpack in the spring led to early exposure of soil and vegetation, accelerating surface drying," explained University of Ottawa professor Hossein Bonakdari. "This early exposure acted as a silent amplifier, subtly setting the stage for extreme fires long before the first flame ignited," he said. Elsewhere, extensive forest fires have been raging in Russia's Far Eastern Federal District since early April, particularly east of Lake Baikal, generating carbon emissions of around 35 million tons, Copernicus reported.

Zimbabwe to cull elephants and distribute meat to people

HARARE (AFP): Zimbabwe will cull dozens of elephants and distribute the meat for consumption to ease the ballooning population of the animals, its wildlife authority said. The southern Africa country is home to the second-biggest elephant population in the world after Botswana.

The cull at a vast private game reserve in the south-east would initially target 50 elephants, the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Authority (ZimParks) said in a statement. It did not say how many of the animals would be killed in total or over what period. An aerial survey in 2024 showed the reserve, the Save Valley Conservancy, had 2,550 elephants, more than triple its carrying capacity of 800, ZimParks said. At least 200 have been translocated to other parks over the past five years.

"Elephant meat from the management exercise will be distributed to local communities while ivory will be state property that will be handed over to the ZimParks for safekeeping," it said. Zimbabwe is unable to sell its stockpile of tusks due to a global ban on ivory trading. Announcement came a day after four people were arrested in the capital Harare with more than 230 kilogrammes (500 pounds) of ivory for which they were allegedly seeking a buyer.

In 2024, Zimbabwe cullled 200 elephants as it faced an unprecedented drought that led to food shortages. It was the first major cull since 1988. The move to hunt the elephants for food has drawn sharp criticism, particularly as the animals are a major tourism draw.

CDC expert resigns from Covid vaccines advisory role

WASHINGTON (Reuters): Pediatric infectious disease expert Dr. Lakshmi Panagiotakopoulos of the US CDC resigned as co-leader of a working group that advises outside experts on COVID-19 vaccines and is leaving the agency, two sources familiar with the move told Reuters.

Panagiotakopoulos said in an email to work group colleagues that her decision to step down was based on the belief she is "no longer able to help the most vulnerable members" of the US population. In her role at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's working group of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, she co-led the gathering of information on topics for presentation.

Her resignation comes one week after Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a long-time vaccine skeptic who oversees the CDC, the Food and Drug Administration and the National Institutes of Health, said the COVID vaccine for healthy children and healthy pregnant women had been removed from the CDC's recommended immunization schedule. The move was a departure from the process in which ACIP experts meet and vote on changes to the immunization schedule or recommendations on who should get vaccines before the agency's director made a final call. The committee had not voted on the changes announced by Kennedy and the CDC does not yet have a permanent director. Two days after Kennedy's announcement, the CDC published a vaccine schedule online saying that COVID-19 vaccines remain an option for healthy children aged 6 months to 17 years when parents and doctors agree that it is needed.

It had previously recommended updated COVID vaccines for everyone aged six months and older, following the guidance of the panel of outside experts. Two sources said Panagiotakopoulos did not include a specific reason for her departure. Panagiotakopoulos did not return requests for comment. "Unfortunately for me, this is a personal decision," Panagiotakopoulos wrote in an email to members of the working group that was read to Reuters by a source who received it.

Canada proposes sweeping security, immigration bill

OTTAWA (BBC): The Canadian government has proposed a bill to restrict some asylum claims and give authorities more power to halt the processing of immigration applications. Canada's immigration minister Lena Diab said the Strong Borders Act is meant to curb organized crime and the flow of illegal drugs and weapons, while boosting the "integrity" of the country's immigration system.

It includes provisions that would give police more power to monitor Canada's shared border with the US. It could also bar those who have been in Canada for more than year from filing a claim for asylum. But critics said the bill, which seeks to expand authorities' ability to open and inspect mail, would breach civil liberties. The proposed legislation comes amid increasing pressure on Canada, which has historically been open to newcomers, to restrict immigration as the country deals with strained public services and a housing crisis. The previous government of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau relied on ambitious immigration targets to fuel economic growth, and oversaw a sharp increase in people entering Canada as temporary workers and students.

At the same time, Canada saw a spike in asylum claims, with applicants

waiting up to two years for their case to be heard due to the backlog. Prime Minister Mark Carney, who won April's federal election, has promised to address Canada's "unsustainable" immigration levels. Under current law, refugees can claim asylum in Canada either when they arrive at a port of entry, like an airport, or when they are already in Canada, with no restrictions on how long they can be in the country before claiming asylum. The new rules would bar asylum claims from those who have been in Canada for over a year, potentially making them subject to deportation.

They would also require people entering Canada from the US under the Safe Third Country Agreement - a long-standing deal requiring migrants to seek asylum in the first "safe" country they reach, whether it is the US or Canada - to file a claim in Canada within 14 days for it to be considered. Those who fail to adhere to those deadlines would still be able to undergo a risk assessment that would determine whether their safety is at risk if they are sent away. The law also gives the government power to outright suspend processing new applications "for matters of public health and national security." The wide-ranging 127-page measure would also expand the government's

power to open mail to advance a criminal investigation.

And it would introduce restrictions on cash transactions above C\$10,000 (\$7,300; £5,400) and cash deposits by one individual into another's account. Jenny Kwan, a member of parliament from the left-leaning New Democratic Party, said the bill "should be alarming to many Canadians". A big chunk of the new legislation deals with curbing the flow of fentanyl and illegal weapons across the US-Canada border - an issue that US President Donald Trump has used as justification for his tariffs on Canada.

Gary Anandasangaree, Canada's public safety minister, said he would brief US border tsar Tom Homan on the new legislation.

He acknowledged that the law would address issues that have been "irritants for the US", and that it would likely play into trade negotiations between Canada and the US. But he added "it's not exclusively about the United States", and is also about securing Canada's borders. Some advocacy groups have criticised the new rules. The Migrant Rights Network called the proposed measures "immoral", and said they "drastically restrict refugee protections and allow for mass deportations".

Lee Jae's rise from poverty to the S Korean presidency

SEOUL (AFP): Lawsuits, scandals, armed troops and a knife-wielding attacker all failed to deter Lee Jae-myung's ascendancy from sweatshop worker to the South Korean presidency. After losing by a razor-thin margin in 2022, the left-leaning Democratic Party candidate is now set to take office after winning a landslide victory.

Opponents decry Lee, 60, for his populist style. But his rags-to-riches personal story sets him apart from many of South Korea's political elite. After dropping out of school to work at a factory to support his family, he suffered a disabling elbow injury in an industrial accident. He earned a scholarship to study law and passed the bar to become an attorney. Lee has used this origin story to cultivate a loyal support base and frame himself as understanding the struggles of the underprivileged. "You can worry about people outside shivering in the cold while you sit in your warm living room," Lee told AFP in a 2022 interview. "But you can never really understand their pain."

Lee takes power after lawmakers suspended his predecessor, Yoon Suk Yeol, for deploying armed troops to parliament in his failed

attempt to suspend civilian rule six months ago. During the tense minutes following that move, Lee live-streamed his frantic scramble over the perimeter fence as he and other lawmakers rushed to vote down the martial law decree. "It was a race against time," he recalled in an interview with AFP. Lee previously served as mayor of Seongnam, south of Seoul, for eight years.

In that role, he helped shut down what had been the country's largest dog meat market -- ending a trade that had once involved 80,000 canines a year. He later served as governor of Gyeonggi Province -- the country's most populous region surrounding the capital -- for more than three years. Lee lost his 2022 bid for the presidency to Yoon by one of the smallest margins in South Korean history. In 2024, he was stabbed in the neck by a man posing as a supporter and was airlifted to hospital for emergency surgery. The attacker later confessed that his intention was to kill Lee to prevent him from becoming president.

Lee has vowed, among other things, to boost South Korea's artificial intelligence industry, with the goal of making the country

one of the top three global leaders in the field. He has also called for holding those involved in the martial law attempt accountable -- promising to "bring insurrection elements to justice". During his early days in politics, Lee drew criticism for his confrontational attacks on political opponents.

But Kim Hye-kyung, his wife of 34 years with whom he shares two children, insists Lee speaks with "deliberation". "He's someone who's come up from the margins, from the very bottom," she said in a 2017 interview. "Just like how a flea has to jump to be noticed, I hope people can understand and view him in that context." Lee has been dogged by legal troubles of his own, including allegations of corruption tied to a real estate development and violations of election law through the dissemination of false information. He has denied any wrongdoing, insisting the charges are politically motivated. In early May, Seoul's Supreme Court overturned a lower court's acquittal of Lee on election law charges and ordered a retrial. But with the election looming, the Seoul High Court postponed the proceedings until after the June 3 vote.

Vietnam scraps two-child limit as birth rate declines

HANOI (AFP): Vietnam's communist government has scrapped its long-standing policy of limiting families to two children, state media said, as the country battles to reverse a declining birth rate. The country banned couples from having more than two children in 1988, but a family's size is now a decision for each individual couple, Vietnam News Agency said.

The country has experienced historically low birth rates during the last three years, with the total fertility rate dropping to just 1.91 children per woman last year, below replacement level, the ministry of health said this year. Birth rates have fallen from 2.11 children per woman in 2021, to 2.01 in 2022 and 1.96 in 2023. This trend is most pronounced in urbanised, economically developed regions, especially in big cities such as Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City as the cost of living rises.

Tran Minh Huong, a 22-year-old office worker, told AFP that the government regulation mattered

little to her as she had no plans to have children. "Even though I am an Asian, with social norms that say women need to get married and have kids, it's too costly to raise a child," Deputy Health Minister Nguyen Thi Lien Huong, speaking at a conference earlier this year, warned it was increasingly difficult to encourage families to have more children, despite policy adjustments and public campaigns. She emphasised that the declining birth rate poses challenges to long-term socio-economic development, including an ageing population and workforce shortages.

She urged society to shift its mindset from focusing solely on family planning to a broader perspective of population and development. Vietnam is also grappling with sex imbalances due to a historic preference for boys. The ministry of health proposed tripling the current fine to \$3,800 "to curb foetal gender selection", according to state media. The gender

ratio at birth, though improved, remains skewed at 112 boys for every 100 girls.

Hoang Thi Oanh, 45, has three children but received fewer benefits after the birth of her youngest, due to the two-child policy. "It's good that at last the authorities removed this ban," she said, but added that "raising more than two kids nowadays is too hard and costly". "Only brave couples and those better-off would do so. I think the authorities will even have to give bonuses to encourage people to have more than two children." Vietnam's giant neighbour China ended its own strict "one-child" policy, imposed in the 1980s due to fears of overpopulation, in 2016 and in 2021 permitted couples to have three children. But as in many countries, the soaring cost of living has proved a drag on birth rates and the moves have failed to reverse China's demographic decline -- its population fell for the third year in a row in 2024.

Lula vows to defend Brazil's SC as US threatens judge

SAO PAULO (Reuters): Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva vowed to defend his country's Supreme Court against attacks from the United States, in a sharp rebuke of potential sanctions from Washington against one of the top court's justices.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio told US lawmakers last month that President Donald Trump could slap economic sanctions on the judge overseeing the trial of Brazil's ex-president Jair Bolsonaro, a Trump ally accused of plotting a coup. "It is unacceptable for the president of any country in the world to comment on the decision of the Supreme Court of another country," Lula told reporters, adding

that the United States needs to understand the importance of "respecting the integrity of institutions in other countries."

Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes has drawn fierce criticism from the Brazilian right while leading the court's aggressive curbing of what he has called threats to Brazil's democracy, both online and in an alleged coup plot. He started by ordering social media companies to take down posts from Bolsonaro supporters that he considered threats to democratic institutions, even suspending Elon Musk's social media platform X in Brazil until it caved to his orders. Musk and other right-wing platforms have accused

Moraes of censorship.

The judge also ordered the arrest of a conservative lawmaker who posted a video attacking the Supreme Court and oversaw a case against Bolsonaro supporters who vandalized government buildings after the former president lost the election. Moraes is now overseeing a case in which Bolsonaro is accused of leading an attempt to overthrow Brazil's democracy to reverse his loss in the 2022 presidential elections. He presided over the electoral court decision barring Bolsonaro from running for public office until 2030 due to behavior in that campaign. Several of those cases have involved criti-

cism, threats and even an alleged assassination attempt targeting Moraes himself, but the Supreme Court has backed the judge's refusal to recuse himself, drawing further complaints from his critics.

The setbacks for Bolsonaro's far-right movement led his son, lawmaker Eduardo Bolsonaro, to take a leave from Brazil's Congress this year and move to the United States, where he vowed to lead a campaign against Moraes. Rubio's comments in Congress about Moraes were prompted by questions by Florida House Representative Cory Mills, with whom Eduardo Bolsonaro said he had met days earlier.

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Tariffs take heavy toll on US first and foremost

WHILE the United States is pressuring its trading partners to submit their "best offers" for trade negotiations in order to avoid facing the "reciprocal tariffs" the US administration threatened to impose on April 2 but suspended for 90 days, until July 9, it raised tariffs on imported steel and aluminum and their derivatives from 25 percent to 50 percent on Wednesday.

And despite repeated promises by the White House that multiple deals are imminent, the US has not yet reached any substantial deal with any of its major trading partners, while its own economy is suffering heavily from the tariff policy.

With its trade talks with almost all major trading partners stalled, the US has obviously been left high and dry by its policy, the legitimacy of which is still pending.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development released its latest economic outlook report on Tuesday, predicting that the US economy will grow by 1.6 percent and 1.5 percent this year and the next respectively, down 0.6 and 0.1 percentage points from the forecast in March. It said that trade tensions caused by the tariff policy affect global trade, impacting consumption and investment.

Before that, the Institute for Supply Management on Monday released data showing that the US manufacturing purchasing managers' index was 48.5 in May, lower than 48.7 in April. The US manufacturing industry has contracted for the third consecutive month, remaining below the 50 boom-bust line.

The real GDP of the US decreased at an annual rate of 0.3 percent in the first quarter. The rate might continue to fall in the second quarter and beyond if the US administration presses ahead with its tariff war, some analysts have warned.

The trade conflict has caused the US business community and industry insiders to continue to be pessimistic about the country's economic outlook, bringing huge uncertainty to the US economy.

The Conference Board, a US think tank, said on May 29 that its measure of CEO confidence, conducted in collaboration with the Business Council, revealed a 26-point decline in the second quarter, the biggest since the survey started in 1976, attributing it to the uncertainties caused by the US' strained economic and trade relations with other economies due to the tariff war.

That uneasy mood of the market and industry has also been confirmed by the Federal Reserve in its periodic "Beige Book" summary published on Wednesday. This indicates the US economy has contracted over the past six weeks as hiring has slowed, and consumers and businesses are worried about tariff-related price increases.

"All Districts reported elevated levels of economic and policy uncertainty, which have led to hesitancy and a cautious approach to business and household decisions," the Fed report said.

It takes just a stroke of a pen for the US president to raise the tariff rate on goods, in the firm belief that increasing tariffs is like waving a magic wand that will not only enable the US to increase its tariff revenue, but also spur other economies to invest in and relocate their factories to the US, with immediate effect.

But the impacts are far more complicated than anticipated, and it is US companies and consumers that have to bear the brunt of the raised tariffs.

For instance, the raised tariffs on aluminum and steel affect not just the prices of products such as cars, building materials, and washing machines, but also canned tuna, chicken soup, fruits, ketchup, and a host of foods and beverages that come in metal packaging, such as beer and soda. In other words, no US family can escape the bite of US tariffs.

Tesla CEO Elon Musk hit out at the US president's "big beautiful" signature tax and spending bill, which is part of the latter's effort to ease the pressure on government debt in a weak economy, describing it as a "disgusting abomination", shortly after he left the administration last week. This served to expose a disagreement even within the core team in the White House on the administration's economic policymaking.

As the tariff war goes on, with the US economy continually slipping toward recession, it is almost predictable that the US administration will only become more desperate to cover up the failure of its tariff policy by playing the blame game to divert public censure to the previous Democratic administration, other economies, the Federal Reserve, and others.

The wise are cautious and avoid danger; fools rush in with reckless confidence where even angels fear to tread. Reckless confidence is the hallmark of "America First".

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Trump is letting Putin win

Maximilian Hess

RUSSIAN and Ukrainian delegations met in Istanbul for the second time in a month on June 2 to explore the possibility of a ceasefire. The talks lasted just over an hour and, once again, produced no meaningful progress. As with the May 16 negotiations, both sides claimed they had laid the groundwork for prisoner exchanges. But despite Ukraine's offer to hold another meeting before the end of June, a deep and unbridgeable divide remains between Kyiv and Moscow.

More meetings are unlikely to change that. Russia continues to demand Kyiv's capitulation to the full list of conditions President Vladimir Putin set at the war's outset: Ukrainian neutrality, a government reshaped to suit Moscow's interests, and the surrender of the Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhia and Kherson regions. Between the two rounds of talks, Putin even raised the stakes, adding a demand for a "buffer zone" in northern Ukraine.

Kyiv, meanwhile, remains resolute. It refuses to cede any territory and maintains that a full ceasefire along all fronts is a non-negotiable precondition for serious negotiations.

Still, both sides appear prepared to continue the diplomatic charade.

That's because these talks are not truly about achieving peace or securing a lasting bilateral agreement. Neither side is genuinely negotiating with the other. Instead, both are using the forum to send messages to the United States – and to Donald Trump, in particular.

This dynamic persists

despite Trump's recent efforts to distance himself from the war he once claimed he could end within 24 hours of returning to the White House. That shift in rhetoric has been echoed by key figures in his administration. Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who just six months ago represented opposite ends of the Republican spectrum on Ukraine – with Vance nearly endorsing surrender to Putin, and Rubio among the Senate's most vocal Ukraine hawks – have both signalled that Trump's White House is no longer interested in mediating the conflict. Reflecting that disengagement, there was no high-level prenegotiation meeting between US and Ukrainian officials in Türkiye ahead of the latest talks, unlike those held in May.

Yet despite Rubio's apparent reversal – likely intended to align with Trump – Ukraine still enjoys broad support in the US Senate, including from senior Republicans. A bipartisan bill aimed at codifying existing sanctions on Russia and imposing new ones – thereby limiting Trump's power to roll them back – has garnered 81 Senate co-sponsors. The bill's authors, Senators Lindsey Graham (R-South Carolina) and Richard Blumenthal (D-Connecticut), recently travelled to Kyiv to reaffirm their backing. Graham has suggested the bill could move forward in the coming weeks.

Still, Ukraine knows the bill stands little chance in the House of Representatives without Trump's blessing. Despite Trump's enduring animosity towards Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Kyiv has recently adopted a more deferential posture, particularly after their disastrous February meeting in Washington. The Ukrainian government quickly signed and ratified the so-called "minerals deal" that Trump demanded last month. A subsequent meeting between the two leaders – held on the sidelines of Pope Francis's funeral – was notably more productive.

So far, Kyiv's strategy of appeasement has yielded little change in Trump's approach. While Trump has occasionally hinted at taking a tougher stance on Putin – usually in response to particularly egregious Russian attacks on Ukrainian civilians – he consistently deflects when asked for specifics. For months, he has promised to reveal his plan for Ukraine "in about two weeks," a vague assurance that remains unfulfilled. A new sanctions package reportedly prepared by his own team over a month ago still sits untouched.

Hoping that mounting battlefield violence or bipartisan pressure from the US Senate might force Trump to act, Kyiv presses on with negotiations. Just one day before the Istanbul talks, Russia launched a record-setting overnight assault on Ukraine, firing more than 430 missiles and drones. Ukraine responded forcefully: on June 1, it conducted a large-scale drone strike deep inside Russia, destroying dozens of military aircraft, including airborne command platforms and nuclear-capable bombers.

Yet these high-profile

losses have done little to shift Putin's strategy. He continues to use the negotiation process as a smoke-screen, providing Trump with political cover for his inaction. Meanwhile, Russian forces are advancing, making incremental gains in northern Ukraine's Sumy region – where they hope to establish a "buffer zone" – and pushing forward on the southwestern Donetsk front.

Ultimately, Ukraine's ability to strike deep inside Russian territory, including potentially vulnerable targets like oil infrastructure, may have more bearing on the war's trajectory than any outcome from the Istanbul talks. Yet neither military escalation nor stalled diplomacy seems likely to bring a swift end to the conflict.

Trump says he abhors the civilian toll of this war, even if he stops short of blaming Putin for starting it. But it is Trump's lack of strategy – his hesitation, his mixed signals, his refusal to lead – that is prolonging the conflict, escalating its brutality and compounding its risks for global stability.

Trump's advisers may call it "peace through strength," but what we are witnessing is paralysis through posturing. Russia's delegation in Istanbul was never a step towards resolution – it was a diplomatic decoy, shielding a brutal military advance. If Trump refuses to back a serious escalation in pressure on Moscow – through expanded sanctions and renewed military aid to Kyiv – he won't just fail to end the war. He will become complicit in prolonging it. The choice before him is clear: lead with resolve, or let history record that under his watch, weakness spoke louder than peace.

Egypt's cautious rapprochement with Iran

EGYPT-IRAN relations are undergoing a notable transformation after decades of tension and estrangement. Regional and international pressures are pushing both countries to reassess their political and strategic priorities. The repeated visits of Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi to Cairo – most recently early this week – signal the emergence of a new phase in the relationship, moving beyond the long-standing diplomatic freeze and toward a potential reshaping of influence dynamics in the region.

Since diplomatic ties were severed in 1979 following Egypt's peace treaty with Israel, Cairo and Tehran have found themselves on opposing sides of most regional issues. But in recent years, major shifts have occurred. The Chinese-brokered agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia, the normalization of Iranian ties with the UAE and Türkiye's increased openness to Tehran have softened the region's traditional resistance to engaging Iran. As a result, one of the key constraints on Egypt's Iran policy has largely dissipated.

Egypt faces overlapping domestic and external challenges: a deepening economic crisis, growing security threats in the Red Sea and a diminishing regional role in key conflicts like Yemen, Syria and Palestine. Iran, meanwhile, is under intense Western pressure over its nuclear program, while its influence

in Dr. Abdellatif El-Menawey ment with Syria and Lebanon is slowly eroding. It is actively seeking new pathways to reposition itself in the regional order. These converging dynamics have made rapprochement not only possible, but necessary – a strategic adjustment more than an ideological shift.

Araghchi's latest visit to Cairo included meetings with President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi and Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty, as well as a tripartite meeting with the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency. The visit clearly went beyond symbolic diplomacy, delving into sensitive topics such as regional security, nuclear negotiations and the future of Gaza.

The cultural dimension of the visit was equally significant. Araghchi toured Cairo's historic Khan El-Khalili district and visited the Imam Hussein Mosque, which he has frequented during prior trips. These gestures reflected a broader Iranian desire to build not just diplomatic but also religious and cultural bridges with Egypt, reframing the relationship not as one between two rival states, but as one between two core civilizations in the Islamic world.

Security is at the forefront of the motivations behind this rapprochement. Egypt has suffered financial losses due to Houthi attacks on international shipping in the Red Sea, resulting in a sharp decline in Suez Canal revenues. Given Iran's influence over the Houthis, direct engagement

could be a key to stabilizing one of Egypt's most vital economic arteries.

Economic concerns also play a central role. Under Western sanctions, Iran is searching for new trade partners. Egypt, in the midst of its own economic hardship, could benefit from Iranian energy (transferred via Iraq) and expanded trade, assuming restrictions on Iran are eased.

Strategically, Egypt is looking to reassert its role as a regional mediator, especially due to its reduced influence in the Syrian and Yemeni files. Engaging Iran offers an opportunity to reaffirm Cairo's independent foreign policy and reestablish a strategic presence in the evolving regional order. The Gaza conflict further increases the necessity of alignment between regional powers. Iran maintains ties with key Palestinian factions, while Egypt plays the principal role in mediation. Coordination between the two is becoming increasingly vital.

Despite this momentum, Egypt remains cautious. The restoration of full diplomatic relations has not been announced and the two countries continue to operate through interests sections. Cairo is taking a step-by-step approach. This caution stems from multiple considerations. Egypt's close relations with the US, Israel and the Gulf require a delicate balancing act. A too-rapid rapprochement with Iran could jeopardize these strategic alliances. Arab public opinion

remains wary of Iran's actions in Syria, Lebanon and Yemen. Egypt is also concerned about the potential for Iran to export its ideology through nonstate actors, especially in fragile Arab states.

Looking ahead, the outlook is positive but conditional. Both sides have expressed interest in launching a structured political dialogue and expanding cooperation in areas such as trade, energy and tourism. Should nuclear negotiations lead to the lifting of sanctions on Iran, Egypt could benefit from Iranian oil via Iraq adoption targets, deferring internal combustion engine phase-outs and acknowledging the upstream carbon footprint of battery manufacturing. Lithium, cobalt and nickel – key inputs for EV batteries – are extracted through processes that are carbon-intensive and often ethically questionable.

The gap between ambition and execution is widening. Global energy-related carbon dioxide emissions reached a record 37.4 billion tonnes in 2023. This raises an uncomfortable question: Are we genuinely decarbonizing or merely engaging in high-cost carbon arbitrage? Data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's International Transport Forum provides a clarifying contrast: maritime shipping emits just 3 to 7 grams of carbon dioxide per tonne-kilometer, compared to 62 grams for road freight and more than 500 grams for air cargo. Maritime shipping is nearly 10 times more carbon-efficient than trucking and 70 times more efficient than aviation. Yet, instead of being recognized for this intrinsic efficiency, the shipping industry is being subjected to regulations that fail to appreciate these comparative advantages.

Decarbonization at a crossroads

Dr. John Sfakianakis

THE global race toward decarbonization is accelerating, as more than 140 countries – collectively responsible for nearly 90 percent of global gross domestic product and emissions – have committed to achieving net-zero carbon emissions by mid-century. But the pathways, mechanisms and economic implications of this transformation remain deeply uneven. Nowhere is this asymmetry more visible than in sectors like shipping, aviation and road transport, where the pace of regulatory ambition often surpasses the realities of technological readiness.

Shipping, in particular, has become an unlikely but prominent target of international climate policy. Despite being the most carbon-efficient mode of freight transport, the sector finds itself grappling with mounting compliance burdens, volatile market mechanisms and infrastructure gaps. This is a paradox that risks not only penalizing efficiency but also distorting the logic of global trade.

Since January 2024, the EU has incorporated maritime emissions into its Emissions Trading System – a monumental shift in regulatory design. Vessels calling at EU ports must now purchase allowances covering 40 percent of their verified carbon dioxide emissions, a share that will rise to 70 percent in 2025 and 100 percent by 2026. With carbon prices hovering around 70 (\$79) per tonne, the cost implications are profound.

A typical large container ship, emitting approximately 60,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide annually on EU routes, could face annual carbon costs exceeding 5 million by 2026. This is in addition to already elevated fuel prices, retrofitting expenses and evolving port compliance mandates. The intent – to catalyze decarbonization – is valid. But the execution, absent global harmonization, risks regulatory fragmentation and competitive distortions.

Meanwhile, the International Maritime Organization has set its own benchmark: net-zero emissions by 2050, with a 40 percent reduction in carbon intensity targeted by 2030. These goals necessitate a seismic shift toward alternative fuels such as green methanol and ammonia. Yet these fuels remain commercially scarce and up to four times more expensive than conventional options. Retrofitting a single vessel can cost between \$5 million and \$15 million, with uncertain payback periods. Infrastructure for alternative fuels remains embryonic, particularly across the Global South.

Other transport sectors face analogous dilemmas. Aviation is constrained by the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation, which seeks to cap emissions at 2019 levels through offsets. Meanwhile, the electric vehicle transition – long hailed as a panacea for road transport emissions – is encountering both technological and geopolitical headwinds.

Policymakers in the US, the EU and the UK are quietly scaling back EV adoption targets, deferring internal combustion engine phase-outs and acknowledging the upstream carbon footprint of battery manufacturing. Lithium, cobalt and nickel – key inputs for EV batteries – are extracted through processes that are carbon-intensive and often ethically questionable. The gap between ambition and execution is widening. Global energy-related carbon dioxide emissions reached a record 37.4 billion tonnes in 2023. This raises an uncomfortable question: Are we genuinely decarbonizing or merely engaging in high-cost carbon arbitrage?

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According to the World Shipping Council, maritime transport accounts for just 2.9 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions – far less than road transport (18 percent) but slightly more than aviation (2.5 percent). Approximately 80 percent of global freight by volume is transported by sea, while road transport accounts for about 18 percent of global freight by volume. Given this indispensable role in global trade, burdening shipping with disproportionately stringent regulations could have cascading effects: distorting supply chains, inflating consumer prices and exacerbating inequities in the developing world.

Carbon markets, originally designed to promote innovation and cost-efficiency, have devolved into volatile and fragmented systems. Voluntary carbon credit prices range from \$1 to \$20 per tonne, with wide disparities in quality and credibility. Studies suggest that up to 90 percent of forestry-based credits may not represent genuine emissions reductions. This erodes trust and incentivizes financial engineering over physical decarbonization.

Moreover, oil prices – adjusted for inflation – have declined in real terms. Brent crude averaged \$73 per barrel in 2024, a far cry from its 2008 peak of \$140, which would translate to approximately \$210 in 2025 dollars. Yet, despite this relative affordability, shipping costs have surged. McKinsey estimates that environmental compliance alone has pushed shipping costs nearly 30 percent above pre-pandemic levels. This adds pressure on thin operating margins and complicates investment in cleaner technologies.

Biofuels offer only a partial remedy. Sustainable aviation fuel can reduce lifecycle emissions by up to 80 percent, but it accounted for just 0.3 percent of global aviation fuel use in 2024. Marine biofuels suffer from similar bottlenecks: limited production, high prices and sustainability concerns over feedstocks. Poorly regulated biofuel mandates could inadvertently aggravate land-use conflicts and food insecurity.

The global decarbonization agenda must reconcile environmental ambition with economic realism and technological maturity. Policy frameworks must reward – not penalize – sectors that are already outperforming in carbon efficiency. Maritime transport, while imperfect, remains the most optimized vector for global trade on a per-tonne basis. Overregulating it will not only raise costs but may also displace emissions to less efficient modes of transport.

One-size-fits-all policies risk undermining the very goals they aim to achieve. Effective climate governance must be technologically agnostic, geographically equitable and economically rational. Transitioning to a low-carbon economy will require time, capital and compromise. While shipping may not achieve net-zero emissions overnight, it stands as a critical enabler of the broader decarbonization of global commerce.

To portray the shipping industry as a climate laggard is to misjudge both its current contributions and its untapped potential for driving long-term decarbonization. At the same time, the industry would benefit from forging a more cohesive voice – ideally through the establishment of a dedicated global institution, strategically situated in Athens, London and Riyadh – to more effectively champion its indispensable role in shaping a sustainable global trade regime.

Trump is increasingly hostile to China. He’s playing with fire

DESPITE widespread concerns that the trade war is dragging down America’s economy, President Donald Trump has notched quite a few wins on his economic belt in recent weeks.

Inflation keeps falling. Jobs remain plentiful. And there’s growing evidence the economy could be booming this quarter.

That’s why Trump’s increasingly hostile rhetoric about China over the past week was particularly concerning ahead of his call Thursday with Chinese leader Xi Jinping. Trump’s economy is cookin’ – for now. But the economic Jenga tower the Trump administration has constructed is precariously balanced on a host of economic caveats and unproven theories. Renewed trade tensions with the world’s second-largest economy threatens to knock the tower to the ground.

May 12 represented a major turning point for the global trade war. Delegates from China and the United States announced they would significantly roll back their historically high tariffs on one another. Markets were elated. Wall Street banks curtailed their recession forecasts. And moribund consumer confidence rebounded significantly.

That’s a significant change from April, when tensions ran so high that trade between the United States and China came to an effective halt. The 145% tariffs on most Chinese imported goods made the math impossible for American businesses to buy virtually anything from China, America’s second-largest trading partner.

No one wants to return to that. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, America’s chief negotiator in the détente with China, said previous tariff levels were “unsustainable.” That’s why he said the countries put in place mechanisms to prevent a re-escalation.

But Trump and his administration in recent weeks have grown increasingly hostile toward China, accusing the country of breaking the promises it made in mid-May. China has similarly said the United States has failed to live up to its obligations under the agreement.

Trump and Xi held a long-awaited phone call Thursday, a person famil-

iar with the matter said. The White House did not immediately confirm the call, which was also reported by Chinese state media.

If the call fails to result in another de-escalation, tensions could boil over, and tariffs could rise again. So could recession forecasts. And the good

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No one wants to return to that. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, America’s chief negotiator in the détente with China, said previous tariff levels were “unsustainable.” That’s why he said the countries put in place mechanisms to prevent a re-escalation. But Trump and his administration in recent weeks have grown increasingly hostile toward China, accusing the country of breaking the promises it made in mid-May. China has similarly said the United States has failed to live up to its obligations under the agreement. Trump and Xi held a long-awaited phone call Thursday, a person familiar with the matter said. The White House did not immediately confirm the call, which was also reported by Chinese state media. If the call fails to result in another de-escalation, tensions could boil over, and tariffs could rise again. So could recession forecasts. And the good vibes that have powered a rebound in sentiment and a massive market rally could disappear in a flash. Strong economic data Although virtually no economic reports are entirely good or bad, and with the obvious caveat that monthly economic data are inherently backward looking, US data have been surprisingly resilient lately. Annual consumer prices grew just 2.3% in April, according to the Consumer Price Index, and inflation that month fell to 2.1%, according to the separate Personal Consumption Expenditures price index. The PCE report is particularly noteworthy, because the Federal Reserve favors that report when it considers whether to change interest rates. Over time, the Fed targets 2% inflation, so America is, at long last, nearing that long-term target after a years-long bout with historic price hikes. Trump, citing America’s low inflation rate, has been bullying Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell to cut interest rates to boost the economy – even summoning Powell to the White House last week to give him a talking to. As Powell has noted, economic data is looking strong. Jobs data, although weakening, has steadied in recent months.
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David Goldman

Trump.

Last week, Trump posted on social media that China “TOTALLY VIOLATED ITS AGREEMENT WITH US.” Trump said that he made a “fast deal” with China to “save them from what I thought was going to be a very bad situation.” He added: “So

like tariffs have completely evaporated. The United States maintains a 10% universal tariff on most goods coming into the country, and Trump just doubled tariffs on steel and aluminum this week. He has threatened higher tariffs on dozens of countries that are unable to reach trade deals with the administration over the course of the next month. And China and the United States, despite their de-escalation last month, maintain significant, double-digit tariffs on one another.

Economists, Wall Street analysts, business leaders and consumers continue to sound the alarm bell about the trade war, worrying about a toxic combination of rising prices and slowing economic growth.

Despite the recent spate of good economic news, some underlying data is raising concerns.

A government report this week showed layoffs in April leapt higher by nearly 200,000 to 1.786 million, reversing a similarly sized drop seen in March. Initial unemployment claims rose to 247,000 last week, far more than estimated. And outplacement firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas reported Thursday that American employers announced 94,000 layoffs in May – down 12% from April but up 47% from last year. Layoff announcements have spiked 80% this year.

Last week, a key economic report showed consumer spending rose just 0.2% in April, a weaker-than-anticipated reading and a significant retreat from March.

And some consumer and business survey data remain incredibly weak. Consumer sentiment remained near historic lows reached in March despite recent trade deal announcements, according to the University of Michigan. And the Fed’s beige book, a collection of business leaders’ reactions to the economic environment, showed that companies across industries are remaining deeply uncertain about the economy – particularly because of the trade war.

So good news could ultimately turn bad, even without escalating tensions with China. But a return to tit-for-tat tariffs and closed borders could make matters significantly worse.

And the US State Department announced it would “aggressively revoke visas” for some Chinese students in America.

China, in turn, has accused the United States of “provoking new economic and trade frictions.”

“The United States has been unilaterally provoking new economic and trade relations,” the Chinese Commerce Ministry said Sunday.

Growing concerns

Meanwhile, it’s not

Will the new era in space be one of rivalry?

Khaled Abou Zahr

So, where does that leave the rest of the world? What is the US’ post-space station plan? What is Europe’s?

There are several private American companies working on what are defined as commercial space stations. Axiom Space is creating a modular station that will initially be attached to the International Space Station, before aiming for independent operation by 2031 with a focus on research, manufacturing and tourism.

NanoRacks, under the Starlab project alongside Voyager Space and Lockheed Martin, plans a free-flying station dedicated to science and industrial applications, targeted for launch in 2028.

And Blue Origin, alongside Sierra Space and Boeing, is developing the Orbital Reef station, envisioned as a mixed-use space “business park” supporting research, manufacturing and tourism. With a modular design, it is expected to be operational by 2030. More recently, Vast has announced its plans for Haven-1, the first commercial space station,

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It can support more than 100 scientific studies, ranging from biology to materials science, while three astronauts are hosted at a time on six-month rotations. The plan is to expand the station to six modules. This would mean doubling its current size. Despite repeated delays, China also plans to launch the Xuntian space telescope, which will orbit alongside Tiangong and periodically dock for maintenance. This means China is establishing a self-sufficient infrastructure. Sun Zhibin, of the National Space Science Centre in Beijing, last week said China is creating a rapid-response space defense system to detect and drive away suspect spacecraft. It aims to use a tiny robotic thruster to grab hold of unknown objects and propel them away from the Tiangong space station or other vital space equipment. There is no doubt this could also play an offensive role. So, where does that leave the rest of the world? What is the US’ post-space station plan? What is Europe’s?
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which is set for launch in 2026. It will support short missions with high-speed internet connectivity via Starlink.

The big issues are whether these companies will be able to deliver on time and whether the projects will be financially successful. Some have already faced issues.

These space station projects are supported by NASA’s goal of transitioning low Earth orbit activities to the private sector. Yet, we need to be realistic.

While it is clear that China’s approach is more state-led and centralized, all these private companies are dependent on government contracts. More than 75 percent of the revenues for space hardware, or what are known as upstream companies, are generated by space agencies, ministries of defense and intelligence services. The competition certainly allows for better pressure on deliverables and prices, but the source is ultimately the same: government.

Axiom Space has raised more than \$505 million in private funding, including a \$350 million Series-C round in 2023. Additionally, the company has secured more than \$2.2 billion in customer contracts, mainly from government entities. In 2021, NanoRacks was awarded a NASA contract worth \$160 million through the Commercial Low-Earth Orbit Destinations program to support the development of Starlab. Blue Origin was also awarded \$130 million by NASA. China, meanwhile, benefits from its purchasing power parity, which multiplies its achievements as companies burn cash.

With the way geopolitics is evolving on Earth, one can expect that these space stations will serve more than just science. Satellites have a critical role in modern defense for secure communications, surveillance and navigation, as well as acting as early warning systems. Space-based assets are also vital in conflict scenarios. Their importance has been clear in the war in Ukraine, where satellite imagery and communications have proved decisive

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on the battlefield, especially with drones.

This confirms that space has become a battle domain as crucial as land, sea, air and cyber. Hence, there is a need for both defending against and developing capabilities to disrupt or disable adversaries’ satellites through cyberattacks, jamming or even antisatellite weapons. This is essential for deterrence.

Recently analyzed swabs taken in May 2023 found an unknown bacterium, Niallia tiangongensis, aboard China’s Tiangong station. Similar microbial challenges have been faced on the International Space Station, where strains like Acinetobacter pittii have shown signs of antibiotic resistance. This highlights the shared responsibility to manage risks as both national and commercial space habitats expand. Rather than competing in isolation, nations and private companies may find that collaboration on biosecurity and research offers some common ground.

LEBANESE Prime Minister Nawaf Salam last week declared his government’s intentions on the host of difficult problems facing the country. He began with the issue of security. He said Lebanon has achieved 80 per cent of its goals by asserting the Lebanese army’s control of the south in accordance with the provisions of the November ceasefire deal with Israel despite daily Israeli violations. While obliged to withdraw completely from Lebanon, the Israeli army has retained what it calls “strategic posts” several hundred metres within Lebanese territory, arguing they are essential for protecting northern Israeli settlements.

While Hizbollah’s fighters and arms have withdrawn and Hizbollah arms dumps and posts have been destroyed from the border zone to territory north of the Litani River, Israel continues to target the movement’s members wherever they are found and has reportedly killed 150 since the beginning of the ceasefire.

This being the case, Hizbollah insists on retaining some weapons. Once Israel stops attacking Hizbollahis, there will be no need for them to bear arms.

Last week Lebanese President Joseph Aoun and his Palestinian coun-

terpart Mahmoud Abbas agreed that Palestinian factions based in the 12 refugee camps in Lebanon must also be disarmed. They said the existence of “weapons outside the control of the Lebanese state has ended.”

They also discussed the “regularisation” of the existence of 270,000 Palestinians in the country. They are barred from some professions and owning property or businesses and cannot secure public service jobs or access healthcare and social security.

Salam told “The Wall Street Journal,” “All over the Lebanese territory, the state should have a monopoly on arms. We don’t want to put the country onto a civil-war track, but believe me, this is not going to affect our commitment to the need to extend and consolidate the authority of the state.”

This will necessitate expanding and army the military to defend the state’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and strengthen the domestic police force to impose law and order on a country which has, since independence in 1943, practiced laissez faire across the board.

Salam has declared his intention of going on the warpath against endemic corruption and of reforming and restoring public confidence in banks which have contributed heavily to the country’s

6-year economic and financial crisis. He said the World Bank and Gulf states have offered Beirut their support in this endeavour.

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It can be said that Nawaf Salam is qualified to be Lebanon’s prime minister at this critical juncture in the country’s recent history.

He was born in December 1953 into a highly political family deeply committed to Lebanon. His grandfather reformist Selim Salam was elected to the Ottoman parliament in 1912. His uncle Saeb Salam, fought for Lebanon’s independence from France and subsequently served four times as prime minister between 1952 and 1973. His cousin Tammam Salam was prime minister between 2014 and 2016.

Nawaf Salam’s academic achievements are outstanding. He earned a doctorate in political science from France’s Sciences Po, a Master of Law from Harvard Law School, and a doctorate in history from the Sorbonne.

He practiced law, lectured at distinguished universities, and worked as a legal consultant in France, the US, and Lebanon. From July 2007 to December 2017, he served as Lebanon’s UN ambassador. In November 2017, he was elected to the International Court of Justice, becoming the second Lebanese to assume this post.

He attracted international attention by pre-

siding over the South African lawsuit against Israel for committing genocide against Gaza.

Following the election of army chief Joseph Aoun as president of Lebanon, Salam was nominated by parliament as prime minister and took up the post on January 14th this year.

The fifth general to assume the presidency, Aoun pre-empted Salam, his candidate for prime minister, by vowing to battle mafias, halt drug trafficking, tackle corruption and fight sectarianism. He pledged to promote economic, political, and judicial reform. He promised to end Israel’s occupation of Lebanese territory and “affirm the state’s right to a monopoly on the carrying of arms.”

Elected at a time of multiple crises in Lebanon, Aoun has a mighty example to emulate. This was the first general to take power, Fuad Chehab, who assumed the presidency after the country’s first civil conflict in 1958.

He was an incorruptible, autocratic figure who unified the country, launched reforms and social development, and built state institution. During his presidency, there were five prime ministers, including Saeb Salam. Lebanon hopes the duo of Aoun and Nawaf Salam could match some of the achievements of Chehab and his associates.



Pakistan Stock Exchange loses 157 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) shed 157.87 points on Thursday, showing a negative change of 0.13 percent, closing at 121,641.00 points as compared to 121,798.87 points on the last trading day.

A total of 854,617,208 shares were traded during the day as compared to 710,591,203 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 25.793 billion against Rs 35.216 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 478 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 217 of them recorded gains and 208 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 53 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were K-Electric Limited with 179,677,072 shares at Rs 5.83 per share, Unity Foods Limited with

62,902,228 shares at Rs 26.89 per share and WorldCall Telecom with 52,373,487 shares at Rs 1.42 per share.

Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 114.29 per share closing at Rs9,855.72 whereas runner-up was Pakistan Engineering Company Limited with Rs81.93 rise in its share price to close at Rs 901.23.

PIA Holding Company LimitedB witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 3,198.89 per share price, closing at Rs 28,789.98, whereas the runner-up Khyber Textile Mills Limited with Rs 303.91 decline in its per share price to Rs 2,735.17.

Rupee gains 05 paise against US Dollar

The Rupee on Thursday appreciated by 05 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 282.17 against

the previous day's closing of Rs 282.22.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 282.90 and Rs 284.40, respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by 74 paise to close at Rs 322.02 against the last day's closing of Rs 321.28, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese yen went up by 01 paise and closed at Rs1.96, whereas an increase of Rs 1 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 382.71 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 381.71.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 01 paise each to close at Rs 76.82 and Rs 75.23, respectively.

Gold prices up by Rs.4,300 to Rs.358,400 per tola

The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs.4,300 and was traded at Rs.358,400 on Thursday as compared to its sale at Rs.354,100 on last trading day, All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported.

The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also increased by Rs.3,687 to Rs.307,270 from Rs.303,583 and for 10 grams of 22 Karat it went up by Rs3,380 from Rs.281,674 to Rs.278,294.

The rates of per tola and ten gram silver increased by Rs.159 and Rs.136 to Rs.3,745 and Rs.3,210 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market went up by \$43 to \$3,400 from \$3,357 whereas that of silver increased by \$1.59 to \$35.87 from \$34.28, the Association reported.



SWAT: President Swat Chamber of Commerce and Industry Noor Muhammad receiving UBG leadership SM Tanveer, Zafar Bakhtaweriu, Haji Afzal and others during welcoming reception ceremony.

SBP made review of Prudential Regulations F.P. Report

KARACHI: State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has made a comprehensive review of the Prudential Regulations (PRs) for SME Financing to promote sustainable, responsible, and inclusive SME finance. In addition to the introduction of some new regulations, several existing PRs have also been revised to make the PRs principles based, remove structural barriers in SME finance, encourage banks to leverage technology, and foster partnerships with Fintechs and other non-financial service providers to better serve the financing needs of the SMEs.

The draft PRs have been uploaded on SBP official website for public consultation. The consultation period will be open for two weeks from June 05-20, 2025. The feedback may be submitted using the Feedback Form provided on the SBP website. The feedback so received will help us to further align the prudential regulations for SME finance with the SMEs' market dynamics.

The SBP encourages all the stakeholders including the banks, business analysts, trade bodies and public at large to share their valuable feedback on the draft PRs.

Trade deficit narrows 23.47%

ISLAMABAD (APP): Exports from the country during May 2025 grew by 17.43 per cent, whereas imports into the country decreased by 7.58 per cent compared to the previous month (April) of the financial year 2024-25.

The trade deficit stood at \$2.619 billion in May 2025, down 23.47 per cent from the previous month, according to the latest figures released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS).

Exports from the country during the month of May 2025 were recorded at \$2.553 billion as compared to the exports of \$2.174 billion, showing an increase of about 17.43 per cent on a month basis, it added.

Meanwhile, imports into the country during the month under review went down from \$5.596 billion to \$5.172 billion, registering a decrease of about 7.58 per cent, it said.

On a year-on-year basis, the trade deficit of the country grew by 26.16 per cent as exports decreased by 10.07 per cent, whereas the imports increased by 5.23 per cent in May 2025 as compared to the same month of the last year, it added. The exports from the country during the month of May 2025 were recorded at \$2.553 billion as compared to the exports of \$2.839 billion of the previous year, the data revealed.

On the other hand, imports into the country during the period under review were registered at \$5.172 billion as compared to the imports of \$4.915 billion of the same month of the previous year, the data revealed.

During the last 11 months of the current financial year, exports from the country witnessed about 4.72 per cent growth, whereas imports increased by 7.30 per cent as compared to the corresponding period of the last year, it added.

During the period from July to May, 2024-25, exports from the country were recorded at \$29.445 billion as against the exports of \$28.117 billion of the same period of the last year.

SECP issues consultation paper

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has invited feedback on a comprehensive Consultation Paper on the Challenges and Potential of Peer-to-Peer (P2P) and Crowd Lending in Pakistan.

The paper also includes proposed amendments to the Non-Banking Finance Companies & Notified Entities Regulations, 2008, aimed at expanding access to alternative finance, said a press release issued here on Thursday.

The rapid evolution of financial technologies and the growing demand for inclusive and innovative financing solutions has led SECP to conduct an in-depth review of the existing P2P lending framework. The paper presents a comparative analysis of international regulatory models and best practices to inform policy development.

The review identifies several structural and regulatory challenges currently constraining the growth of P2P and crowd lending platforms in Pakistan.

These challenges include the absence of securitized lending mechanisms, restrictions on eligible participants, limited options for credit risk diversification, and operational difficulties related to escrow account management.

To address these challenges, the SECP proposes a series of amendments to the P2P lending framework.

These proposed changes include increasing loan ticket sizes and exposure limits, strengthening governance requirements for NBFCs operating as P2P service providers, ensuring the financial sustainability of P2P platforms, introducing a trust account structure for fund management, enhancing risk disclosures,

and introducing IT and cybersecurity standards for platforms.

The SECP has invited comments and suggestions from all stakeholders, including P2P platforms, fintech innovators, financial institutions, investors, and the general public. Stakeholder feedback will play a critical role in shaping a forward-looking, risk-sensitive, and enabling regulatory environment for P2P lending in Pakistan.

In addition, the SECP also proposed amendments to revise the definitions of SME/MSME and microenterprises, enhance credit bureau reporting requirements for lending NBFCs, amend the Code of Corporate Governance applicable to lending NBFCs, and relax the Fit and Proper Criteria for Fintech Startups in the lending space.

Plastic recycling industry should be incentivised

FAISALABAD (APP): Environment Protection has emerged as one of the most critical issues after economy and defense and the government in collaboration with the private sector must play their pivotal role to save the environment on a sustained basis, said Rehman Naseem Bharrara, President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI).

Addressing a function on the topic of "Zero Plastic, Zero Pollution" organized at FCCI Complex to mark "World Environment Day" here on Thursday, he appreciated the vision of Chief Minister (CM) Punjab Madam Maryam Nawaz and Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb and said that tangible results could be achieved to reduce and ultimately eliminate the excessive use of plastic in the province.

He lauded the environment related legislation and said that implementation on it is equally important to protect this only known living planet for coming generations.

He said that in order to incentivize the public, the departmental stores should provide cloth bags to their customers free of cost.

He said that FCCI is the first green chamber which is getting electricity from solarization while the business community has also played a key role in extensive plantations in the city.

He said that transport is the major sector which was polluting the atmosphere while the share of industry is quite nominal.

He expressed concern over the detection of traces of micro plastic in eatables due to the excessive use of plastic in our everyday life.

He welcomed the ban on shopping bags and other some items of plastic and said that the environment protection force should be motivated to take action against the elements violating these laws.

He also stressed the need to promote the plastic recycling industry by providing incentives and concessions.

Deputy Director EPA Usman Azhar, Mr. Waheed Khaliq Ramay, Dr. Habib Aslam Gaba and other intellectuals also addressed the function.

Later, Senior Vice President Mr. Qaisar Shams Gucha offered vote of thanks while President Mr. Rehman Naseem Bharrara presented FCCI shield to Deputy Director EPA.

An awareness walk was also staged while FCCI President Rehman Naseem Bharrara, SVP Qaisar Shams Gucha, Deputy Director EPA Mr. Usman Azhar, Mr. Waheed Khaliq Ramay, Dr. Habib Aslam Gaba, Dr. Farhana Nosheen, Madam Nasrat Zahra, Madam Salma Amber, other executive members and ladies planted saplings to mark the Environment Day.

Halan Microfinance Bank gets license F.P. Report

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan has granted a Nation-wide microfinance banking license to "Halan Microfinance Bank Limited" with effect from June 03, 2025.

The MFB has recently been acquired by MNT-Halan, Egypt's leading fintech company having global presence, offering business and consumer lending, digital payments and e-commerce solutions to the underserved and unbanked.

PEEF awards scholarships at Hashoo School of Hospitality Management

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In a landmark initiative to foster skill development and educational empowerment in Pakistan's growing hospitality and tourism sector, the Pakistan Education Endowment Fund (PEEF) awarded scholarships to students pursuing degrees in Tourism and Hospitality Management. The award ceremony was held for awardees of Hashoo School of Hospitality Management (HSHM) and Iqra University (IU) Campus at Pearl Continental Hotel, Karachi.

The event brought together a distinguished lineup of guests from government academia. Notable attendees included Senator Nasreen Jalil; Prof. Dr. Nassar Ikram, Vice Chancellor, Iqra University Karachi; Dr. Zaki Rashidi, Dean, Business School, Iqra University; Mr. Faisal Shehzad, Chief Internal Auditor, PEEF; Mr. Murad Shoaib Khan, Company Secretary, PEEF; Mr. Faisal Naem Khan, Director Education, Hashoo School

of Hospitality Management (HSHM); and Mr. Malik Zulfiqar, General Manager, Pearl-Continental Karachi. The ceremony was attended by parents, faculty members, and students underscoring a shared commitment to fostering talent and strengthening industry-academia collaboration.

A moving address by scholarship recipient Ms. Fiza Raza highlighted the emotional depth of the occasion, as she shared her personal journey and expressed gratitude for the opportunity setting an inspiring tone for the event.

Faisal Naem Khan, Director Education at Hashoo School of Hospitality Management (HSHM), expressed his appreciation for the partnership: "It is an honor to work with PEEF and Iqra University to identify and support talented individuals. These six scholarship recipients exemplify the promise of Pakistan's youth and will now receive not only a world-class education but also access to practical training across Hashoo

Group properties. With campuses in five major cities across Pakistan, HSHM is producing skilled workforce and leadership for the burgeoning hospitality sector."

Speaking on behalf of PEEF, Faisal Shehzad, emphasized the fund's mission: "Through initiatives like the Tourism and Hospitality Scholarship Program, PEEF is committed to removing financial barriers for students, particularly those from underserved regions. By offering fully funded scholarships, we aim to nurture future professionals and drive long-term growth in key sectors such as tourism."

During his address, Dr. Prof. Nassar Ikram, Vice Chancellor, Iqra University, Karachi expressed his gratitude to the Chief Guest for her valuable time, PEEF and HSHM for their support and congratulated the six successful candidates who secured the talent-need based scholarship. He urged students to make the best use of the financial support provided by PEEF

and excel in their academic journey.

The ceremony concluded with a keynote address by Senator Nasreen Jalil, who commended the collaborative effort and encouraged students to seize the opportunity: "Education is the foundation of a resilient and progressive society. Collaborations like these between the government, academia, and industry play a critical role in shaping future generations. These scholarships are not just financial aid; they are investments in leadership, professionalism, and national progress."

The highlight of the event was the formal awarding of scholarships to six meritorious students, selected through a rigorous and merit-based process. Their achievements were celebrated in the presence of their families, peers, and mentors, marking a significant milestone in the journey toward developing skilled human capital for Pakistan's hospitality and tourism sector.

SNGPL holds corporate briefing session for shareholders, analysts

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) conducted its Corporate Briefing Session (CBS) after closure of their financials for FY 2023-24, on Thursday, in compliance with the requirements of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX). The session was held at the Faletti's Hotel, Lahore and was attended by the shareholders, analysts, and other stakeholders, both in-person and via Video-conferencing.

The Company's Management provided a comprehensive overview of the operational and financial performance of SNGPL. Key performance indicators, including the Comp-



any's record-high profitability and notable achievements in reducing Unaccounted for Gas (UFG), were shared with the participants.

The Managing Director highlighted that SNGPL recorded the highest ever profit before tax of Rs. 29,843 million and profit

after tax of Rs. 18,977 million, resulting in earnings per share (EPS) of Rs. 29.92. This represents a significant improvement over the previous year. It was also noted that the Company achieved a major operational milestone by reducing overall UFG losses from 5.15% to 4.93%,

the lowest level in 18 years.

An interactive question-and-answer session was held after the presentation, during which the shareholders and analysts posed queries related to the Company's operations, profitability, UFG control measures, regulatory matters, and future prospects.

Eurozone stocks climb before ECB rate decision

LONDON (AFP/APP): Eurozone stock markets climbed Thursday as the European Central Bank prepared to announce another cut to interest rates in the face of US tariffs.

With markets widely expecting the ECB to trim borrowing costs, all eyes will be on central bank President Christine Lagarde's press conference for clues on future policy. "Investors will be more focused on any signals regarding the pace of any further potential cuts," noted Russ Mould, investment director at AJ Bell.

"Inflation isn't a problem, but sluggish economic growth is. That points to further monetary easing to encourage more borrowing and spending by consumers and businesses."

The ECB decision is due after soft US economic data boosted expectations that

the Federal Reserve will soon cut American interest rates, weighing on the dollar Thursday.

Investors are keeping track of developments in President Donald Trump's trade war and signs of movement on possible talks between the US leader and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping.

Wall Street provided an uninspiring lead to Asian and European trading Thursday as a report by payroll firm ADP showed private-sector jobs rose by 37,000 last month.

This was a sharp slowdown from April's 60,000 and less than a third of the amount forecast in a Bloomberg survey.

Another survey showed activity in the US services sector contracted in May for the first time since June last year.

The readings stoked con-

cerns that the world's number one economy was stuttering, with the Fed's closely watched "Beige Book" study noting that "economic activity has declined slightly".

It flagged household and business caution caused by slower hiring and heightened uncertainty surrounding Trump's policies.

The readings ramped up bets on a Fed cut, with markets pricing in two by the end of the year, starting in September.

Eyes are now on the US non-farm payrolls release on Friday, which the Fed uses to help shape monetary policy.

Still, there is some concern that Trump's tariff blitz will ramp up inflation, which could put pressure on the US central bank to keep borrowing costs elevated.

In Asia, the Seoul stock

market rallied more than one percent on continued excitement after the election of Lee Jae-myung as South Korea's new president.

The vote ended a six-month power vacuum sparked by the impeachment of predecessor Yoon Suk Yeol for a calamitous martial law attempt.

The won rose versus the dollar, building on a recent run-up.

Jakarta advanced as Indonesia's government began rolling out a \$1.5 billion stimulus package after Southeast Asia's biggest economy saw its slowest growth in more than three years in the first quarter.

Tokyo fell following another weak sale of long-term Japanese government bonds, which added to recent concerns about the global debt market.

Chinese stock markets climbed.



Ronaldo ends Germany duck - where next in his 1,000 goals pursuit?

MUNICH (BBC): There aren't many things Cristiano Ronaldo hasn't done but beating Germany was one of them - until now.

When Ronaldo popped up with the winner in the Nations League semi-final in Munich, it extended his record goalscoring total - and ended a long wait.

It was the 40-year-old's 137th international goal in 220 caps, and his 937th strike in all football.

All three of those totals are men's records.

But until now Ronaldo had never experienced a worse record at international level against any other team.

He played Germany five times, losing all five - with Portugal last beating them at Euro 2000. But that is now five from six.

That means England take the record of the country Ronaldo has played the most times without beating - three (all draws). Although the biggest caveat in the world is needed here.

Portugal won two of the three 'draws' on penalties - the Euro 2004 and 2006 World Cup quarter-finals.

After Germany, the nation Ronaldo has suffered defeat against most is France - with four losses.

But his Portugal side most famously beat France in the Euro 2016 final, and there have been three draws (although that includes a penalty shootout defeat).

Ronaldo's goalscoring record against Germany was also poor with just one goal in those five meetings, a total of 450 minutes. That is now two in 540 minutes (so one every 270 minutes).

Funnily enough it was against German clubs where he excelled the most in the Champions League, with 28 goals in 26 games.

Since turning 30, Ronaldo has scored 85 goals for Portugal.

By way of comparison only five other players have ever scored more than 85 goals.

So that means in the

second half of his international career he has scored more than legends like Ferenc Puskas, Pele, Diego Maradona and Gerd Muller - or current players like Neymar and Harry Kane - have in their entire international careers.

"It's difficult to put into words. He takes each day as an opportunity to get better," said Portugal boss Roberto Martinez.

"As a human, when you have success, you wake up and you have less hunger. But not Cristiano."

While his international teammate, Bernardo Silva, added: "It's his ambition to keep going."

"It's never easy - to still be hungry to go every day. "He's been doing this for more than 20 years. It's tough, but he's here with us and we're happy he scored again."

Where next for Ronaldo?

After Sunday's Nations League final against either France or Spain - who meet on Thursday in Stuttgart (20:00 BST) it is

not entirely clear where Ronaldo's club future lies.

Ronaldo has been playing for Saudi club Al-Nassr for the past two and a half years but his contract expires this summer.

After their final game of the season, he wrote on social media: "This chapter is over. The story? Still being written. Grateful to all." That led many to presume Ronaldo was leaving Al-Nassr.

Fifa president Gianni Infantino had said "there are discussions" over Ronaldo playing at the Club World Cup this summer.

Al-Nassr had failed to qualify - but he would be able to join another team in it, even if just on a short-term deal.

Brazilian side Botafogo were the most strongly linked.

But now multiple media outlets report that Ronaldo is likely to sign a new contract with Al-Nassr, tying him to the club until he is 42.

Can Ronaldo reach

1,000 goals?

Ronaldo needs 63 more goals to become the first player to reach 1,000 ever.

Brazil legends Pele and Romario both claimed to have scored more than 1,000 goals but they included many unofficial matches, including friendlies - so neither are recognised figures.

Ronaldo scored 35 goals for Al-Nassr last season - so would reach the landmark in less than two years if he keeps up that goalscoring rate.

Portugal beat Germany Cristiano Ronaldo scored his 137th international goal for Portugal as they came from a goal down to beat Germany and reach the Nations League final.

The 40-year-old tapped in Nuno Mendes' low pass in the 68th minute for what proved to be the winner and set up a final against either France or Spain.

Ronaldo's effort came just five minutes after Francisco Conceicao had cancelled out a 48th-

minute Florian Wirtz opener for the hosts.

Portugal won the first tournament in 2019, but their hopes of a second success looked slim when they fell behind in Munich.

Bayer Leverkusen forward Wirtz, close to completing a £109m move to Premier League champions Liverpool, headed Germany in front, connecting with a clever lofted ball over the defence by Joshua Kimmich, who was making his 100th appearance.

Portugal were furious the goal was allowed to stand as they thought German debutant Nick Woltemade had blocked off defender Ruben Dias and, despite referee Slavko Vincic being advised to watch the incident again on a pitchside monitor, the strike was allowed to stand.

But substitute Conceicao scored a fine 63rd-minute equaliser.

Having only come on five minutes earlier, he collected the ball close to

the right touchline before running at the home defence and curling an excellent finish past Marc-Andre Ter Stegen.

Ronaldo, unmarked from close range, added the decisive second goal to turn the tie around, although Germany nearly forced extra time when Karim Adeyemi's strike hit the post.

France and Spain play the second semi-final in Stuttgart on Thursday, with the final in Munich on Sunday.

Conceicao follows in father's footsteps for landmark win

The match had been delayed by 10 minutes because of hail storms in Munich as the Allianz Arena hosted its second major game of the week after the Champions League final on Saturday, when Paris St-Germain dismantled Inter Milan 5-0. Germany had the better of the opportunities in the opening 45 minutes as visiting goalkeeper Diogo Costa did well to get down

quickly to stop Leon Goretzka's well-struck effort and kept out a shot from Stuttgart forward Woltemade too.

Portugal only had a tame Ronaldo effort on target in the opening period, with Julian Nagelsmann's side taking a deserved lead through Wirtz's header, before the introduction of the lively Conceicao transformed the game.

His side were suddenly dominant and, after their two goals, Portugal had further chances as Ter Stegen made a brilliant double stop to deny Liverpool's Diogo Jota and the follow-up from Conceicao.

But it did not matter in the end as Roberto Martinez's men claimed a first competitive win over Germany since Euro 2000, when Conceicao's father Sergio scored a hat-trick in a 3-0 win.

This is the fourth edition of the Nations League with Portugal winning in 2019, France in 2021 and Spain in 2023.

Battle of Ballon d'Or favourites - Yamal v Dembele in Nations League

PARIS (BBC): Ousmane Dembele and Lamine Yamal, the two favourites for the Ballon d'Or, go head to head in Thursday's Nations League semi-final.

Dembele's France and Yamal's Spain meet in Stuttgart (20:00 BST) for a place in Sunday's final against Portugal - after the conclusion of remarkable domestic seasons for both.

As well as impressing for their clubs, both netted in their country's respective Nations League quarter-final victories.

Yamal played down any suggestion this match would have an impact in the Ballon d'Or decision - with the winner announced on 22 September in Paris.

"If you were voting for the Ballon d'Or, would you choose the best player of the year, or the one who wins the match on Thursday?" the 17-year-old told El Partidazo de COPE.

"Whether we win or not, I would vote for the best player of the year."

"I'm not thinking about the trophy or whether I'm going to win. You'll do badly if you think you have to win it. What I do is play and try to win." BBC Sport compares their stats and looks at the seasons that two of the most exciting forwards in world football have just completed.

Paris St-Germain forward Dembele is well clear of Barcelona winger Yamal for goals (33 v 18) but the Spaniard beats his French rival for assists (21 v 13).

Across all competitions, Yamal, despite being 11 years younger, played significantly more than Dembele this season - 4,548 to 3,286 minutes - and in a tougher league in terms of the general level

of competition.

Yamal has taken more shots overall (but fewer per 90 minutes) while Dembele's conversion rate is much higher.

And Yamal ranks much higher for dribbles than Dembele, with a higher success rate on them too.

The Spaniard has won possession more times, tackled more and won more duels than the Frenchman.

In terms of trophies, both won their domestic double, plus their Community Shield equivalents - and Dembele lifted the Champions League.

Dembele delivering the season he has had would have been unthinkable even seven months ago, and winning the Ballon d'Or would complete one of football's greatest revivals.

This season has already resulted in the 28-year-old being named the Champions League's player of the season and the Ligue 1 Golden Boot winner.

His career looked destined to be one of of unfulfilled potential, and he has admitted himself for years he lacked professionalism. He once cost Barcelona a fee of £96.8m, potentially rising to £135.5m.

But before this season he had only managed double figures for goals in a league campaign once, his first in senior football for Rennes (12 goals in 2015-16). Maybe he was best known in England for missing the chance to put Barca 4-0 up in their 2019 Champions League semi-final, with the Reds going on to win 4-3 on aggregate.

Even approaching the halfway point of the sea-

son, he was only having a fairly average one by his standards - with five goals before playing Lyon on 15 December.

But everything changed that day as Luis Enrique moved him from his more accustomed right-wing berth to play him at centre forward - and he netted in a 3-1 win.

That was part of a run of 18 goals in 10 games. After that he chipped in goals at a regular rate.

Even with a return of one goal in his final 10 games of the season, he ended on 33 - with 21 in the league making him Ligue 1's top scorer.

Dembele has also performed for his country, netting in Nations League wins over Belgium and Croatia - doubling his tally of competitive goals in a France shirt.

He also managed 13 assists for PSG, including two in the record-breaking 5-0 Champions League final win over Inter Milan.

"I would give the Ballon d'Or to Mr Ousmane Dembele," PSG boss Luis Enrique said in Munich.

"The way he defended, just that alone could be worth the Ballon d'Or. That's how you lead a team: goals, trophies, leadership, defence, his pressing."

Unlike Yamal, Dembele still has the Fifa Club World Cup to play in this summer to cement his claims.

Yamal is achieving things few 17-year-olds have ever done before.

Before his 18th birthday - which he will celebrate on 13 July - he has already won the European Championship with Spain, La Liga, the Copa del Rey, plus a Spanish Super Cup

while in the colours of Barca.

He has actually won two La Liga titles, as he played once as a 15-year-old in 2022-23.

But in the space of two years his influence has grown significantly as Yamal, who has already passed 100 appearances for Barcelona, scored 18 goals and made 25 assists in 55 games this season.

He was named in the Champions League team of the year after some remarkable displays - including in the thrilling semi-final defeat by Inter Milan.

"Lamine is the kind of talent that comes along every 50 years, and to see him up close really impressed me," said opposition manager Simone Inzaghi.

"He caused us huge problems because we were supposed to double up on him and it wasn't enough."

It is not just the quantity of Yamal's goals but the quality and big-game nature of them.

He netted three goals in four Clasicos against Real Madrid this season, plus a fantastic strike in that epic tie against Inter.

And he struck in the Nations League quarter-final against the Netherlands.

The CIES Football Observatory recently valued him at 400m euros (£340m).

Yamal recently signed a new six-year deal with Barca, and BBC pundit Stephen Warnock called him "a future Ballon d'Or winner".

Brazil legend Ronaldo is the youngest winner of the award at the age of 21 - so Yamal has three attempts to break that record.



EDMONTON, CANADA: Leon Draisaitl #29 of the Edmonton Oilers scores a goal on Sergei Bobrovsky #72 of the Florida Panthers during the first period in Game One of the 2025 Stanley Cup Final at Rogers Place in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Inter-District Hockey Tournaments TTS Girls and Faisalabad Boys clinch titles

FAISALABAD (APP): Toba Tek Singh (TTS) Girls' team and Faisalabad Boys' team have clinched their titles in Inter-District Hockey Girls and Boys Tournaments arranged in Hockey Stadium Madina Town in connection with Chief Minister (CM) Punjab Summer Games 2025.

According to a spokesman for Sports

Department, in the girls' final, the match between District Toba Tek Singh and District Faisalabad ended in a goalless draw during regular time.

However, the outcome was decided through penalty strokes where Toba Tek Singh triumphed with 3-2 goals and secured the championship.

He said that the Boys' final match between

District Faisalabad and District Toba Tek Singh proved to be a thrilling match.

District Faisalabad emerged victorious by scoring a decisive penalty stroke in the final moments of the game and earned the championship title.

Senior PMLN leader Mian Tahir Jameel witnessed the final event as chief guest and later he also

distributed trophies and certificates among the winning teams.

Divisional Sports Officer Shah Manzoor Fareed, Deputy Director Sports Board Punjab Zarina Waqar, District Sports Officer Sajida Lateef, Tehsil Sports Officers and officials from Faisalabad Hockey Association were also present on the occasion.

Man City's third-placed finish may be better achievement than title win, Guardiola says

BARCELONA (Reuters): Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola described his team's first trophyless season as his managerial career.

Guardiola rejected the idea that the season was disastrous, instead arguing that it may have been the most valuable of his tenure at City.

"You judge happiness if you win. You judge success if you win and win. And that is a problem," he said.

"I will not judge myself or my team because of bad seasons or good seasons... Maybe finishing third in a season and never giving up otherwise you finish 10th or 12th, maybe that's a better season than when we won the fourth Premier League in a row."

"We faced so many difficulties that were higher due to injuries, relaxation, I was not good enough... for many reasons. Maybe the analysis about my period is that the last season was better. Qualifying for the Champions League when we were on the verge of not getting it."

'WINNERS ARE BORING'

Reflecting on setbacks, Guardiola quoted former Uruguayan President Jose Mujica: "Success is how many times you stand up when you fall down." He added: "Fall down, stand up. Fall down, stand up... That is the biggest success."

"Winners are boring," he said, adding that he always looked forward to post-match interviews with players and coaches from losing sides. "It's nice to see the losers. That is when you really learn."

Despite his remarkable record, Guardiola dismissed any notion of exceptionalism. "Do you think I feel special because I won a lot of titles? No! Forget about it!" he said. "I feel that special is the doctor that saves lives. The people who invented penicillin. That is a genius. Me? Genius? Come on."

"I don't want to pretend to be humble: of course I'm good! I'm proving that over many years I'm good... But the success I had, I was chosen. In certain moments, to lead Lionel Messi and the other ones, to be in those type of

places I made incredible teams... But other managers, in the right moment, in that position, maybe they could have done the same."

Looking ahead to the upcoming season and the Club World Cup, Guardiola emphasised the importance of team spirit. "Play good. Create a good vibe, good team spirit... Try to make the new players bring us an energy that we need to lift the team again. And at the end, we can lift trophies," he said.

Guardiola also reflected on the pressures of public-facing jobs with constant scrutiny.

"The stress is always there because you are being judged every single day, but it is what it is," he said.

"Nobody put a gun to my head forcing me to choose this job. I have chosen that... There is no professional in football that wins all the time, because it's simply impossible. So, it happened last season... you accept it, improve, learn and there will be good learnings for the future."

Oilers rally, upend Panthers in OT in Game 1 of finals

FLORIDA (Reuters): Leon Draisaitl made certain that the Edmonton Oilers won't be playing from behind to start this year's Stanley Cup Final against the Florida Panthers.

After losing the first three games of the teams' seven-game series last year, the host Oilers overcame a two-goal deficit on Wednesday to post a 4-3 overtime victory over the Panthers in Game 1.

Florida's Tomas Nosek was whistled for a delay-of-game penalty late in the extra session, setting the stage for Draisaitl to cap his two-goal performance at 19:29 of overtime.

Corey Perry fed superstar captain Connor McDavid, who sent a cross-slot feed to an unmarked Draisaitl for an easy conversion from the right hashmarks.

"Obviously (McDavid) making the great play to Leon -- it's not the first time

you've seen that," Edmonton's Kasper Kapanen said. "It was a long, hard game, so it was just happy to see that go in."

Draisaitl, who also scored 66 seconds into the game, has nine goals this postseason -- including an NHL-record three in overtime, tying Perry (2017 Anaheim Ducks), Panthers forward Matthew Tkachuk (2023), Mel Hill (1939 Boston Bruins) and Maurice Richard (1951 Montreal Canadiens) for the most in one year.

"It's a good start for us, but we've got to regroup and get ready for Game 2 (on Friday in Edmonton)," Draisaitl told Sportsnet.

Florida coach Paul Maurice was asked what he plans to say to Nosek after the crucial penalty in overtime.

"You remind him after the game of being down 0-2 to Toronto (in the Eastern

Conference semifinals) and that his line came in and changed everything. We're not here without Tomas Nosek," Maurice said. "It's a tough break. We'll make sure he doesn't eat alone tonight. He has got lots of people eating at his table and reminding how good he's been to us."

Viktor Arvidsson and defenseman Mattias Ekholm each scored a goal, McDavid and Kapanen both notched two assists and Stuart Skinner made 29 saves for the Oilers.

Florida's Sam Bennett scored twice to set a franchise record with 12 goals this postseason. Eleven of his goals have come on the road, tying the NHL postseason record set by Mark Scheifele in 2018.

"Look, it's going to be a long series. We didn't expect this to be easy," Bennett said. "We can learn some things from tonight and

move on."

Brad Marchand also tallied for the Panthers. Carter Verhaeghe and defenseman Nate Schmidt each notched two assists, and Sergei Bobrovsky turned aside 42 shots.

Bennett extended Florida's lead to 3-1 two minutes into the second period. He accepted Schmidt's seam pass before shifting from backhand to forehand and then beating Skinner.

Arvidsson's shot from above the left circle hand-cuffed Bobrovsky to halve the deficit 1:17 later.

McDavid's saucer feed from behind the net found Ekholm, who wired a shot from the left circle to level the contest at 6:33 of the third. After being shut out by Florida in Game 1 of last year's Stanley Cup Final, Edmonton got the early jump just 66 seconds into the Wednesday contest.



In brief

235,044 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 235,044 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 155,670 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1465.32 feet which was 63.32 feet higher than dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 76,800 cusecs and 155,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1163.70 feet, which was 113.70 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 33,826 cusecs and 35,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 174,428, 153,583, 124,381 and 60,633 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 23,100 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 3064 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Severe heatwave expected: MO

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has issued a severe heatwave warning across most parts of the country during the upcoming Eid-ul-Adha holidays and the following week. According to the Met Office, a high-pressure system is expected to develop over the country on June 07, which will grip most regions from June 08 onwards, significantly increasing day temperatures. Daytime temperatures are expected to rise 5-7C above normal in the upper half of the country, including central and upper Punjab, Islamabad, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan from June 7-12. In the southern half, covering upper and central Sindh, southern Punjab, and parts of Balochistan, temperatures are likely to remain 4-6C above normal during the same period. Dust storms and gusty winds are also anticipated over the plains due to excessive surface heating. The Met Office has urged the general public, especially children, elderly, and women, to avoid prolonged sun exposure and stay well-hydrated. The citizens are advised to take all precautionary measures to prevent heat-related illnesses. Rising temperatures in the northern areas could accelerate the snowmelt rate, potentially affecting water flows in rivers. The authorities have urged the judicious use of water and requested farmers to plan their crop activities in line with the forecast.

IFA conducts milk checks

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) on Thursday launched surprise inspections before Eid to monitor the quality of milk being delivered in the Federal Capital and inspected 36,500 liters of milk in which 3000 liters disposed off due to poor quality. The move comes as part of a wider plan to ensure safe food reaches citizens during the festive season. Talking to APP, Deputy Director Operations of IFA, Dr Tahira Siddique said that a surprise campaign was launched in Rawat, focusing on key entry points such as GT Road and T-Chowk. During the campaign, the IFA teams checked 24 vehicles carrying milk into Islamabad. These inspections led to the examination of 36,500 litres of milk to determine whether the quality met the required safety standards.

3,500 officers on Eid duty as police tighten security

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police have finalized a comprehensive security and patrolling plan to ensure the safety of citizens during Eid-ul-Azha, deploying more than 3,500 police officers across the federal capital.

An official told APP on Thursday that the security measures are being implemented under the special direction of the Inspector General of Police (IGP). Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Muhammad Javad Tariq said that officers will be deployed at mosques, imambargahs, shopping centers, graveyards, bus terminals, railway stations, and cattle markets to maintain law and order and assist citizens.

DIG Tariq said that special deployment has been made at major shopping hubs including Jinnah Super Market, F-6, F-10, and Aabpara Market. Dolphin Force personnel

will conduct patrols in these areas to prevent any untoward incidents. DIG Tariq added that a shift-based security arrangement has also been made at the city's bus terminals, where SHOs have held meetings with terminal managers to coordinate the deployment of volunteers for public assistance.

DIG Tariq said that police presence has also been ensured at graveyards and the railway station. A dedicated force will be deployed at Faisal Mosque for crowd management during Eid prayers. Moreover, Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has prepared a comprehensive traffic management plan to maintain smooth vehicular flow and effective parking arrangements across the city.

DIG Tariq said that a special patrolling plan will be implemented during Eid holidays, with Falcon and CRT vehicles actively patrolling their assigned

sectors. Additional patrol vehicles have also been provided to local police stations to enhance vigilance. Special security measures have been taken at recreational points across Islamabad, and no parking will be allowed near places of worship.

DIG Tariq said that strict checking will be conducted at all entry and exit points of the city. Bomb Disposal Squad will carry out area checks to preempt any threats. Police teams have also been directed to patrol both urban sectors and rural areas during the holiday period. Commando units will assist local police in ensuring foolproof security.

DIG Tariq urged citizens to lock their homes securely before leaving for Eid prayers or celebrations and to stay in contact with local police. "Police officers are working round the clock to safeguard your life, property, and peace of mind," he said.

Conference held on World Environment Day

ISLAMABAD (APP): In order to celebrate World Environment Day 2025, a one-day conference was organized by the Global Trade & Tourism Center & Brain Designer at Best Western Hotel Islamabad.

Governor KP Faisal Karim Kundi was the Chief Guest on this occasion. In his opening speech, he said that environmental degradation is a serious threat to survival, changes due to climate change on the planet are causing heavy financial & infrastructural losses, besides loss of innocent lives.

Managing Director of PTDC, Aftab ur Rehman Rana, in his keynote address, made a presentation on the concept of developing Eco-friendly Hotels and Resorts in the mountain areas of Pakistan.

He said that if the protection of environment is not given due attention, we would face irreparable losses in the future, as the protection of natural landscape is the key element for the sustainability of mountain tourism.

He shared a 12-point agenda to make the hospitality sector eco-friendly, which has a significant impact on the natural environment of the mountain areas of Pakistan.

He said instead of a mushroom growth pattern, we should adopt the concept of sustainable development of tourism, where focus is on the minimization of tourism's own negative impacts, supporting local communities' livelihoods and supporting the conservation of natural and

cultural assets of tourist areas.

Rauf Raja said the whole world is in danger due to environmental pollution, climate change and global warming and the World Environment Day requires that everyone play a positive role in tackling environmental challenges.

Later on in two panel discussions, experts shared their thoughts on different segments of environment conservation and made recommendations to adopt an eco-friendly model for economic growth.

Diplomats, environmentalists, prominent personalities of the corporate sector and a large number of people from different walks of life and students participated in this conference.

Over 80% of vehicles fail emissions test

ISLAMABAD (APP): More than two-thirds of vehicles tested in Islamabad's emission monitoring campaign failed environmental standards, authorities revealed Thursday, with only 24 out of 75 vehicles passing inspections.

The joint operation by the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) and Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) at JIP Road and Subzi Mandi Thanna

checkpoint found alarming pollution levels.

Seventeen vehicles were fined for exceeding 75% smoke emissions, while four were impounded for emissions above 80% - levels described as "poison machines on wheels" by officials.

Authorities issued warnings to 30 drivers whose vehicles showed emission levels between 40-50%. "This campaign's

goal is cleaner air, not revenue collection," a Pak-EPA spokesperson emphasized, noting repeat offenders could face registration cancellation.

The year-long initiative comes as Islamabad battles worsening air quality.

Motorists are advised to service vehicles regularly and use quality fuel ahead of upcoming checks at Srinagar Highway and Murree Road this weekend.

Demand of barbecue essentials surged

ISLAMABAD (APP): The capital's residents eagerly prepare for festive barbecues, with Aabpara and G-9 Markaz markets bustling as demand surges for essentials like coal burners, skewers and knives.

With Eid just around the corner, shopkeepers are witnessing a surge in sales, highlighting the timeless

charm of outdoor cooking during the festivities.

Zaidi, a vendor at Aabpara Market, said that the demand for BBQ burners and accessories surges to nearly twice the usual levels in the days preceding Eid.

This is a profitable season for us, and the best time to sell these items," he said, while arranging stock for

eager customers. Ali, a shopper at Aabpara Market, said,

"Eid ul Adha feels incomplete without barbecue and seekh kebabs. We host a barbecue night for our family and friends every year."

However, Ali and other consumers voiced concerns over the steep rise in barbecue essentials prices, urging the government to inter-



ISLAMABAD: A tricycle loader on way loaded with sacrificial animal after purchasing from Animal Market.

Motorway police launch crackdown

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a bid to ensure safe and fair travel for commuters, the National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) have launched a nationwide campaign targeting overcharging and overloading by public transport operators during the Eid-ul-Azha.

According to the spokesperson of the Motorway Police, all bus companies have been strictly directed to refrain from charging passengers more than the officially approved fares. "Strict action will be taken against violators," said Additional Inspector General (IG) of the North Region.

"Heavy fines will be imposed on transporters found guilty of overloading or overcharging," the Additional IG warned. "No concession will be granted when it comes to the fitness of passenger vehicles."

Passenger vehicles operating without valid route permits and fitness certificates will be sent back and barred from entering the motorways. Authorities emphasized that only roadworthy vehicles will be allowed to operate to ensure passenger safety.

As part of the campaign, Motorway Police officers were holding briefings at different sections of motorways for passenger vehicle drivers. The officers outlined the consequences of overloading and speeding, emphasizing the importance of adhering to regulations for a safer journey.

The Motorway Police has reiterated its commitment to providing safe, smooth, and fair travel for all commuters.

For any complaints or assistance, travelers are encouraged to contact the Motorway Police Helpline at 130.

CDA mobilizes massive cleanup force for Eid

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority has launched its largest-ever Eid-ul-Azha cleanliness operation, deploying 2,500 sanitation workers and 250 vehicles across the federal capital.

The emergency measures come as the city prepares to handle more than 10,000 tons of sacrificial animal waste during the three-day festival.

Sanitation Director Tariq Ali told APP that the capital has been divided into five operational zones, with 107 specially-prepared disposal pits at 55 locations. He said authorities have established two 24-hour emergency control rooms at the Sanitation Directorate (G-6/1-4) and Fire Headquarters (G-7/4), along with a central complaint center at Safe City in Sector H-11.

Residents can report waste collection issues

through multiple channels including the sanitation helpline (1334 or 9213908), phone calls (9203216, 9211555), or WhatsApp / SMS (03355001213).

The CDA, Ali said has distributed biodegradable bags across urban and rural areas and warned against illegal dumping in drains, forests or public bins.

Sanitation director said special arrangements for rural areas, with union councils handling cleanup in 15 suburban regions. "We've learned from previous years," Ali said. "Our sector-wise teams and modern equipment will ensure timely waste removal."

He warned of strict legal action against violators, particularly those slaughtering animals outside designated areas.

He noted that the cleanup operation will con-

tinue until all sacrificial waste is properly disposed of, with special focus on major sectors during the first two days of Eid before shifting to suburban areas.

Meanwhile, Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa announced the cancellation of all sanitation staff holidays during a high-level meeting Wednesday. "We're implementing a foolproof system to keep Islamabad clean and disease-free," Randhawa said. "Our teams will work round-the-clock, but public cooperation is equally crucial."

Randhawa appealed to citizens: "Help us maintain Islamabad's beauty. Proper waste disposal protects everyone's health."

ANF recovers 67 kg of drugs in 5 operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), conducting five operations across the country, recovered as many as 67.287 kilograms of drugs worth more than Rs 6.76 million and arrested five suspects, including a woman, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Thursday.

He informed that 61 capsules filled with 337 grams of ice were recovered from the stomach of a passenger travelling to Qatar from Allama Iqbal International Airport.

As many as 30 grams of weed were recovered from a parcel sent from the US at the courier office in Sialkot, and the suspect was arrested.

In another operation, 120 grams of MDMA powder was recovered from a parcel sent to Karachi at the cargo office at Allama Iqbal International Airport.

Similarly, 9.6 kg of opium and 2.4 kg of hashish were recovered from two suspects, including a woman near Kak Pul, Islamabad. As much as 43.2 kg of hashish and 6.6 kg of opium were recovered from a vehicle near the Islamabad Motorway Toll Plaza, and the two suspects were arrested.

Cases have been registered against the arrested suspects under the Narcotics Control Act, and further investigations are underway.

NLPD donates books to govt colleges

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Language Promotion Department (NLPD) has gifted a collection of its published books to the libraries of government educational institutions across the country.

A special ceremony to this effect was held under the premises of NLPD the other day. Director General of the NLPD, Professor Dr. Muhammad Saleem Mazhar, presented sets of books to the heads of various colleges.

More than 25 principals, both male and female, from public sector colleges participated in the event and received books for their respective libraries.

While addressing the gathering, Dr. Mazhar stated that the department possessed a rich collection of high-quality books that it aims to distribute to libraries in public educational institutions nationwide.

"Our objective is to nurture a love for reading among the youth and to acquaint them with the richness of Urdu language and literature," he remarked.

He further emphasized

Experts urge circular economy, policy reform & grassroots action

ISLAMABAD (APP): Experts on the World Environment Day 2025 webinar on Thursday urged the government and stakeholders to join forces for promoting circular economy, policy reform and grassroots action to tackle plastic pollution.

The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) convened a high-level webinar to mark World Environment Day 2025, bringing together a diverse panel of policymakers, experts, development partners, and private sector stakeholders to tackle the growing challenge of plastic pollution, and to promote circular economy models aligned with the global theme: "Beat Plastic Pollution," said a press release.

Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director SDPI, said: "Plastic isn't the real problem—it's the way we manage it." He underscored

the need for a system approach, involving plastic segregation, recycling infrastructure, and climate justice, stressing that Pakistan must not bear the burden of Western overconsumption. "Those exporting their plastic waste must co-finance our waste management and technology transfer."

Opening the session, Ubaidur Rehman Zia, Head of Energy Unit at SDPI, emphasized the deep interlinkages between pollution and plastics, stating that the health and ecological toll on Pakistan has become unsustainable.

He stressed that reuse and circularity should take precedence, and that waste-to-energy should be treated as a last resort. A call was made for policy-centric and diplomatically aligned action plans moving forward.

Dr Hassan Daud Butt, Head of Energy (China),

lauded SDPI's efforts as a torchbearer of clean energy, stating: "It's time for tangible action. Any environmental effort today is an investment in future generations."

He called for cross-border climate cooperation, citing China's recent reduction of 1% CO2 emissions amidst economic growth. Dr Butt emphasized making green solutions "fashionable and affordable," particularly electric vehicles, and suggested CPEC Phase 2 be turned into a Green Energy Accelerator for off-grid solutions in regions like Gilgit Baltistan and KP.

Dr Irfan Yousaf highlighted that plastic waste would be recognized as a top-tier development challenge. He suggested reusing plastics in construction, industrial design, and local crafts, especially in Karachi and Lahore where informal innovation

thrives. However, he warned against bans on single-use plastics without viable alternatives, advocating for inclusive approaches that create jobs and empower marginalized communities.

Asad Mehmood, an energy expert, pointed to the critical governance gap, emphasizing the need for local governments to lead in managing plastic use transitions and engage with communities to ensure inclusive data collection and decision-making.

Hammad Bashir, an expert from PFAN (Private Financing Advisory Network), shared success stories of clean energy and circularity projects that have mobilized over \$3.5 billion globally, with several exclusive projects in Pakistan. From women-led recycling firms in Lahore to automated plastic vending machines in Karachi, Pakistan's private sector is

innovating but needs financial and regulatory support to scale.

Saleha Qureshi, Head of Industrial Decarbonization Programme, called for a more systemic and coordinated approach to waste management and decarbonization. She cited Pakistan's 40 million tonnes/day waste production as a "massive opportunity" for industrial recycling and suggested utilizing agricultural residue as a clean fuel substitute in cement production.

She also flagged the absence of a regulatory framework for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), particularly regarding solar panel recycling. ILO's Razi Haider Mujtaba raised a vital human dimension: the poor working conditions of workers in the plastic value chain, many lacking PPEs, contracts, or safety nets. He urged the inclusion of these

informal workers in all strategies, stating, "Decent work must be the foundation of any circular economy transition."

WWF's Nazifa Butt echoed the urgency, pointing to poor infrastructure and drainage systems clogged by plastics in urban centers like Islamabad. She emphasized the need for on-ground actions, proper landfills, and investment in climate-smart waste management, especially in neglected regions.

Humaira Jahanzeb from the Living Indus Initiative emphasized that plastic pollution is both a waste and development issue. With wetlands revival, social inclusion, and the Indus ecosystem at stake, she called for harmonized policies that integrate plastic management with long-term climate resilience.

Representing SwitchAsia, Ranga Pallawalla called plastic pollution part

of the "Triple Planetary Crisis" (climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution). He highlighted that EPR frameworks should go beyond compliance, and foster innovation in plastic design to reduce environmental impact.

Zia Hyder Naqi from Spel Group critiqued Pakistan's poor data infrastructure, noting that real plastic waste may be overestimated due to lack of verifiable data.

He advocated for creating intrinsic value for plastics to promote voluntary recycling—much like PET bottles.

Concluding the event, Dr Zainab Naeem, SDPI's Head of Circularity and moderator of the webinar, emphasized: "Plastic regulations are meaningless without infrastructure and implementation. We must build consensus, commit to action, and move from intention to execution."

Earthquake hits Badakhshan

KABUL (Khaama Press): A 5.3 magnitude earthquake struck Badakhshan province, shaking border areas with China and Tajikistan. The EMSC has reported a moderate earthquake that shook parts of northeastern Afghanistan late Wednesday night. According to EMSC, the earthquake occurred at approximately 11:59 PM local time on June 4, affecting areas in Badakhshan province and neighboring regions bordering China and Tajikistan.

1000 Afghan migrant returned

KABUL (BNA): Over 1000 Afghan migrant families have returned to Afghanistan from Pakistan and Iran through various transit routes. The High Commission for Addressing Refugee Problems reported that 1026 migrant families comprising a total of 4501 individuals who forcibly repatriated to the country. These families have been arrived to the country through several key transit points, including Torkham-Nangarhar, Spin Boldak-Kandahar and among other routes.

Kabul urges UN to enable access to Afghans in Europe



KABUL (Pajhwok): Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs Maulvi Amir Khan Muttaqi has called on the head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to ensure that its reports accurately reflect the realities on the ground. During a meeting with UNAMA head Roza Otunbayeva, Muttaqi urged that the caretaker government be allowed access to address the concerns of Afghan nationals in Europe, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) said in a statement.

The two sides discussed a range of issues, including the needs of returning refugees, the challenges faced by Afghans abroad, recent developments within the country, private sector growth, investment promotion, and other key topics.

Muttaqi highlighted the need for the Afghan government to be able to reach its citizens in Europe in order to offer consular services, resolve legal matters, and safeguard their human rights.

He urged UNAMA to ensure its reports convey the country's progress and stability to the international community in a balanced and accurate manner.

Otunbayeva reaffirmed the United Nations' commitment to supporting the Afghan people. She noted that UNAMA is working to attract investment into Afghanistan to create jobs and improve conditions for returning refugees.

She added that international assistance to Afghanistan now goes beyond humanitarian aid, extending into development support.

Otunbayeva pledged to share updates on Afghanistan's progress and to relay the caretaker government's perspectives at upcoming United Nations Security Council (UNSC) meetings.

10m Afghans in need of emergency food aid

KABUL (Amu TV): Nearly 10 million people in Afghanistan require emergency food assistance to survive, the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) said in a report released Thursday, warning that the country remains one of the world's most acute hunger hotspots.

According to the WFP, an estimated 21 percent of the Afghan population is facing high levels of acute food insecurity, with projections showing that conditions could deteriorate further between May and October 2025.

Of the nearly 10 million affected, 1.6 million people — or about 4 percent of the population — are classified as being in the "emergency" phase of food insecurity, while another 7.93 million people (17 percent) are in the "crisis" phase, the report said.

Despite the alarming figures, the WFP noted a slight improvement compared to earlier this year. From March to April 2025, approximately 12.6 million people, or 27 percent of the population, were experiencing severe food insecurity.

The report attributed the improvement to several factors, including increased humanitarian food assistance, emergency agricultural support, modest economic growth, and a decline in active conflict across the country.

However, the WFP cautioned that these gains remain fragile. Ongoing climate-related risks, economic instability, and a recent 40 percent cut in humanitarian food security funding threaten to reverse progress and place additional pressure on Afghanistan's most vulnerable households.

"The reductions in aid, combined with environmental and socio-economic stresses, pose a serious risk to families already on the edge," the agency warned.

Afghanistan has faced a complex web of overlapping crises in recent years, including conflict, economic collapse, climate shocks, and widespread poverty — all of which continue to challenge international efforts to stabilize food security in the country.

New medical equipment to boost healthcare services

GHAZNI (TOLONews): Medical equipment and vehicles worth around 30 million afghani have been donated by the Ministry of Public Health and some aid organizations to several hospitals in Ghazni.

The donated items include oxygen generators, ultrasound machines, ambulances, and motorcycles, which have been distributed not only to hospitals in Ghazni's provincial center but also to clinics in its districts.

Officials stated that the newly provided equipment will enhance healthcare services and reduce the difficulties people face in accessing medical facilities.

Zarak Zarak, head of Ghazni's Public Health Department, said: "We will distribute seven ambulances, six ultrasound machines, 33 motorcycles, and an oxygen generator to the clinics in the center and districts to better serve the public."

Samin Nikofar, a provincial officer from the supporting organization, said: "The ambulances, ultrasound machines, and motorcycles are designated for Ghazni center and districts such as Ajristan, Andar, and Qarabagh, where people are very underprivileged."

Hamid Gul, a resident of Ajristan district, expressed satisfaction, saying: "We desperately needed this equipment. Our patients often died while being transferred to hospitals; with these ambulances and motorcycles, 90% of our problems will be solved."

Meanwhile, local officials have assured better service to the people.

Abdul Rashid Omari, deputy governor of Ghazni, stated: "Today is our day of trial. With the system that God Almighty has given us, we are being tested. We must serve the people in the right way."

According to Ghazni's Public Health Department, in the solar year 1403 (2024-2025), 3.6 million patients were treated in 180 medical centers across the province.

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Aid delivered in Paktia to 525 deportee families



PAKTIA (TOLONews): Food and non-food items have been distributed to 525 migrant families in Paktia province who were recently deported from Pakistan.

According to officials, each family received a bed, three blankets, food supplies, and kitchen utensils.

Nisar Ahmad Nijat, head of the Paktia Department of Disaster Management, said: "The aid is being given to migrants who have recently returned to the country. It includes five items of food and non-food supplies. These families had been surveyed earlier, and the distribution process started today."

Meanwhile, the newly deported families from Pakistan are urging the authorities to provide permanent shelters and employment opportunities.

Mohammad Tariq, one of the recent deportees, told TOLONews: "It is necessary to create job opportunities and build shelters for the people."

Bahadar, another deportee from Pakistan, said: "We cannot afford to build proper shelters for ourselves; even if we manage to cover the roof of a house, we can't afford doors and windows. We are all poor and destitute people."

However, Paktia's local officials said that the process of distributing land plots to the recently returned migrants in a township in Gardez city has begun.

Azizullah Qanit, a representative of the Paktia governor's office, said: "You are aware that the migrant township has been inaugurated, and currently, one hundred houses are under construction there. An independent committee has been established, and the houses will later be distributed. For those without homes, tents have been allocated, and assistance has been planned for all returnees."

In the second phase of the forced deportation of Afghan migrants from Pakistan, so far 525 families have returned to Paktia.

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Kabul Governor announces full preparations for Eidul Azha

KABUL (TOLONews): Aminullah Obaid, the Governor of Kabul, announced that necessary preparations have been made for the celebration of Eid al-Adha in the province. He said that, to ensure better coordination, a special committee has been formed with representatives from various ministries and relevant institutions.

While assuring the public about the security measures in the capital, he urged citizens to cooperate with security forces during the Eid days.

"Eid day is a special day and holds great importance in Islam. Thankfully, meetings have been held and full preparations are in place. God willing, we assure the people of Kabul," Aminullah Obaid said.

According to the Governor, specific programs have been designed to ensure security and order throughout the city.

He further explained: "We have a special committee comprising representatives from different departments, including Kabul Municipality, the Traffic Department, Police, and Intelligence, aimed at facilitating services for the people of Kabul."

Meanwhile, some Kabul residents have also called for effective security management during Eid.

Atiqullah, one of the residents of Kabul, said: "Security is currently good, but maintaining it is crucial so that people can go out for recreation and Eid visits."

Shukrullah, another Kabul resident, said: "Crowding should be prevented. When there is too much congestion, problems arise."

According to the announcement from the Supreme Court of the Islamic Emirate, Eid al-Adha will be celebrated across Afghanistan on Saturday, June 7.

Eid al-Adha is celebrated annually by Muslims around the world.

KABUL (Ariana News): The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has expressed alarm over the spread of plastic waste, warning that even Afghanistan's most remote valleys are now being affected by growing pollution.

In a statement marking World Environment Day (June 5), UNAMA called for an urgent end to the use of single-use plastics, urging Afghans and the international community to prioritize environmental protection.

"Even isolated regions are not immune to the creeping threat of plastic pollution," the mission stated via its official Facebook page.

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UN warns of plastic waste in Afghanistan

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HR organizations condemn rising execution of Afghans

KABUL (Khaama Press): Over 80 human rights organizations have condemned the alarming rise in executions of Afghan citizens in Iran, urging immediate international intervention. More than 80 human rights organizations have jointly expressed deep concern over a three-fold increase in the execution of Afghan nationals in Iran. In a recent statement, they have called for an immediate halt to this alarming trend.

According to reports, at least 80 Afghan citizens were executed in Iran in 2024, a significant rise compared to only 25 executions reported in 2023. This surge highlights a sharp increase in capital punishment targeting this vulnerable group.

The trend has continued into the first five months of 2025, during which 32 Afghan detainees have been reportedly executed in Iranian prisons. These executions have largely occurred with little to no public disclosure, with only six of the 80 cases in 2024 officially acknowledged by Iranian sources.

Most of these executions are related to drug-related offenses. Human rights activists argue that the judicial process in these cases is deeply flawed, citing unfair trials, confessions extracted under torture, and denial of access to lawyers chosen by the accused, thereby violating fundamental legal rights.

The joint statement describes these mass executions as part of the Iranian regime's repressive policies aimed at instilling fear. It also condemns the use of anti-Afghan rhetoric as a justification for these harsh measures.

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Global support key to reducing Afghanistan mental health crisis

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) says despite three years of progress in Afghanistan's mental health sector, significant challenges remain. The ministry emphasizes that sustained international support is critical to strengthening mental health services in the country.

In 2019, MoPH reported that 47% of Afghanistan's then 32-million population suffered from mental health issues, including depression. At the time, officials had noted that 26% of these cases were severe enough to disrupt individuals' daily lives.

Last year, a representative of the World Health Organization (WHO) for the Eastern Mediterranean Region stated that half of Afghanistan's population is affected by mental distress.

In an exclusive interview with Pajhwok News, Dr. Waheedullah Afghan, head of MoPH's Mental Health Department, highlighted the likelihood that mental health issues had further increased. He stressed the need for a new nationwide survey to obtain accurate data on the current scale of the problem.

Dr. Afghan identified several long-standing factors contributing to the country's mental health crisis, including over four decades of conflict, unemployment, poverty, domestic and societal violence, migration, and a chronic lack of mental health services.

Budget shortages, aid cuts

Dr. Afghan noted that since mental health services are integrated into the general healthcare system, no dedicated budget currently exists for this purpose. He argued that allocating a proper per-capita budget could significantly help reduce the burden of mental illness.

"We are facing a serious problem, and continued international support is vital," he said. "Afghans need healthcare services more than ever before."

His comments come amid an ongoing funding crisis. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the suspension of US foreign aid has significantly affected humanitarian programs in Afghanistan, hampering disaster preparedness and essential services like healthcare.

US President Donald Trump, upon returning to the White House, issued an executive order suspending foreign development aid pending a full review—further impacting Afghanistan's fragile health system.

Shortage of mental health specialists

According to Dr. Afghan, Afghanistan currently needs around 3,000 trained mental health counselors to meet national demand. However, only about 1,100 counselors are active—600 women and 500 men.

He explained mental health counselors held at least a diploma or bachelor's degree in mental health and have also received specialized training.

There are currently between 130 and 150 mental health specialists across the country, most of whom are men. Dr. Afghan stressed that an equal number of additional specialists are required, but only 10 to 12 graduate each year from psychiatric training programs.

"Patients initially receive awareness and non-medication therapy from counselors," he said. "If their condition worsens, they are referred to trained general doctors or specialists for further care."

Dr. Afghan clarified that doctors who complete a short-term training course (e.g., six days) in mental health are considered "trained," but they are not psychiatrists or psychologists. In complex cases, they must refer patients to qualified mental health professionals.

Currently, Afghanistan has around 21,000 trained healthcare workers who have received brief training in mental health. These include general practitioners, nurses, and midwives who undergo 3- to 6-day courses focused on early diagnosis, basic intervention, initial counseling, and effective referral protocols.

The aim of these trainings, he said, is to integrate mental health services into the broader public health system.

Development programs, services expansion

Dr. Afghan noted that there are currently 440 comprehensive health centers across all 34 provinces, each employing at least one mental health counselor.

In addition, there is one specialized mental health ward in each of Afghanistan's four regional zones. Kabul hosts a 100-bed psychiatric hospital, while other zones have mental health centers with 20 to 40 beds.

"The Mental Health Department aims to establish a dedicated mental health unit in every province," Dr. Afghan said. "We also plan to add a psychosocial counselor to each comprehensive health center to ensure equitable access to services for both men and women."

Achievements over the past 3 years

Dr. Afghan shared several key accomplishments from the last three years:

New mental health units have been established in the provinces of Nimroz, Farah, Badakhshan, Bamyan, and Ghor. A 50-bed psychiatric ward has been opened in Kandahar.

The department has launched a series of national initiatives to improve mental health services, including:

Expanding mental health integration at both primary and secondary healthcare levels.

Training doctors, nurses, and healthcare workers in diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders.

Establishing mental health wards in public hospitals.

Providing individual, group, and family counseling for people affected by violence, migration, or personal trauma.

Conducting awareness campaigns in health centers, schools, and media platforms.

Working to reduce social stigma against individuals with mental illness.

Empowering and training hundreds of counselors and nurses.

Training more than 500 new psychosocial counselors.

Launching tele-counseling services, including mental health mobile apps and helplines.

Dr. Afghan added that the ministry is also engaging with religious leaders, teachers, and media professionals to help shift public attitudes and reduce stigma surrounding mental health issues.

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ISLAMABAD: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur called on by delegation comprising high ups of cement factories.

Trump slaps new travel ban on 12 countries

WASHINGTON (AFP): US President Donald Trump signed a new travel ban Wednesday targeting 12 countries including Afghanistan, Iran and Yemen, reviving one of the most controversial measures from his first term.

Trump said the measure was spurred by a makeshift flamethrower attack on a Jewish protest in Colorado that US authorities blamed on a man they said was in the country illegally. The ban targets nationals of Afghanistan, Myanmar, Chad, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Haiti, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen.

Trump also imposed a partial ban on travelers from seven countries: Burundi, Cuba, Laos, Sierra Leone, Togo, Turkmenistan and Venezuela. Both go into effect on Monday, the White House said.

"The recent terror attack in Boulder, Colorado has underscored the extreme dangers posed to our country by the entry of foreign nationals who are not properly vetted," Trump said in a video message from the Oval Office posted on X. "We don't want them." Trump compared the new measures to the "powerful" ban he imposed on a number of mainly Muslim countries in his first term, which caused huge travel disruption across the world. The US leader said that 2017 ban had stopped the United States suffering terror attacks that happened in Europe.

"We will not let what happened in Europe happen in America," Trump said. "We cannot have open migra-

tion from any country where we cannot safely and reliably vet and screen. That is why today I am signing a new executive order placing travel restrictions on countries including Yemen, Somalia, Haiti, Libya, and numerous others." "Being in the United States is a great risk for anyone, not just for Venezuelans," Venezuela's Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello said after the announcement, warning citizens against travel there.

Trump's new travel ban could however face legal challenges, as have many of the drastic measures he has taken in his whirlwind return to office. The White House unveiled the new ban with virtually no warning, minutes after Trump had addressed some 3,000 political appointees from his balcony at a celebratory "summer soiree." Trump also unusually made the announcement with no reporters present. He has unveiled many of his most headline-grabbing policy announcements at signing ceremonies in front of journalists in the Oval Office.

Rumors of a new Trump travel ban had circulated following the attack in Colorado, with his administration vowing to pursue "terrorists" living in the US on visas. Suspect Mohammed Sabry Soliman is alleged to have thrown fire bombs and sprayed burning gasoline at a group of people who had gathered on Sunday in support of Israeli hostages held by Hamas. US Homeland Security officials said Soliman was in the country illegally, having overstayed a tourist visa, but that he had

applied for asylum in September 2022.

"President Trump is fulfilling his promise to protect Americans from dangerous foreign actors that want to come to our country and cause us harm," White House Deputy Press Secretary Abigail Jackson said on X. "These commonsense restrictions are country-specific and include places that lack proper vetting, exhibit high visa overstay rates, or fail to share identity and threat information." Trump's proclamation gave specific reasons for each country in his proclamation, which says it is aimed at protecting the United States from "foreign terrorists and other national security" threats.

For Taliban-ruled Afghanistan and war-torn Libya, Sudan, Somalia and Yemen, it said they lacked "competent" central authorities for processing passports and vetting. Yemen, where American forces have struck Iranian-backed Houthi rebels, was also the "site of active US military operations," it said.

Iran, with which the United States is in negotiations on a possible nuclear deal, was included as it is a "state sponsor of terrorism," the order said. For most of the other countries, Trump's order cited an above average likelihood that people would overstay their visas. Trump separately on Wednesday announced a ban on visas for foreign students who are set to begin attending Harvard University, ramping up his crackdown on what he regards as a bastion of liberalism.

DG ISA holds meeting with Tarar

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Director General Information Service Academy (ISA) Mubashir Tauqir Shah on Thursday held a farewell meeting with Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar.

The minister presented a shield of honour to Mubashir Tauqir Shah on his retirement in recognition of his outstanding services in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Speaking on the occasion, Attaullah Tarar said that Mubashir Tauqir Shah's services in the fields of the Ministry of Information, media and mass communication were exemplary.

He said Mubashir Tauqir Shah had always prioritized national interest and professional integrity. Under his leadership, the Information Service Academy played a prominent role in training young officers, Attaullah Tarar maintained.

Mubashir Tauqir Shah said he was grateful to the Ministry of Information, fellow officers and staff and was proud of his career in the Ministry of Information. He prayed that the Ministry of Information continues to play a full role in strengthening the national narrative in the future as well. It should be noted that Mubashir Tauqir Shah has also performed his duties as Additional Secretary, Ministry of Information and Managing Director, Pakistan Television Corporation.

IHC puts off Al-Qadir Trust case hearing

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday adjourned the hearing of the petitions, seeking suspension of sentences awarded to former prime minister and PTI founder Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi in 190 million Pound case (Al-Qadir Trust case) until June 11 when the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) told the court it needed time to prepare arguments for the case.

Acting IHC Chief Justice (CJ) Justice Sarfaraz Dogar and Justice Muhammad Asif heard the petitions. Earlier, talking to the media at the IHC, PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan said he was hopeful that the nation would hear good news just two days ahead of Eidul Azha. "In routine, such cases are decided within a month," he said, adding it was for the first time that the IHC was hearing the petitions, seeking suspension of a sentence awarded to Imran Khan. "For the first time, somebody from the prosecution would appear in the court in connection with the case."

Gohar further said that the three-time prime minister Nawaz Sharif had been granted bail 70 days after his first conviction, while 51 days after he was convicted for the second time. He went on to say that on August 3, the PTI founder would complete his two years at Adiala Jail. When a reporter asked him whether former Sindh governor Muhammad Zubair was going to join the PTI, the party chairman replied that the party's doors were open for all and sundry.

At a time when the hearing was in progress at the IHC's courtroom, PTI leaders, including Aliya Hamza, Amir Dogar, Kanwal Shauzab and Barrister Gohar, kept shouting slogans in support of the release of Imran Khan.

Dispute on water leaves 4 dead in Jamrud

E.P. Report

JAMRUD: At least four people, including a woman, lost their lives in a shooting incident triggered by a water dispute in Jamrud, a subdivision of Khyber District on Thursday.

Police said, the tragic event occurred in the Ghundi Sikandar Khel area of Multan Khel in Jamrud, where an argument over water escalated into gunfire. Three individuals, including two brothers died on the scene. A woman who sustained injuries in the incident later succumbed to her wounds at the hospital.

Belarus Commander, Air Chief vows to boost defence ties

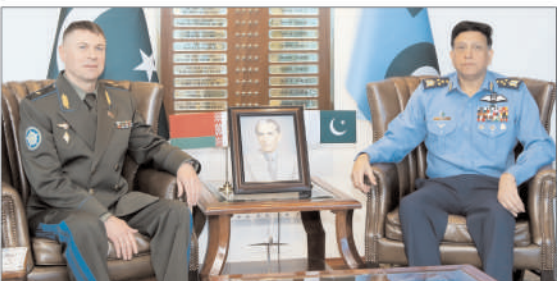
E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A high level defence delegation led by Major General Andrei Yulianovich Lukyanovich, Commander of the Air Force & Air Defence of Belarus, called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force at Air Headquarters Islamabad.

During the meeting, a wide array of mutual interests related to air power and military cooperation were thoroughly discussed. The discussions also reaffirmed the mutual commitment of both nations to further strengthening their long-standing bilateral relations, with both sides agreeing to sustain close and continuous engagement between their respective Air Forces.

On his arrival, a smartly turned out contingent of Pakistan Air Force presented Guard of Honour to Major General Andrei Yulianovich Lukyanovich. During the meeting, Chief of the Air Staff highlighted the robust bilateral military ties between the two countries and assured that PAF is committed to extending full support for the basic to tactical-level training of pilots and maintenance crews for capacity building of Belarus Air Force.

He reiterated his resolve to consolidate the existing bilateral Air Force to Air Force ties between the two countries by enhancing col-



laboration, particularly in the areas of training, technological development and operational capability. A key highlight of the meeting was the mutual consensus on enhancing Air Force-to-Air Force cooperation through a variety of domains. This includes the initiation of high-level exchange programs aimed at fostering professional development between the two Air Forces.

Major General Andrei Yulianovich Lukyanovich expressed his sincere gratitude for the warm hospitality extended to him underscoring the long-standing bond of friendship between Pakistan and Belarus. The visiting dignitary conveyed keen interest of Belarus Air Force in learning from Pakistan Air Force's rich operational experience, particularly in the context of wartime operations.

He also acknowledged PAF's professionalism and effectiveness in complex operational environments and shared his Air Force's eagerness to draw lessons from PAF's combat-tested doctrines and training

regimes. Major General Andrei Yulianovich Lukyanovich shared his earnest desire for structured and formal training programs to be conducted by PAF for Belarus Air Force personnel, indicating a new chapter of collaboration in capacity-building and operational proficiency.

The Commander of the Air Force & Air Defence of Belarus extended an invite to CAS PAF seeking his participation in upcoming important and acclaimed defence related events in Belarus, to bolster this relationship further by expanding and exploring new avenues for collaboration. Both sides agreed to work on the modalities of the visit, with the aim of furthering the strategic dialogue and exploring new avenues for bilateral defence cooperation. This visit of Major General Andrei Yulianovich Lukyanovich to Air Headquarters, Islamabad highlights the strong commitment of both nations to further enhance their military partnership through continued dialogue and collaboration.

Saif blast Centre' policies

E.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, Barrister Dr. Saif, has stated that the "fake" federal government has plunged the country into a state of complete lawlessness and disorder.

He questioned the legitimacy of the Chief Election Commissioner's continued presence in office, asking, "On what grounds is the Chief Election Commissioner still holding his position? His term expired long ago, yet he clings to the post. Under what legal or constitutional authority is he drawing a salary and receiving bene-

fits funded by taxpayers' money?"

Dr. Saif alleged that the only "service" the Chief Election Commissioner has rendered is the worst electoral rigging in the country's history. "If the Sharif family holds him in such high regard, they should hire him as a personal employee instead of burdening the national treasury," he remarked.

He further stated that the form 47 federal government is repaying political favors using national resources. "On one hand, they facilitated the theft of the people's mandate; on the other, they are granting illegal perks at the taxpayers' expense," he said. Calling the Chief Election

Commissioner's continued tenure a blatant defiance of the Constitution and the law, Dr. Saif accused the federal government of unlawfully retaining him in office out of gratitude for past favors.

"The Chief Election Commissioner committed an unprecedented robbery of the people's mandate through Form 47. There is no historical parallel to such a disgraceful act," he asserted.

Dr. Saif concluded by stating that this act has brought international embarrassment to the country and that the Chief Election Commissioner must be held accountable for stealing the public mandate.

Number of proposals made for budget

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A number of proposals have been put forward for their incorporation in the national budget for the next financial year (FY), 2025-26. As per the document available with the 24News TV channel, a proposal has been made to allocate Rs3 billion for additional suits for the members of the parliament (MPs).

The document informs that 500 servant quarters will also be built under the project. Furthermore, there is a proposal to earmark Rs4 billion for the Karachi Coastal Power Project and an equal amount of money for an IT Park in Karachi.

Likewise, a budget of over Rs4.90 billion has been proposed for building a Technology Park in Islamabad; a budget of Rs3 billion for the Islamabad Safe City Project; a budget of Rs2.59 billion for the Digital Economy Project NADRA, and a budget of Rs2 billion for the Islamabad development package. Similarly, there is a proposal to allocate Rs1.97 billion for the digital economy project and Rs500 million for the Prime Minister's IT Startup Programme.

Russian drone strike kills five in Ukraine attacks

MOSCOW: A Russian drone strike has killed five people in the northern town of Pryluky in Chernihiv region, including three members of one family, Ukrainian authorities said. Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko said on Thursday morning that a local first responder's wife, daughter and one-year-old grandson were killed in the attack.

Regional Governor Viacheslav Chaus said the family was among five people killed when Russia launched six drones to attack the town overnight. Six others were admitted to hospital, he said. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy slammed the attacks and accused Moscow of "constantly trying to buy time for itself to continue killing."

"When it does not feel strong enough condemnation and pressure from the world - it kills again," he wrote on X. Zelenskyy said Russia launched 103 drones and one ballistic missile overnight targeting the Donetsk, Kharkiv, Odesa, Sumy, Chernihiv, Dnipro and Kherson regions. "This is yet another reason to impose maximum sanctions and put pressure together. We expect action from the United States, Europe, and everyone in the world who can really

help change these terrible circumstances," he urged.

In the northeastern city of Kharkiv, 18 people were injured, including four children, in a Russian drone attack, Klymenko said. Resident Anastasia Meleshchenko told the Reuters news agency that the overnight strike had flown into her neighbour's apartment, and she managed to run out into the hallway with her child. "Yesterday, workers had just finished repair work in my apartment after the previous attack," she said.

There was no immediate comment from Russia. Later on Thursday, Ukrainian authorities said two people were killed in a Russian attack on army training facilities in the Poltava region, eastern Ukraine the previous day. "Doctors unfortunately failed to save the lives of two people who were wounded as a result of an enemy attack on the training ground," senior regional official, Volodymyr Kohut, wrote on Telegram.

In Russia, Ukraine's military said it struck missile systems in the Bryansk region, which it said were preparing to attack Ukraine. The attacks come days after Ukraine targeted four of Russia's military airfields in Siberia and the far north in an operation

using 117 unmanned aerial vehicles launched from containers close to the targets, codenamed "Spider's Web". Russia also accused it of blowing up rail bridges in the south of the country, killing seven people.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said on Thursday that Russia will respond to the attacks as and when its military sees fit. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said on Thursday that the warplanes that were held in the facilities were damaged and would be restored. Two US officials told Reuters that Washington assesses that up to 20 warplanes were hit and about 10 were destroyed.

In recent weeks, fighting and aerial attacks have escalated despite the two warring sides holding direct talks in Türkiye aimed at ending the conflict. Reporting from Kyiv, Al Jazeera's John Hendren said, the "US embassy has warned US citizens here in Ukraine that major strikes are to come. "Donald Trump, the US president, said in a conversation with [Russian President] Vladimir Putin that lasted about an hour and 15 minutes that Putin was going to have to retaliate for the strikes on Russian airfields," Hendren said. — Al Jazeera

Trump and Xi speak as trade worries mount

BEIJING/WASHINGTON (Reuters): US President Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping spoke on Thursday in a phone call intended to hash out differences on tariffs that have roiled the global economy, according to China's embassy in Washington.

The talks were at Trump's request, China said, without providing further details about the leaders' conversation. The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The highly anticipated call comes amid accusations between Washington and Beijing in recent weeks over critical minerals in a dispute that threatens to tear up a fragile truce in the trade war between the two biggest economies.

The countries struck a 90-day deal on May 12 to roll back some of the triple-digit, tit-for-tat tariffs they had placed on each other since Trump's January inauguration. Though stocks rallied, the temporary deal did not

address broader concerns that strain the bilateral relationship, from the illicit fentanyl trade to the status of democratically governed Taiwan and US complaints about China's state-dominated, export-driven economic model.

On Thursday, US stocks ticked higher initially but were little changed after news of the call. Since returning to the White House in January, Trump has repeatedly threatened an array of punitive measures on trading partners, only to revoke some of them at the last minute. The on-again, off-again approach has baffled world leaders and spooked business executives, who say the uncertainty has made it difficult to forecast market conditions. China's decision in April to suspend exports of a wide range of critical minerals and magnets continues to disrupt supplies needed by automakers, computer chip manufacturers and military contractors around the world. Beijing sees mineral exports as a

source of leverage - halting those exports could put domestic political pressure on the Republican US president if economic growth sags because companies cannot produce mineral-powered products. The 90-day deal to roll back tariffs and trade restrictions is tenuous. Trump has accused China of violating the agreement and has ordered curbs on chip design software and other shipments to China, while also doubling steel and aluminium tariffs to 50%. Beijing rejected the claim and threatened countermeasures.

In recent years, the United States has identified China as its top geopolitical rival and the only country in the world able to challenge the US economically and militarily. Despite this and repeated trade threats and tariff announcements, Trump has spoken admiringly of Xi, including of the Chinese leader's toughness and ability to stay in power without the term limits imposed on US presidents.



LAHORE: People leaving towards their native villages for celebrating Eidul Azha.

PM declares India

(Continued from Page 1)

also present, along with senior civil and military officials.

Govt resolved to implement eco-friendly policies, stricter plastic regulations: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif calling plastic pollution an environmental challenge threatening ecosystems, economy, and future generations, reaffirmed his government's commitment to eco-friendly policies, responsible consumption, and stricter plastic regulations.

"Real change begins with each of us - in our homes, our communities, and our choices," the prime minister said in his message on World Environment Day, annually observed on June 5. He said that on the Day, Pakistan joined the international community in reaffirming its commitment to safeguard our planet and pursue sustainable development.

The prime minister said that this year's theme - "Putting an End to Plastic Pollution" - was both timely and urgent. "Plastic pollution is an environmental challenge that threatens our ecosystems, our economy,

and future generations. From choking our rivers and seas to harming marine life and contaminating our food chain, plastic waste has reached alarming levels across the globe - and Pakistan is no exception. This calls for a bold and collective action," he remarked. He said that the Day should serve as a reminder of our shared responsibility - to ourselves and to the generations yet to come.

Pakistan's appointment to key UN bodies validates int'l community's confidence: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said Pakistan's key appointments at UN bodies validate the international community's confidence and trust in the country's counter-terrorism (CT) credentials as well as an acknowledgment of its strong and unwavering commitment to eradicate this global menace.

The prime minister in a post on his X wall wrote: "It is a matter of great pride that Pakistan has been appointed as Chair of UNSC Sanctions Committee under Res.19-88(2011); Vice Chair of the 1373 (2001) Counter-Terrorism Committee; as

well as Co-Chair of Informal Working Group (IWG) on documentation and sanctions." He added that as one of the biggest victims of terrorism, with over 90,000 casualties and more than \$150 bn economic losses, Pakistan's sacrifices in combatting this scourge have been second to none.

Shehbaz takes notice of polio case in Diamer; directs improved immunisation: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif taking strict notice of a polio case reported in the Diamer district, directed the relevant authorities to improve immunization further.

The prime minister, in a meeting with Federal Minister for National Health Syed Mustafa Kamal and Prime Minister's Focal Person for Polio Ayesha Raza Farooq here, expressed deep concern over the recently reported polio case in the Gilgit-Baltistan district, according to a PM Office press release. Prime Minister Shehbaz instructed strict monitoring of the Union Councils where more polio cases were being reported and immunization was not satisfactory.