

USC completely shut down
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Utility Stores Corporation has completely shut down its operations. A formal notice has been issued by USC to all zonal managers, instructing the immediate suspension of all buying and selling activities at utility stores nationwide. The letter stated that all grocery items and other essential goods have been removed from store shelves and transferred to warehouses.



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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing a meeting of steering committee on anti-terrorism and harden the State.

Pak-US successfully conclude trade pact

WASHINGTON (APP): In a landmark development, Pakistan and the United States have finalized a trade agreement aimed at boosting bilateral trade, expanding market access, attracting investment, and fostering cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

The breakthrough was reached during a meeting of Federal Minister for Finance Minister, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, with US Secretary of Commerce, Howard Lutnick and United States Trade Representative Ambassador Jamieson Greer in Washington, D.C.

Secretary Commerce Jawad Paul and Pak Ambassador to the United States Ambassador Rizwan Saeed Sheikh were also present during the meeting, said a press release issued by finance ministry here adding President Trump announced the trade deal via a post on Truth Social. The agreement will result in reduction of reciprocal tariff especially on Pakistani exports to the United States, it added.

This deal marks the beginning of a new era of economic collaboration especially in energy, mines and mineral, IT, cryptocurrency and other sectors. The deal complements Pakistan's existing efforts of broadening the scope of Pak-US economic ties and to include partnerships at the US states level. The agreement enhances Pakistan's access to the US market and vice versa. Additionally, the deal is expected to spur increased US investment in Pakistan's infrastructure and development projects. This trade agreement underscores the commitment of both nations to deepen their bilateral relationship and explore all avenues for strengthening trade and investment ties. "Trade and investment have to go hand in hand, and today we see

the emergence of a broader economic, bilateral, and strategic partnership," said Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb while commenting on the successful conclusion of a comprehensive trade agreement between Pakistan and the United States.

The negotiations, which addressed key concerns including tariffs, non-tariff barriers, and trade imbalances, were hailed as a joint success by both sides. Aurangzeb emphasized the critical role played by Pakistan's private sector, noting that business leaders were among the first to step up and offer support in correcting trade disparities.

"This has truly been a team effort," he said, thanking the leadership of Pakistan, fellow Cabinet members, the Commerce Secretary and his team, and the embassy staff led by Ambassador Usman Sheikh. "No single individual could have delivered and taken us through the finishing line." The agreement sets the stage for increased cooperation in sectors including energy, minerals and mining, IT, and digital infrastructure—pillars of what Aurangzeb termed "the new economy."

"President Trump's message is clear: this is going to be a real win-win situation for both Pakistan and the United States," the Finance Minister affirmed. Reflecting on the progress made ahead of August 1, Aurangzeb said: "Alhamdulillah, we are in a good place today. We have come a long way in strengthening our strategic partnership, and I believe it will continue to grow from strength to strength." The trade deal is expected to unlock new avenues of economic collaboration, marking a significant shift in bilateral relations between the two nations.

Court adjourns hearing in KP CM case

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The District and Sessions Court of Islamabad Thursday postponed the hearing of a case involving alleged possession of alcohol and illegal weapons against Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur after he failed to appear before the court.

Judicial Magistrate Mubashir Hassan Chishti presided over the hearing. During the proceedings, Gandapur's lawyer, Raja Zahoore-ul-Hasan, appeared before the court and informed the judge that the chief minister was occupied due to the Senate by-election in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In response, the judge suggested that the defence file a formal exemption request from personal appearance. The court took a break to wait for the written plea. When the hearing resumed, the exemption request was submitted. After reviewing the application, the court accepted the plea and granted temporary exemption to Gandapur from attending the hearing.

The court also directed that arguments on Gandapur's statement under Section 342 and his acquittal request be presented at the next hearing. The case was adjourned until September 6. The case against Gandapur was registered at the Bara Kahu Police Station and involves allegations related to possession of alcohol and illegal arms. Further proceedings will continue in the upcoming hearing.

Meanwhile, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)'s leadership is deliberately skipping appearances before the courts to delay the proceeding decisions of trials in various cases pertaining to violence and vandalism, said the Federal Prosecutor General Ghulam Sarwar. He was talking to media along with Prosecutor Raja Naveed and others outside the Judicial Complex Islamabad.

He said that case No.1033 of Kohsar police station, which has been heard in ATC-II is related to November 26 protest in which Ali Amin Gandapur, Faissal Javed, Zulfi Bukhari, Asad Qaiser and others are involved. In this, considerable damage was caused to government property.

PTI mulls assembly boycott

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar has reacted to the court sentences handed down to party leaders, saying that a decision on whether to boycott the assemblies or launch a movement will be made soon.

In an emergency press conference alongside Asad Qaiser, Junaid Akbar Khan, and Allama Raja Nasir Abbas, Barrister Gohar said, "Today is a sorrowful day for democracy. Our mandate has been stolen, our leader is imprisoned, and the doors of justice have been shut on us."

He added, "We made every effort to keep democracy and parliament functional, but the oppression, injustice, and unequal

treatment continue relentlessly. Six of our MNAs, three MPAs, one senator, and the opposition leaders in both the National Assembly and Senate have been sentenced. Even Sunni Ittehad Council Chief Hamid Raza and Zartaj Gul have been targeted."

Barrister Gohar stated that PTI leadership always advocated for protecting the system, refraining from sit-ins and remaining within parliament. "Despite this, PTI is being consistently sidelined. We only asked the Chief Justice for justice — nothing else. Yet, petitions filed since 2023 remain undecided, while other trials are being conducted in courts as late as 2am."

Criticising the Election Commission, he said,

"This is the same Election Commission whose tenure has expired, yet our elected representatives are continuously being disqualified. If PTI is being pushed out of the system, then the question arises: who is behind it?" He further emphasized that PTI believes in democracy and the system, not in politics of chaos or confrontation. "However, circumstances have forced us to present the matter before our leader Imran Khan — whether we should boycott parliament or initiate a movement. The final decision will be made by the party leadership very soon." Barrister Gohar concluded by saying, "When two sides are in conflict, all eyes turn to the judiciary. We seek justice from the courts."

ATC convicts Omar, Shibli, Zartaj, Kanwal and others in May 9 cases

F.P. Report

FAISALABAD: Special Judge Anti Terrorism Court (ATC) Javaid Iqbal Sheikh has pronounced verdicts in three cases of 9th May mayhem and convicted 196 accused while 88 others were acquitted from the charges.

Leader of Opposition in the National Assembly Omar Ayub, Leader of Opposition in Senate Shibli Faraz, Zartaj Gul, Sheikh Rashid Shafique, Bilal Ejaz and Kanwal Shozab were convicted in all three cases.

According to the prosecution, Civil Line police had registered a case (The State vs. Muhammad Ali, etc. vide FIR No.832/2023) against 185 people on charge of attacking office of a sensitive agency and the ATC Judge convicted 108 accused in this case while 77 were acquitted. In Civil Line case, the learned judge awarded 10-year imprisonment to each of 107 accused while one accused Junaid Afzal Sahi was handed down with 3-year imprisonment in this case.

Among other convicts included Leader of Opposition in the National Assembly Omar Ayub, Leader of Opposition in Senate Shibli Faraz, Mst. Zartaj Gul, Sheikh Rashid Shafique, Bilal Ejaz, Mst. Kanwal Shozab, Sahibzada Hamid Raza, Ashraf Sohna, Rai Hassan Nawaz, Rai Murtaza Iqbal, Mst. Farrah Agha, Mst. Farkhanda Kokab, Muhammad Ahmed Chatha, Ch. Asif Ali, Shakil Ahmad Khan Niazi, Sardar Azeem Ullah Khan, Mehar Muhammad

Javaid, Muhammad Ansar Iqbal, Abdul Rasool, Muhammad Shahbaz, Shahid Iqbal, Zaheer Abbas, Imran s/o Abdul Razzaq, Muhammad Amin, Zeeshan, Tayyab Hussain, Insha Azhar, Aamir Sultan, Muhammad Azam, Mohsin s/o Khurshed, Umair, Abdul Rehman s/o Shafique Shah, Aqib, Ahad s/o Tariq, Rizwan, Arslan s/o Nazir, Khalil, Balawal, Farhan s/o Maqsood, Ramzan, Abdul Rehman s/o Ramzan, Ahmad s/o Farooq, Afrasiab, Arslan s/o Sultan, Taji Abbas, Zain Abbas s/o Javaid Iqbal, Rafaqat, Mehboob Ali, Muhammad Umar, Muhammad Waqas s/o Muhammad Hussain, Naveed s/o Safdar, Muntazir alias Moon s/o Umar Hayat, Ali Haider s/o Imran, Ali Raza, Sheraz Abbas, Mustansar, Imran s/o Rafique, Muhammad Asif s/o Muhammad Tufail, Haider s/o Raza, Sohail, Faisal, Usman, Waqas s/o Ramzan, Saqib, Huzaifa, Faizan Ullah, Nadeem Ahmad, Shahbaz Shakil, Syed Touseeq Hussain, Zain Abbas s/o Nasir Abbas, Areeb, Habib Ullah, Shah Zaman, Syed Qandeer Hussain, Jahan Zaib Khalid, Mst. Amreen Fatima, Ali Raza s/o Shafi, Bilal s/o Afzal, Moazzam s/o Aslam, Shafique s/o Mushtaq, Ayyaz Khan Tareen, Kashif Ali Khan s/o Karamat Ali Khan, Mst. Tehmina Riaz, Muhammad Azeem, Nauman Ali, Asif s/o Khurshed, Dr. Qaisar Abbas, Asad alias Muhammad Waqas s/o Aslam, Kaleem Alam, Muhammad Nadeem, Rana Nasir Ali, Muhammad Younas s/o Talib, Muhammad Rehman s/o Ashraf, Rashid Ali s/o

Muhammad Sardar, Naveed Sabir, Shaheer s/o Sajid, Saif Ullah, Abdullah s/o Nawaz, Bilal s/o Iqbal, Mirza Khan, Muhammad Kashif s/o Abdul Majeed, Matloob Chisht, Shakoor-ul-Faheem, Babar Saleem, Umar Tahir, Rana Aftab and Shaban Kabir.

However, trials of PTI founder, Shah Mehmood Qureshi and Chief Minister (CM) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Ali Amin Gandapur are yet to be completed whereas 77 accused were acquitted in this case. Among them included Fawad Chaudhry, Zain Qureshi, Faiz Ullah Kamoka, Malik Jahan Zaib alias Zaibi, Rana Asad Mehmood Khan, Khurram Ijaz Khaloon, Bilal Ashraf Basra, Imran Saleem, Haroon Rasheed s/s Abdul Rasheed, Mst. Khansa Ijaz, Mst. Ammara Rasheed, Mst. Nazia Sardar, Ihtesham Javaid, Sahibzada Hassan Raza, Hassan Zika Niazi, Kamran Virk, Abdul Haseeb alias Tipu, Abu Bakar Siddique, Rana Munir Babar, Abid Ali Abid, Khalid Shafique, Mian Muhammad Tayyab, Shahbaz Ameer Ali, Muhammad Aamir Hameed, Bakhsh Ali, Muhammad Mudassar Ayub, Kashif Ihsan, Sajid Ali, Zubair Anjum, Rana Ali Gias, Najam-ul-Hassan, Mst. Qurat-ul-Ain, Muhammad Riaz, Sami Ullah, Faiz Muhammad, Muhammad Nasir Jamal, Muhammad Younas s/o Muhammad Siddique, Sufyan Hafeez Bhatti, Javaid Iqbal, Imran Ali s/o Ghulam Rasool, Sarfraz Ahmad, Sheraz Hussain Malhi, Muhammad Saleem Khan, Moin-ud-Din, Farhan s/o Hamayoun Khan, Abdul Razzaq Khan Niazi, Rana Israr

Ahmad Khan alias Arslan Ahmad Khan, Zahid Mehmood, Makhdoom Ahmad Kausar, Suleman Bari, Sheharyar Ali, Muhammad Naveed s/o Anwar Javaid, Muhammad Awais Khan, Ali Anwaar, Muhammad Faisal Yaqoob, Rashid Qadeer, Usman Ashraf, Abdul Quddus, Aurang Zaib, Mst. Nargis Munir alias Nargis Naheed, Muhammad Abdullah Rao, Imran Ilyas, Abdul Mutlab Nawaz, Rana Amir Hussain, Muhammad Anwar, Joyal Aamir Sahotra, Nadeem Aftab Sandhu, Zulfiqar Ali, Mat. Rughayya Karim, Muhammad Farooq Sarif, Syed Riaz Abbas, Muhammad Saeed, Mst. Perveen Zaman Awan, Shahzad Akram, Muhammad Qasim, Muhammad Iqbal and Munir Ahmad.

Ghulam Muhammad Abad police had also booked 67 individuals on charge of besieging the police station and attempting to set it ablaze on 9th May vide an FIR No.1277/2023 (The State vs. Awais Akbar, etc.) In this case, the ATC judge convicted 60 accused with 10-year imprisonment each while 7 accused were acquitted.

Among the convicts included Leader of Opposition in National Assembly Omar Ayub, Leader of Opposition in Senate Shibli Faraz, Mst. Zartaj Gul, Sheikh Rashid Shafique, Bilal Ejaz, Mst. Kanwal Shozab, Awais Akbar, Tahir Javaid, Sabir Ali, Muhammad Mohsin s/o Zafar Iqbal (juvenile), Ali Raza, Mubashar Ali, Nauman Jamil, Sami Ullah, Muhammad Shafique, Muhammad Afham alias Iftikhar (juvenile), Awais Ashraf (juvenile), Asad Ullah (juvenile), Shahzad alias

Sajjad, Haroon s/o Khushi Muhammad, Farman Ali, Ihtesham Ali, Muhammad Salman, Muhammad Haroon s/o Abdul Rasheed, Saqib, Ali Hamza alias Ali Raza, Muhammad Imran, Muhammad Qasim, Muhammad Irfan, Mehroz Khan, Muhammad Rehman s/o Asif Saleem (juvenile), Mirza Hassan, Abid Ali, Tahir Luqman, Mohsin Raza s/o Ghulam Raza, Faiq Zahid, Akbar Pehalwan, Khadim Almas, Muqaddam Iqbal s/o Muhammad Iqbal, Nauman Tariq, Abdul Rehman s/o Master Muhammad Akram, Shabbir Hussain, Muhammad Ahmad, Muhammad Yasin, Ahmad Naqash, Sameer Ashraf, Muhammad Rizwan, Muhammad Asim, Azeem Ullah Khan, Muhammad Ahmad Chatha, Shakeel Khan Niazi, Ch. Muhammad Asif, Mehar Muhammad Javaid, Mst. Farkhanda Kokab, Farah Agha, Rai Murtaza Iqbal, Muhammad Ansar Iqbal, Muhammad Ashraf Khan and Rai Hassan Nawaz.

Among the acquitted of Ghulam Muhammad Abad case included Sikandar Saleem, Shahzad Anwar, Muhammad Saeed Iqbal, Mian Muhammad Arshad, Makhdoom Zain Hussain Qureshi, Fawad Chaudhry and Khayal Ahmad Kastro. In another case of Civil Line police station, the learned ATC judge also handed down 28 accused with 10-year imprisonment each after completing trial of 32 accused. Four accused in this case were acquitted. The Civil Line police had registered this case (The State vs. Asif, etc.) vide FIR

No.835/2023 on charge of putting an official vehicle on fire during 9th May riots in its jurisdiction.

Among the convicts of this case included leader of opposition in National Assembly Omar Ayub, leader of opposition in Senate Shibli Faraz, Mst. Zartaj Gul, Sheikh Rashid Shafique, Bilal Ejaz, Mst. Kanwal Shozab, Asif son of Maqbool, Ghulam Khan son of Akhtar Khan, Hikmat Ullah son of Karim Ullah, Shehzad Farooq son of Farooq Ahmad, Asim Javaid son of Javaid Iqbal, Muhammad Ashfaq son of Muhammad Abbas, Ali Ahmad son of Muhammad Saleem, Habkook Rafique Gill son of Rafique M. Gill, Muhammad Irfan Sarwar son of Muhammad Sarwar, Muhammad Umar Farooq son of Muhammad Siddique, Rai Haider Ali Khan so of Rai Salah-ud-Din Khan, Rai Hassan Nawaz son of Rai Muhammad Iqbal, Rai Murtaza Iqbal son of Rai Ali Nawaz, Shakeel Khan Niazi son Niaz Ahmad, Azeem Ullah Khan son of Ch. Sardar Khan, Mehar Muhammad Javaid son of Said Muhammad, Mst. Farah Agha w/o Muhammad Agha Shah, Mst. Farkhanda Kokab w/o Shabbir Ali, Muhammad Ashraf Khan s/o Muhammad Din, Muhammad Ahmad Chattha s/o Chaudhry Hamid Nasir Chattha, Ch. Muhammad Asif s/o Muhammad Ali and Muhammad Ansar Iqbal s/o Muhammad Ameer.

Among the acquitted accused included Khayal Ahmad Kastro, Makhdoom Zain Hussain Qureshi, Fawad Chaudhry and Muhammad Abdullah Khan Dumarr.

TTP operative sentenced
F.P. Report

SAHIWAL: An anti-terrorism court sentenced banned TTP operative Muhammad Hasnain Lar to 31 years in prison after charges were proven against him. The convict, a resident of Ahmedpur Sharqia, was arrested on May 7 this year with 1,950 grams of explosives. Law enforcement also recovered a detonator, prima card, and an improvised explosive device (IED) from his possession.

PM reiterates resolve to defeat terrorism

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Thursday while chairing a review meeting of the Steering Committee on Counter-Terrorism and Establishment of the State Writ (Harden the State), expressed resolve to eradicate the scourge of terrorism from the country.

Speaking during the meeting here, he said, "The state of Pakistan is determined to root out the scourge of terrorism and the world recognizes our successful operations against terrorists." "The state of Pakistan has adopted a multi-pronged strategy in the war against terrorism," he said adding, "Pakistan has made full and effective use of important elements such as ground operations, relevant legislation, meaningful public communication and discouragement of extremist thinking."

The committee directed effective coordination between the federal and provincial governments against terrorism and strict implementation of its recommendations in this regard. "The role of the brave sons of the armed forces in this war against terrorism is commendable and laudable," he remarked.

He said, "The entire nation, including me, is proud of the officers and officials who laid down their lives for the country and their families who were imbued with the spirit of sacrifice." "The entire Pakistani nation, the brave forces, law enforcement agencies, and intelligence agencies are united and focused in the war against terrorism," he added.

The prime minister said, "Pakistan's brave forces fought the terrorists vigorously in Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad and Zarb-e-Azb, and the world recognized Pakistan's victory in the recent historic Marka-e-Haq." He acknowledged that the provincial governments, the Intelligence Bureau, the Ministry of Interior, the Counter-Terrorism Department, especially the Punjab Counter-Terrorism Department, had

taken very effective steps in this war against terrorism.

"Pakistan is working on a comprehensive, effective and workable strategy to completely eliminate Fitna-al-Hindustan and Fitna-al-Khawarij and other such anti-social elements," he stressed. He said, "With the joint strategy and cooperation of all the relevant institutions, effective operations were undertaken against smuggling, which made it possible to prevent the menace."

"Prevention of smuggling has had a positive impact on the economy," he noted. "Only a peaceful and strong state structure free from terrorism restores the confidence of investors at the international level," he said adding, "The government has brought revolutionary changes such as digitization of all systems and improvement in the tax system to restore the confidence of the investors at the international level."

He said, "Record increase in the Pakistan Stock Exchange and improvement in global ratings indicate the stability of Pakistan's economy and this will restore the confidence of foreign investors." "The implementation of the repatriation programme for Afghan nationals residing illegally in Pakistan in accordance with international laws is continuing effectively," he observed.

Deputy Prime Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Field Marshal Chief of Army Staff Syed Asim Munir, National Security Adviser Lieutenant General Muhammad Asim Malik, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, Federal Minister for Law Azam Nazir Tarar, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Division Ahad Khan Cheema, Adviser to the Prime Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination Rana Sanaullah, Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry, Chief Secretaries of all provinces, Inspectors Generals and relevant government officials attended the meeting.

Shehbaz thanks Trump for role in finalizing US-Pakistan trade

Tarar welcomes verdicts on May 9

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Thursday hailed the recent court verdicts against those involved in the May 9 riots, calling them a "historic precedent" that will deter future conspiracies against the state.

Talking to the media, Tarar termed the ransacking of Lahore's Jinnah House to the work of "professional dacoits" and emphasized that the culprits have now been sentenced. "The verdicts have set a precedent, henceforth, no one would dare to commit such a conspiracy again," he stated.

The minister said the country is now on a path of unity and progress, with the legal actions reinforcing national stability. Tarar said the "sinister motives" behind the May 9 events have been exposed and defeated. Hostile rhetoric against the state has been neutralized and Pakistan has established its hegemony, he said, adding "Modi is being grilled in the Indian parliament as a defeated Modi and a defeated person."

Tarar welcomed the verdicts awarded to those involved in May 9 riots, describing them as a "good omen" for

Pakistan. He reiterated that the destruction of public property would no longer be tolerated and that justice has prevailed.

Through narrative, diplomatic front Pakistan proved its desire for peace not weakness: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar said that on the narrative and diplomatic front, Pakistan established that its desire for peace must not and should not be mistaken for its weakness.

"The response given (to unprovoked Indian aggression) by our Armed Forces, valiant soldiers, has proven our military might to India. (It proved) that we are capable of a befitting response to any unprovoked aggression," he said while delivering his speech as chief guest at the policy dialogue of the Institute of Regional Studies titled, "Building Peace in South Asia." He said Pakistan has always been desirous of peace in the region, and it has always contributed towards peacebuilding in the region. "The deterioration that we see in the region was directly in proportion to the rise of fundamentalism and extremism in India," he said, adding that the way Hindutva ideology was propagated in the power corridors in

India was the greatest threat to peace in the region.

The minister said Pakistan had always proved that if an unprovoked and unjustified war was imposed on it, Pakistan had the capability and the potential to respond back effectively. "I think the deterrence that we have created in the region has contributed to maintaining peace," he remarked.

Tarar said India had assumed the position of a bully in this region, and India was behind the surge in terrorism in Pakistan during the past few years. He said when the Pahalagam incident happened, on the narrative front, Pakistan was facing a challenge. The biggest argument that Pakistan had was that it was the biggest victim of terrorism, and how can a nation victim of this scourge be involved in terrorism.

Pakistanis rendered matchless sacrifices in the war against terrorism as armed forces, security forces, and civilians embraced martyrdom while fighting against terrorism. He said Pakistan was a shield, a wall between terrorists and the rest of the world. He said that when the Pahalagam incident happened, baseless allegations were leveled by the Indian government, pointing fingers towards Pakistan.

Sindh CM urges Varsities to celebrate Independence Day



F.P. Report

KARACHI: In a significant meeting held at CM House, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah convened the vice chancellors of 64 universities, comprising 30 public and 34 private institutions, to devise a detailed programme for celebrating Independence Day under the theme of Marqa-e-Haq.

The Chief Minister emphasised the importance of organising educational, cultural, sports, and literary events to foster national pride. Provincial Ministers Sharjeel Memon, Nasir Shah, Saeed Ghani, Mohammad Bakhsh Mahar, and Qulfiqar Shah, along with Secretary to the Chief Minister M. Raheem Shaikh and Chairman of HEC Sindh, Professor Tariq Rafi, attended the meeting

held at CM House.

The Chief Minister highlighted the pride the Pakistan Armed Forces have brought to the nation through their valiant efforts, stating, "To amplify the celebrations of the nation's victory and independence, the government has devised a comprehensive plan."

The Independence Day festivities are set to commence on August 1. The Chief Minister urged all universities to adorn their campuses and classrooms in a manner that reflects national dignity and to organise related programmes. He also announced that the government would reward any university, institution, shopkeeper, or entity that excels in decoration.

Universities are encouraged to prepare schedules for sports, cultural events, debates, and literary activities, with Mr Shah instructing Secretary University & Boards Abbas Baloch and Chairman of HEC Sindh Tariq Rafi to organise separate and inter-university programmes.

Suggestions from all universities were included in the meeting's agenda, and it was agreed that a tree plantation initiative would be launched across Sindh to promote environmental sustainability. Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon provided updates on planned programmes across various provincial and private institutions. The meeting concluded with a strong commitment to celebrate Independence Day with enthusiasm and dignity.

Sharjeel concerned over closure of Utility Stores

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon has expressed serious concerns over the sudden closure of the Utility Stores Corporation of Pakistan, stating that the employees of Utility Stores have served with honesty and dedication for decades, and it is regrettable to disregard their services.

In a statement, Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the Utility Stores Corporation has played a vital role in providing basic food items to low-income citizens at affordable prices for the

past 55 years. In 1971, Shaheed Zulfikar Bhutto established utility stores to provide subsidies to the poor.

He said that the Utility Stores Corporation was serving an average of 15 to 20 million people per month through approximately 3,800 utility stores across the country, particularly in areas where the private sector has no reach. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the closure of utility stores and the dismissal of around 12,000 employees through a golden handshake is an attack on the livelihoods of thousands of families and goes against the public interest. He added that utility stores employees

have served with honesty and dedication for decades, and it is regrettable to disregard their services.

He said that instead of rendering the hardworking employees of utility stores jobless, they should be properly accommodated in other federal or provincial institutions. Rather than completely shutting down the utility stores, they should be restructured and their role preserved by aligning them with modern requirements. He added that utility stores are not merely a business entity; they represent a national service that provides essential support and convenience to millions of people across the country.

UVAS Varsity approves Rs4.435b budget

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (UVAS) Lahore's Syndicate has passed a Rs4.435 billion budget for the fiscal year 2025-26, amidst concerns about a substantial deficit. The budget prioritizes innovation, applied research, development, and enhancements to educational facilities, services, and technology transfer.

Chairing the 77th Syndicate gathering, UVAS Vice-Chancellor Prof Dr Muhammad Younus emphasized the institution's commitment to applied research and developmental initiatives aimed at elevating the standard of education, research, and services. Chairperson of the Punjab Higher Education Commission (PHEC), Prof Dr Iqbal Ahmad Khan, was also present.

Prof Dr Younus revealed that Rs. 730 million has been earmarked for ongoing ventures in the upcoming financial year. This includes Rs. 550 million for bolstering the KBCMA and CVAS, Rs. 30 million for enhancing academic facilities at the Jhang campus, and Rs. 150 million for a new campus in Pattoki.

Treasurer Muhammad Umar informed the Syndicate that the university anticipates non-development revenue of Rs. 3.051 billion from various channels in 2025-26, against projected non-development expenditures of Rs. 3.705 billion, resulting in a shortfall of Rs. 654.192 million.

The Vice-Chancellor stated that UVAS aims to generate Rs. 2.110 billion from its own sources. To address the deficit, the university plans to boost revenue generation through increased research-based product sales and expanded diagnostic and clinical offerings. Austerity measures will also be implemented to contain recurring expenses within available resources.

The Vice-Chancellor also briefed the Syndicate on various academic and research endeavors, university rankings, dairy farm operations, seminars, training programs, motivational lectures, workshops, Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with diverse institutions, ongoing developmental projects, student competitions, and institutional accomplishments.

The Syndicate addressed several administrative and academic matters in the best interests of the university and its students. They expressed unanimous commendation for the leadership of Vice-Chancellor Prof Dr Muhammad Younus, Registrar Sajjad Hyder, and their team for their exceptional contributions and guidance.

AJK President, PM pay glowing tributes to Sardar Ibrahim

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President and Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry and Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq have paid rich tributes to the founding President of AJK, Ghazi-e-Millat Sardar Muhammad Ibrahim Khan, on the occasion of his 22nd death anniversary, acknowledging his historic role in the Kashmir freedom movement and his lifelong commitment to the cause of Kashmiri people.

President Barrister Sultan in his message said that Sardar Muhammad Ibrahim Khan will always be remembered for his unwavering struggle for

Kashmir's freedom and his tireless public service. Calling him a dynamic and visionary statesman, the President said the late leader not only led the freedom movement but also represented the Kashmir cause effectively at the United Nations.

Recalling his personal association with Ghazi-e-Millat, President Sultan said, "I had the honour and privilege of working under his guidance for five years." He noted that during that time, several major development initiatives were launched, including the Jagran Hydel Power Project, which still contributes billions of rupees in revenue to the state.

Reaffirming his commitment, the AJK President pledged to continue advocating for Kashmir's right to self-determination and exposing India's human rights abuses in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) on international forums.

Meanwhile, AJK Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq, in a special statement, said that Ghazi-e-Millat's mission was to liberate Kashmiri Muslims from Dogra rule and unite the region with Pakistan according to the aspirations of the people. "His mission is still alive and will continue until Kashmir's freedom and the completion of Pakistan," the Prime Minister declared.

Scorching heat wave grips Balochistan

F.P. Report

QUETTA: A severe heat-wave is sweeping across Balochistan, with exceptionally high temperatures expected in most areas, according to the Meteorological Department. Quetta Regional Center report today.

Western regions are bracing for extremely hot, dry, and windy conditions. However, some relief is anticipated in hilly locales of Musakhel, Sherani, Zhob, Barkhan, Kohlu, Ziarat, Harnai, Loralai, Khuzdar, Dera Bugti, Bolan, Kalat, Lasbella, and Hub districts, where isolated rain, wind, and thunderstorms are possible.

The forecast warns of potential heavy downpours in the central and northern mountainous regions over the next 24 hours, increasing the risk of flash floods in hill torrents. The sweltering conditions are predicted to persist for the next 48 hours across most of the province, with isolated rain and thunderstorms expected in Barkhan, Musakhel, Sherani, and adjacent areas.

Over the past 24 hours, Barkhan recorded 10mm of rainfall. Temperatures soared across the region, with Dalbandin reaching a high of 44.5°C and a low of 28.0°C. Other notable high temperatures included Nokkundi at 44.0°C, Turbat at 44.0°C, and Sibbi at 42.0°C. Quetta experienced varied temperatures, ranging from 39.5°C in the city to 37.0°C in Sariab. Coastal areas like Gwadar and Ormara saw slightly cooler temperatures, hovering around 32.5°C.

Minor killed in crossfire

F.P. Report

SHIKARPUR: A 10-year-old boy died in an armed clash between rival groups in the Katcha area of Madeji, Shikarpur, reigniting concerns about ongoing violence in the region.

Initial accounts indicate the shootout occurred between members of the Juneja and Kalhora communities. The victim, identified as Shakeel, son of Islam Junejo, was a resident of Jamalpur village.

The conflict reportedly stems from a long-standing feud between the two tribes. The child's family alleges he was targeted by members of the Kalhora community. However, local sources suggest the young victim was grazing livestock and caught in the crossfire. As of today evening, no official complaint had been lodged with authorities.

Minor killed in crossfire

F.P. Report

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Ombudsman Regional Office member visits EOBI Karachi

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Senior officers of Federal Ombudsman visited Head office of Employees Old-Age Benefits Institution (EOBI), Karachi. Member In charge and Co-ordinator Federal Ombudsman inspection team Karachi, Amir Ahmed Shaikh chaired this meeting at EOBI, accompanied by Consultant Media Taqi Muhammad Soomro, and Director Rashid Ahmed Shaikh.

Amir Ahmed Shaikh, Member In-Charge of the Federal Ombudsman Regional Office in Karachi, paid a visit to EOBI Karachi to review the processes related to employee allotments and registrations. He expressed his satisfaction with the progress made in digitizing the contribution and fund collection systems. The team also briefed him on the performance of the Wafaqi Mohtasib Complaint Management Information System over the past year.

Highlighting the importance of raising key concerns directly with the Federal Government, Mr. Shaikh reaffirmed his commitment to supporting efforts that strengthen the organization's effectiveness. He also commended the current EOBI Karachi administration for their ongoing efforts in upgrading systems and enhancing service delivery.

Amir Ahmed Shaikh pointed out that there were hundreds of employees especially poor labor did not even know that EOBI existed in the country, how they would know that their pension could be possible, they knew nothing about the websites and fancy digital systems, he added. He advised that EOBI should consider remote areas and launch soft campaigns to aware the target audience to expand the pool of needy employees by using channels of radio, TV, newspapers and through endorsement figures. In charge inspection team highlighted that there must be employee-centric approach rather than employer-centric.

During a visit by the Federal Ombudsman inspection team, Mr. Amir Ahmed Shaikh recommended enhancements to the employee complaint system. He emphasized the importance of making the system more efficient and responsive to facilitate faster and easier resolution of grievances. He also recognized the ongoing issues faced by EOBI, particularly in the timely disbursement of pensions and the handling of unresolved cases, stressing the need for prompt corrective measures.

The Ombudsman team received a detailed briefing on EOBI's operations from Executive Chairman Mr. Javed Shaikh, who was joined by PS to Director Mr. Abrez. They explained that EOBI functions under Article 38(c) of the Constitution and shared insights into its organizational structure and key responsibilities. The officials underscored the necessity of setting up additional regional offices in all provinces to expand and streamline service delivery.



SIUT performs successful deceased organ transplant

F.P. Report

KARACHI: A team of transplant surgeons of SIUT (Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation) successfully performed a deceased organ donation transplantation of two kidneys. According to the institutes' sources the surgery was performed in early hours of this morning by a team of urologists and anesthesiasts.

Giving the details a spokesperson of SIUT said one Sultan Zafar, a 23 year old student of dental surgery, met a fatal accident and suffered severe head injuries. He was rushed to a local hospital in a comatose condition. He remained in the ICU for a week before he was declared brain dead. Subsequently he was brought to SIUT for deceased organ donation transplantation.

The deceased's mother Dr Mehr Afroz who is a Consultant Nephrologist at SIUT took a courageous decision and donated Sultan's two kidneys which were transplanted to two needy patients who were on dialysis and did not have any organ donors in their families and hence were kept on a waiting list.

This generous donation of Dr Mehr in an hour of profound grief and distress is widely hailed by the members of the medical profession and the society at large. Director SIUT, Prof Adib Rizvi has greatly lauded the gesture of the family which allowed the organ donation and gave new lease of life to two patients and called upon the society to emulate this noble act of savings lives.

Residents facing multiple challenges in Karak

F.P. Report

KARAK: The residents of Takht Nusrati facing multiple challenges including clean drinking water, electricity, gas, roads, law and order, health and education facilities. In the modern era, the thesil headquarters Takht Nusrati, which has not gone through situations like "Gaza", "Afghanistan", "Iraq" or "Libya", has gone through situations like this, but still all the facilities are being snatched away from the helpless and insensitive people.

The narrow road, which was a major source of livelihood for the Nusrati and Gadikhel people, is now indescribable because the road is a unit in the development and communication system. The clean drinking water system has been in disrepair for the last one and a half to two years, which neither the people themselves need, nor the Ibnushi department nor the thesil administration, whose role is the welfare state is like the sun during the day, but unfortunately everything is reversed here.

The punishment for the lack of electricity is a drama created to fill the pockets of a few officers, which is the same situation as electricity due to various collections from the people at different times by different officials. Three hours are given, the rest is for God's sake. Currently, the elected representatives do not have time for gas and the public has been conditioned on the release of prisoner number 804, "Let's go, let's go to Jail Chowk."

Health and education are running in a state of limbo, but we have turned our backs on them. When an officer wants to show off and organize a public festival, in the name of "open court," the public invites so-called elders. Then, because we have nothing, they only attack the hospitals and the education department.

Senate probes AI Bill

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Information Technology and Telecommunication convened at Parliament House to address Pakistan's trajectory in artificial intelligence, digital security, and technological advancement, chaired by Senator Palwasha Mohammad Zai Khan. The committee tackled the "Regulation of Artificial Intelligence Bill, 2024," introduced by Senator Dr. Afnan Ullah Khan, aiming to establish a legal and ethical structure for AI. Members underscored the need for prompt AI regulations in light of swift global technological progress.

The Ministry of IT and Telecommunication (MoITT) Secretary announced a new Emerging Technology Wing dedicated to fostering innovation in Artificial Intelligence, Semiconductors, Cybersecurity, and Quantum Technologies. A Rs. 16 billion allocation has been earmarked for these initiatives under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) for 2024-25.

Scrutiny arose regarding Pakistan's first indigenous Large Language Model (LLM), a joint venture between Jazz and NUST University. Senator Dr. Mohammad Humayun Mohmand questioned the partner selection process, citing concerns about the exclusion of other academic bodies. The MoITT Secretary clarified the Ministry's non-involvement in funding or directing the project.

Toll hike scrutiny raised by NA committee

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly's Standing Committee on Communications intensely questioned the National Highway Authority (NHA) over a recent toll increase and the structural integrity of a bridge on the M-9 Motorway, during its 12th meeting at Parliament House. Chaired by MNA Aijaz Hussain Jakhraani, the committee expressed strong displeasure at the absence of the Communications Secretary, threatening disciplinary action for continued non-attendance.

Legislators criticized the NHA for implementing its third toll hike in a short period, alleging a breach of its own policy allowing revisions only every three years. The committee labeled the increase detrimental to the public and demanded a detailed justification from the NHA at its next session.

The Motorway Police Inspector General informed the committee about the decrease in highway accidents since the implementation of a law penalizing motorists exceeding 150 km/h. The committee decided to review this legislation, considering replacing criminal charges with increased penalties and potential license revocation, following consultations with political factions.

Responding to a Calling Attention Notice, the committee questioned the existence of two toll plazas within five kilometers on the M-9, contrary to the stipulated 35-kilometer minimum distance. The NHA attributed this to a major bridge situated at that point. However, the committee ordered a comprehensive report on all such instances, along with a thorough assessment, including visual documentation, of the bridge's condition, to be presented at the next assembly. Committee representatives also recommended extending toll exemptions for Hyderabad citizens, similar to those enjoyed by Jamshoro residents, and requested a solution for the bridge's deterioration.

The NHA updated the committee on the M-6 Sukkur-Hyderabad Motorway endeavor, stating construction will commence in April 2026 with Islamic Development Bank funding. Land acquisition is projected to begin next month.

The integration of the Karachi Northern Bypass into the M-10 initiative was also announced, aimed at alleviating Karachi's traffic congestion. Finally, the committee decided to correspond with the Senate Standing Committee on Communications to access findings related to a contractor previously disqualified but later awarded a substantial Rs. 166 billion contract under the CAREC Tranche-III scheme. The NHA was directed to furnish an update on this matter. Several MNAs and officials from the Ministry of Communications and associated departments were present.

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES
PESHAWAR CAMPUS
JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Applications are invited for the faculty posts **ON CONTRACT/VISITING** basis in following disciplines for **NUML University, Peshawar Campus**:-

Department/ Specialization	Minimum Qualification and Experience	Other Requirement
SENIOR INSTRUCTOR / INSTRUCTOR (CONTRACT / VISITING)		
German	For Senior Instructor First Class Master's Degree OR equivalent degree awarded after 16 Years of education in the relevant field from HEC recognized University / Institution with no 3 rd division in the academic career.	- Must be capable of delivering instruction from A1 to B1 levels. - Experience in preparing students for the Goethe Certification will be preferred.
English	For Instructor Preferably Master's Degree or a Bachelor's degree in case of a rare language for which suitably qualified candidates may not be available.	- Should possess a minimum of 5 years experience in Occupational English Teaching (OET). - Preference will be given to candidate with a background in preparing candidates for OET Certification
Arabic		- Must demonstrate expertise in using modern teaching methodologies and audio-visual aids. - Experience in teaching Arabic for professional or medical communication will be considered an asset.

CONDITIONS

- Interested candidates may apply on prescribed faculty application form along with detailed CV, attested photocopies of all educational documents, professional experience certificates, copy of CNIC and two recent photographs. Application complete in all respect should be sent through courier to **Regional Director NUML Peshawar Campus, Near Peshawar Board, Jamrud Road, Peshawar.**
- Job Application Form can be downloaded from <https://numl.edu.pk/jobs/all>.
- Applications must reach NUML Peshawar Campus by 15-08-2025.**
- Incomplete applications or applications submitted by hand/email or received after due date shall not be entertained.
- You can be posted anywhere in Pakistan.
- No TA/DA is admissible.
- Decision of the University shall remain final in all cases and only Shortlisted candidates will be called for test/interviews.

Regional Director
Peshawar
Tele: 091-9218380-81



PESHAWAR: Deputy Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Surya Bibi casting her vote during Senate by-elections.

Board exam results reflect success of govt reforms

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Science & Information Technology, Dr. Shafqat Ayaz, extended heartfelt congratulations to Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur and Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah for their effective measures in ensuring transparency and curbing cheating in the recent 2025 SSC (Matric) and HSC examinations across the province.

Dr. Ayaz stated that since the COVID-19 disruption in 2020, the examination system had been plagued by a culture of carelessness and malpractice. However, this year, the provincial government successfully

restored discipline and credibility in the exam process through strict monitoring and systemic reforms, and the positive results are evident in the matric exam outcomes.

He paid tribute to the students who passed the matric exams through dedication and hard work, and also appreciated their parents for their continuous support.

"These students are the pride and future of Pakistan," he remarked.

Dr. Shafqat Ayaz emphasized that marks obtained through cheating offer no real benefit in practical life. "Our youth must pursue real knowledge, not just numbers," he said. "True success lies in honest effort and lifelong learning."

He highlighted that the recent success reflects the vision of PTI founder Imran Khan, who always prioritized quality education, transparency, merit, and public service. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, is committed to implementing this vision on the ground.

Dr. Ayaz also extended appreciation to the Education Department, district administrations, and all concerned institutions for their coordinated efforts to restore credibility in the exam system. He vowed that the government will continue to strengthen a transparent and merit-based education system in the province.

Amna Asif shines in SSC Exam



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Amna Asif, student of Forward Public School, Hayatabad Peshawar, has secured distinctive position in the Annual SSC Exam (2025) by scoring 1086 marks. She attributed her success to the hard work of her teachers and prayers of her parents.

Workshop on geophysical tools held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The National Centre of Excellence in Geology (NCEG) at the University of Peshawar successfully conducted a two-day technical workshop on "Geophysical Tools for Coal Exploration in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa" from July 30-31, 2025. The event took place at the RAK Tahirkehi Auditorium within the NCEG premises and was made possible through the sponsorship of the Higher Education Commission under NRPJ Project. The workshop provided comprehensive training on advanced exploration techniques including Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR), Electrical Resistivity surveys and geochemical analysis including froth flotation processes, Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM), X-ray Diffraction (XRD), and coal upgradation methods. These sessions were designed to enhance professional capabilities in coal exploration and resource development. Attended by students, researchers, and industry professionals from both public and private sectors, the workshop facilitated valuable knowledge exchange between academia and the mineral exploration industry.

Governor, VC UET discuss promotion of quality higher education

PESHAWAR (APP): Vice Chancellor of the University of Engineering and Technology (UET) Peshawar, Professor Dr. Saeed Khattak, called on Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi at the Governor House here on Thursday.

During the meeting, they held an in-depth discussion on the promotion of higher education and improving academic standards in the province.

The Governor emphasized that the provision of quality education is the need of the hour and essential for sustainable development.

He said that universities must go beyond academic instruction by also focusing on character building and practical training of students.

Appreciating the contributions of UET Peshawar, the Governor expressed hope that the institution would continue to equip youth not only with technical

education but also with strong moral and professional values to enable them to play an active role in the progress of the country. Meanwhile, a delegation of the Mardan Youth Parliament, led by former Mardan Nazim and Pakistan Peoples Party leader Asad Kashmiri, called on Governor Faisal Karim Kundi at the Governor House.

The delegation included Chairman Irshad Ahmed along with cabinet mem-

bers Haider Mayar, Ghulam Habib, and Faisal Bakhtiar.

During the meeting, discussions were held regarding the upcoming oath-taking ceremony of the Mardan Youth Parliament.

Governor Kundi appreciated the constructive role of youth in leadership development and said that youth parliaments are playing a vital role in grooming future leaders.

He assured the delegation of his full support for their initiatives.

Senior officer handed over to anti-corruption establishment

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a major crackdown on corruption, the Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has arrested a senior officer of the Health Department while accepting a bribe.

The action was taken following a complaint received by Advisor to the

Chief Minister on Anti-Corruption, Mussadiq Abbasi, regarding alleged bribery by Deputy Director of Internal Audit Cell in the Health Department. According to the complaint, the officer had demanded a bribe of Rs. 2 million to clear audit objections.

Taking immediate notice of the complaint, Advisor

Mussadiq Abbasi ordered an immediate action. Acting on these directives, Director Anti-Corruption Siddique Anjum led a successful sting operation, during which the accused officer, Zahir Shah, was caught red-handed accepting Rs. 1 million in bribe in the presence of a magistrate.

The arrest was made at

the office of the Section Officer General, Health Department, where Zahir Shah was allegedly receiving the bribe amount. The Anti-Corruption team recovered the money on the spot and handed over the accused to the Special Investigation Wing of the Anti-Corruption establishment for further legal proceedings.

Gender-Based Violence Tribunal rejects bail in extortion case

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Special Tribunal against Gender-Based Violence Peshawar has rejected the bail plea of two alleged extortionists named Farid and Amir who victimized transgender community, on Thursday.

According to the prosecution, the accused individ-

uals demanded Rs. 2.5 million from the transgender victim, Zarqa, and threatened to expel her from Peshawar and seize her property if she failed to comply. The accused also allegedly threatened Zarqa with serious harm and even death.

After hearing the arguments, the tribunal, headed

by Judge Bakht Zada, rejected the bail plea of the accused and directed that they be kept in jail.

The prosecution argued that there was sufficient evidence against the accused and that they had a history of involvement in activities against the transgender community.

They had threatened

Zarqa with serious harm if she failed to pay the demanded amount.

The defense counsel argued that there was a lack of concrete evidence against the accused and that they should be granted bail. However, the tribunal was not convinced by the defense's arguments and rejected the bail plea.

Government committed to restore cultural heritage: Dr. Abdul Samad

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has developed a comprehensive roadmap for the preservation and promotion of the province's cultural heritage, with accelerated efforts to highlight cultural pillars such as music, drama, fine arts, and crafts on a global scale. In this regard, an important meeting was organized by the Department of Culture, Tourism & Archaeology and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture & Tourism Authority, where Provincial Secretary for Culture Dr. Abdul Samad addressed a delegation of artists. The delegation included prominent figures from music, film, and literature, such as Professor Sajjad Orakzai, Presidential Award-winning Pashto actress Noshaba Bibi, Afshen Zaman, Manzoor Khan, Dr. Masood-ur-Rehman, Umar Hayat, Ashfaq Toru, Muhammad Nawaz, and Syed Ahmed Bukhari. Director General of the KP Culture & Tourism Authority, Habibullah Arif, also presented suggestions. Dr. Abdul Samad emphasized that Peshawar's Nishtar Hall holds historical significance and immediate steps will be taken to make it a hub for artists' activities. He requested the delegation to submit an event calendar and an actionable plan for the next six months. A concrete plan will also be prepared to revive the cultural festival "Jashn-e-Khyber," which was held in the past. In line with Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur's vision, special attention is being given to heritage tourism to put the province on the global tourism map. The delegation requested that cultural associations be granted council status, to which Director General KP-CTA Habibullah Arif directed them to submit a written application, assuring them of registration.

Uprooting Polio Virus Crucial for National Prosperity: Dr. Ilyas Syed

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: President of the Special Persons Welfare Foundation from Orakzai District, Nek Badshah, and Social Media Coordinator Muhammad Aslam, both affected by polio, called on Dr. Syed Muhammad Ilyas, CEO Paraplegic Center Peshawar, at his office. They lauded Dr. Ilyas's remarkable services for persons with disabilities (PWDs) and assured of full support from their organization. They also expressed a desire to launch joint efforts for the welfare of wheelchair users and for the eradication of polio in Orakzai and other merged districts.

Dr. Ilyas Syed appreciated the Foundation's sincere efforts for PWDs and expressed hope that the mission to serve suffering humanity would continue at all costs. He voiced serious concern over the increasing spread of the polio virus and the rising number of affected individuals in Orakzai and other merged tribal districts. He attributed the primary cause to a lack of public awareness and the refusal of some parents, under the influence of negative propaganda, to allow polio vaccination for their children.

Dr. Ilyas Syed stressed that complete eradication of the polio virus is essential for national prosperity and emphasized that Pakistan can only become polio-free when we fight this crippling disease with the spirit of a national crusade, ultimately wiping it out and consigning it to history.

Sajjad Muhammad Khan



IN Pakistan's secondary and higher secondary education system, practical exams-often perceived as a mere 10-mark component-are in reality a crucial but unfortunately highly neglected aspect. These exams, ostensibly designed to assess students' scientific skills and experimental capabilities, are frequently compromised by favoritism, personal connections, and nepotism.

The issue becomes more alarming when a student who excels in theoretical papers receives very low marks in the practical exam, while another with poor academic performance secures full marks. For instance, a student scoring 63/65 in theory receives only 5 marks in the practical, while another with just 4/65 in theory gets a full 10 marks. This is not merely an individual injustice-it raises serious ques-

tions about the credibility of the entire education system. My esteemed friend, Dr. Inayat-ur-Rahman, former president of the Islamia Collegiate School Peshawar's teaching staff association and an expert in educational affairs, inspired me to write this article. Dr. Rahman has conducted extensive research on educational reforms in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and deeply understands how such flawed systems lead future generations towards disillusionment.

The Current Reality of Practical Exams

Typically, performance in practical exams should be evaluated based on student attendance, lab notebooks, and oral examinations.

Unfortunately, this process lacks transparency. The external examiners are often familiar with the students or are influenced by some form of non-academic pressure.

As a result, hardworking students are overlooked, while those with the right connections receive undue advantage. This unfair practice reinforces the belief among students that success relies more on connections than on merit.

What Can Be Learned from International Models?

The Cambridge O-Level's "Alternative to Practical" (ATP) model serves as a beacon of reform. Instead of appearing in a hands-on lab exam, students attempt a standardized written paper that is centrally marked. This model ensures not only transparency but also uniformity in assessment.

Two Practical Solutions to This Crisis:

1. Implementation of the ATP Model:

Introduce a standardized written paper for practical assessment in Pakistan, to be checked at the central level. This would eliminate favoritism and curb the influence of personal bias or external pressure.

2. A Regulated Internal Assessment System:

Allow subject teachers to award practical marks, but implement a strict monitoring mechanism supported by documented evidence. This could include lab attendance records, active participation in experiments, the quality of lab notebooks, and year-round performance.

The fundamental purpose of any education system is to assess a student's capabilities and effort-not their connections or influence. If we truly aim to raise a generation that is genuinely educated and skilled, we must reform the outdated and unjust system of practical examinations.

This is not just an educational issue; it is a moral and national responsibility.

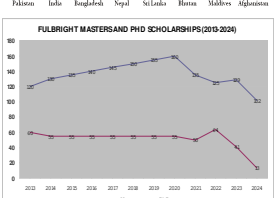
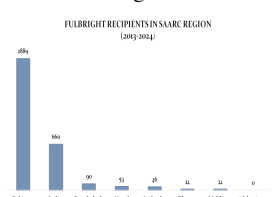
Fullbright scholarship in Pakistan 2013-2025

Sidra Jamil

THE Fulbright Scholarship, often hailed as a beacon of academic excellence and international cooperation, has long been a cornerstone of US cultural diplomacy. The scholarship is based on comprehensive financial support from the US that covers all educational and living expenses. Since its inception in 1946, the programme has awarded scholarships to over 370,000 individuals across 160 countries, including Pakistan. This insight critically examines Fulbright scholarships in Pakistan from 2013 to 2024.

Since its inception in Pakistan in 1951, the Fulbright Programme has awarded nearly 3,000 scholarships to Pakistani nationals. In 2022 alone, Pakistan was the largest recipient of Fulbright scholarships globally, with 189 scholarships worth US\$18.44 million. Graph 1 below indicates that Pakistan has been the largest recipient of Fulbright scholarships in the SAARC region over the last decade.

The Fulbright Programme operates on a bilateral partnership basis, encompassing the 'Foreign Student Programme' and 'Fulbright Foreign Student Program'.



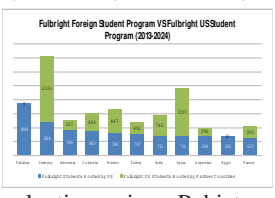
the 'US Student Programme'. The Foreign Student Programme brings international graduate students to the US, whereas the US Student Programme allows American citizens to study in partner countries.

Graph 4 below clearly illustrates that, among the top ten Fulbright recipient countries, every nation except Pakistan hosts US nationals under the Fulbright US Student Programme.

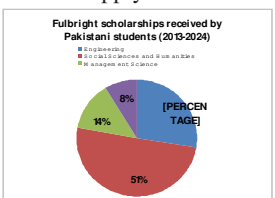
The pie chart below indicates that in the last decade, 64% of Pakistanis

secured Fulbright scholarships in Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities, and Management Sciences, and only 36% in Engineering and Science subjects.

The United States Educational Foundation in Pakistan (USEFP) primarily manages Fulbright



selection in Pakistan. USEFP advertisements on its website state that Pakistani citizens with strong academic histories, residing in Pakistan, and committed to returning and serving Pakistan are welcome to apply.

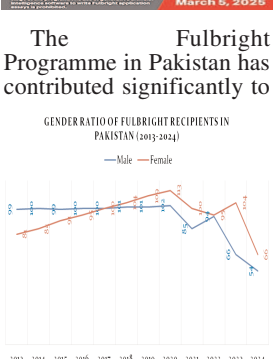


Graph below shows the gender ratio of Fulbright recipients in Pakistan. Until 2018, approximately half of the Fulbright Programme recipients

were women; however, since 2018, the number of female recipients has exceeded that of their male counterparts.



The Fulbright Programme in Pakistan has contributed significantly to



educational exchange and social inclusion by targeting women and individuals from historically marginalised regions such as the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Gilgit-Baltistan, Balochistan, Northern Sindh, and South Punjab. However, the programme operates in complex sociopolitical environments marked by conflict and limited access to state resources, sometimes leading to radicalisation. These dynamics underscore the need for ongoing, context-sensitive evaluation. Collaboration among HEC, policymakers, and other stakeholders is vital to sustaining Fulbright's positive developmental impact.

Some critics believe that returning scholars, exposed to Western ideologies and perspectives, introduced views into academic and social spaces that may not always align with Pakistan's national interests. The tensions observed today, especially among the youth, could be seen not as deliberate efforts to challenge the state but as part of the natural friction accompanying

rapid social and intellectual transformation.

Pakistan's unique position in the Fulbright Programme, lacking reciprocity in hosting US students, also warrants attention. Pakistan is the only top Fulbright recipient country exempt from hosting US students under the 'Fulbright US Student Program.' This absence of two-way exchange limits Pakistan's opportunity to shape its global narrative and foster deeper mutual cultural understanding.

The Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan does not directly participate in the selection process for Fulbright scholarships, which the US Embassy in Pakistan manages through the USEFP. Furthermore, transparency issues surrounding the Fulbright Programme present another significant concern. To obtain data on recipients' demographics, selection, subjects, career paths, and funding details, the researcher visited Pakistan's HEC, wrote a letter to the US Embassy, and wrote multiple emails to USEFP. Unfortunately, these key institutions have not been forthcoming with such data.

Moreover, the programme's focus on Social Sciences, Arts, and Humanities over cutting-edge science and technology disciplines prompts a discussion on its alignment with Pakistan's developmental requirements. Is the Fulbright Programme equipping Pakistan with the skills necessary to compete in a rapidly evolving world?

The lack of comprehensive data on Fulbright recipients from Pakistan hinders effective tracking of talent migration, intellectual capital, and potential brain drain. Assessing how US-educated scholars contribute to national development without accurate records becomes difficult. This limited transparency raises questions about possible foreign influence and the implications for national security.

The Fulbright programme should be a two-way exchange, fostering mutual benefit for Pakistan and the US. Enabling Pakistani scholars to study in the US while encouraging American students to engage with Pakistan can enhance cultural understanding, promote knowledge-sharing, and strength-

en diplomatic, educational, and economic ties.

HEC should play a more significant role and take proactive measures to safeguard Pakistan's intellectual and cultural autonomy. This includes active participation in the selection process and subject allocation to maintain transparency. HEC should also establish a centralised data bank and monitoring system to track scholarship recipients' demographics, subjects, career paths, and funding details.

Furthermore, a thorough, periodic review of the performance and impact of international scholarships is essential to ensure their relevance and effectiveness. Consistently addressing these factors will help sustain the effectiveness and credibility of such initiatives. There is a need to review other international scholarships offered to Pakistani nationals, like the Chevening Scholarship (UK government-funded) and the DAAD (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst) Scholarship (German government-funded programme), on similar lines.

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In brief

Commissioner chairs meeting F.P. Report

KOHAT: An important meeting regarding the networking of gas pipelines in Kohat Cantt was held with the Commissioner Kohat Syed Motasim Billah Shah in the chair at his office, which besides others, was also attended by the Additional Deputy Commissioner (G) Hamid Iqbal, Chief Executive Officer Kohat Cantt: Board, In-charge SNGPL, Superintendent of Police Kohat and officials of the C&W Department. It was unanimously decided in the meeting that all the necessary requirements will be met to complete the said project as per the specified standard and quality. It was further decided that a monitoring committee consisting of the relevant technical personnel of the Cantt: Board, SNGPL, district administration and C&W Department under the supervision of the district administration will continuously monitor the project and maintain its quality at all costs. Commissioner Kohat directed the timely completion of the gas pipeline networking project in Kohat Cantt: without compromising on the quality of work by continuous monitoring. He added that there should be no further delay in this important project of public interest.

Two shot killed in Larkana F.P. Report

LARKANA: Unknown motorcyclist shot dead former policeman Shahzad Shar over an old dispute near village Daulat Khokhar near Larkana, while the gunmen fled the scene. On receiving information, police reached the spot and brought dead body to Dokri Hospital for postmortem, which was taken to his heirs after necessary action. On the other hand, a situation of fear and panic has arisen in the area after the incident. Meanwhile, gunmen opened fire on a young man Tariq Ali Bhagat over a family dispute in the limits of Badah police station, police registered case against Badar Bhagat, Altaf Bhagat, Ashiq Bhagat and an unknown person on the complaint of his heirs. In a third incident, a 22-year-old rickshaw driver, Muhammad Qasim son of Hassan Kalhor, drowned while swimming in the Umrani Bridge Rice Canal near Larkana. His body was recovered by rescue workers 24 hours later and handed over to his heirs. A mournful atmosphere was created when the body reached his home.

Uplift works discussed F.P. Report

WANA: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Lower Waziristan, Musarrat Zaman, has vowed to expedite development efforts in the district, emphasizing the urgent need for improved infrastructure and effective public service delivery. Chairing a series of separate meetings with the heads of three key government departments at his office, DC reviewed the district's development indicators, the status of infrastructure restoration, and the challenges faced by local communities. "Since the division of South Waziristan, progress on establishing government offices and developing essential infrastructure in Lower Waziristan has been far from satisfactory, causing immense hardship for the public," he said. He underscored that the district, one of the most underdeveloped in the former FATA region, would be given top priority in healthcare, education, roads, and the expansion of government facilities.

AG KP visits District Accounts Office Swat



F.P. Report

MINGORA: Accountant General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Khalid Mahmood paid a visit to the District Accounts Office Swat. He was accompanied by District Comptroller of Accounts Swat Nishad Ali, and District Accounts Officers Sajid Khan and Najeeb Ullah. During the visit, the Accountant General conducted a detailed inspection of various sections of the office, including Pension, G.P. Fund, HR, and the

Counter Section, among others. He obtained information from the staff regarding the services being provided to government departments and employees, as well as the issues they face. On this occasion, Accountant General Khalid Mahmood was given a comprehensive briefing on the overall performance of the office, available facilities, public services, and challenges.

Expressing satisfaction over the office's performance, he instructed officers and staff to perform their

duties with honesty, professionalism, and a strong sense of responsibility. He particularly emphasized the need to treat government employees, especially retired personnel (pensioners) with courtesy and full cooperation, so they receive both ease and respect during their visits. He assured the immediate and prioritized resolution of the issues highlighted during the briefing and stated that practical steps would be taken to address these matters to further improve government financial operations.

NLC officials blamed for violating agreement

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: The Khuga Khel tribesmen blamed National Logistic Cell (NLC) officials for violating agreement to openly tender loading and unloading, canteen and other contracts in Torkham terminal as it was promised to be given to them.

Addressing to a press conference in District Press Club, Landi Kotal on Thursday Tehsil Chairman Haji Shah Khalid, tribal elders Malik Tajuddin, Malik Khayal Muhammad, Malik Tahir, Sadullah Shinwari, Torkham Clearing Agents Association Mujib Shinwari and other categorically condemned what they said unlawful act of NLC and said without taking onboard the Khuga

Khel, by inviting biddings of various contracts in the Torkham export, import terminal was denial of triparties agreement.

Khuga tribal has 15% share in income generating activities in the terminal in addition with promise has been made at the time of signing the agreement that priority will be given to them in low cadre posts, jobs and small businesses in the premises of the terminal however publicizing the tenders is equivalent to deprive them of earning of three times meal for their families, they added.

The tribesmen maintained that they agreed to set up a terminal in Torkham in the best interest of the country but ironically the NLC under the supervision of Federal Board Of

Revenue (FBR) utilized all unfair means to usurp their rights.

They demanded of the arbitration committee, comprising Commandant Khyber Rifle, Deputy Commissioner, Khyber and Distinct Police Officer, Khyber to play their due role to resolve the issue. They threatened that if tender advertisement was not withdrawn till 03 August, 2025 then they would move to the roads to protest.

Earlier, a protest rally of Khuga Khel tribesmen was held in Torkham against the advertisement of minor jobs and businesses inside the terminal. The protestors suspended the road for time being and asked the NLC and FBR officials to immediately withdraw the small jobs and businesses in the terminal.

DPO assured journalists for crime free Tank F.P. Report

TANK: District Police Officer (DPO) Shabbir Hussain Shah has vowed to restore peace and order in Tank and eradicate the menace of narcotics. He revealed that special operations are being conducted against drug dealers and addicts, and patrols have been increased in various areas to monitor the situation.

Addressing a delegation from Press Club Tank at his office, DPO assured that the public would witness a significant reduction in lawlessness and other illicit activities in the coming weeks. The delegation, led by Press Club Tank President Rafiq Ahmad Kundi.

DPO expressed gratitude to the journalists for visiting his office and emphasized the crucial role of responsible media reporting in shaping society. He acknowledged the importance of print and electronic media in promoting regional development and constructive discourse.

The journalists engaged in a detailed discussion with the DPO on issues related to law and order and narcotics. DPO Shah acknowledged their concerns and assured them that he would take stringent action against criminals and drug dealers. He emphasized that he has been closely monitoring the situation since his posting 18 days ago and is determined to bring about positive change in Tank. "We will soon witness a significant transformation in Tank, and the public will feel the impact of our efforts to curb lawlessness and promote peace," the DPO said, expressing optimism about the future of the district.

Solar system at NPC inaugurated Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: District Development Advisory Committee (DDAC) chairman Haji Zar Alam Khan inaugurated solar system in Nowshera Press Club. On this occasion, he stated that the current provincial government is working for the welfare of journalists and will make every effort to solve their problems on a priority basis.

DDAC chairman Haji Zar Alam Khan emphasized the crucial role of journalism in society, saying that it is the fourth pillar of the state and plays a key role in solving societal problems. He urged journalists to use their pens for constructive criticism rather than mere criticism.

He expressed his commitment to making the Nowshera Press Club one of the best press clubs in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He assured that every effort will be made to solve the problems of journalists affiliated with the press club on a priority basis.

Haji Zar Alam Khan stressed the importance of unity and cooperation in solving problems. He said that Nowshera is progressing due to its positive journalism and that everyone needs to work together for its development.

The MPA highlighted the record development projects initiated by PIT MPAs in Nowshera, which will end years of neglect and deprivation in the district. He announced a recreational tour for the journalist community, provided that they maintain unity and resolve their issues.

Three girls drowned in Indus river F.P. Report

SHANGLA: As many as three girls drowned in Indus River, residents of Kamach Khwar area of Union Council Kamach, Tehsil Martung, District Shangla, while bathing by the river-side, on Thursday.

According to details, local residents managed to rescue one of the girls, identified as Gulei Bibi, daughter of Gul Sher Khan. However, the search continues for the remaining two girls who are still missing. The missing girls have been identified as daughter of Sawab Syed, approximately 16 years old, resident of Khwar, UC Kamach, daughter of Gul Sher Khan, approximately 14 years old, resident of Khwar, UC Kamach, Tehsil Martung, District Shangla.

Dir elders assure full support to admn against anti-state elements

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: A grand jirga convened in Balambat on Thursday brought together political and community elders of Lower Dir and top district officials, reaffirming mutual cooperation in maintaining peace and countering anti-state elements.

The jirga was attended by Deputy Commissioner Lower Dir Muhammad Arif Khan, Commandant Dir Task Force, and District Police Officer Abdul Salam Khalid, along with Additional Deputy Commissioners Bashir Khan and Gohar Ali, Assistant Commissioners Zaid Safi and Baqar Ali, and a large number of political leaders, religious scholars, lawyers, and notables from across the district.

Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Commissioner Arif Khan thanked the elders for their participation and emphasised the administration's commitment to strengthening public trust and resolving misunderstandings between state institutions and the local populace.

He assured the gathering that the overall law and order situation in Lower Dir remained under control and that no full-scale military operation was planned. However, he clarified that intelligence-based targeted operations would be carried out in areas where the presence of militants is confirmed — and only in consultation with local elders.

The DC expressed concern over ongoing social media propaganda by anti-state elements aimed at discrediting the armed forces and state institutions. "Fake videos and disinformation campaigns are being used to sow distrust and mislead the public," he warned. "It is the collective responsibility of the community to stand firm against such narratives."

He urged the public to identify and report suspicious activities in their areas and encouraged relatives of wanted individuals to persuade them to surrender. "The state has tightened its grip on those involved in terrorism," he added, noting that profiling of suspected individuals was underway.

District officials praised the unwavering support of Lower Dir's residents during past security operations, especially in resisting

Girl student ends life after scoring 1010 marks in exams F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: A 15-year-old girl reportedly took her own life after becoming distressed over her matriculation exam results in the Gandigar Payeen area of Upper Dir district here the other day.

According to police, the student, identified as Anmol, daughter of Muhammad Ishaq Khan, secured 1010 out of 1200 marks in the recently announced SSC results announced by the Malakand Board. Despite her high score, she reportedly considered her performance unsatisfactory and, in a moment of emotional distress, shot herself with a firearm. She was rushed to a nearby hospital, where doctors confirmed her death.

Local authorities have launched an investigation into the incident. The tragic news has shocked the community, with residents and educators alike expressing deep sorrow over the loss of a young life.

Meanwhile, another girl student identified as Adan, 16 D/O Shafiullah, a resident of Munjai Lower Dir, reportedly consumed poisonous pills at home and tried to end her life. She was unsatisfied of her result. She was admitted to district headquarters hospital Timergara where her condition is stated to be critical. The Balambat police registered a case and started investigations. Similarly, a 19-year-old youth drowned in the River Panjkora near the Khall area of Lower Dir on Wednesday, according to Rescue 1122 officials. The deceased was identified as Ghani Rehman, a resident of Khall. Upon receiving information about the incident, Rescue 1122 teams, along with local divers and Civil Defence volunteers, swiftly launched a search and rescue operation at the site. According to the Rescue 1122 spokesperson, the joint team managed to recover the body from the river after a 30-minute operation. The victim was immediately shifted to a nearby hospital, where doctors confirmed that he had died. The tragic incident has once again raised concerns over the lack of safety measures along riverbanks during the summer season.

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He urged the public to identify and report suspicious activities in their areas and encouraged relatives of wanted individuals to persuade them to surrender. "The state has tightened its grip on those involved in terrorism," he added, noting that profiling of suspected individuals was underway.

District officials praised the unwavering support of Lower Dir's residents during past security operations, especially in resisting

external threats and terrorism. "With public support, the armed forces will bring all enemies and their facilitators to justice," said the Commandant of the Dir Task Force.

Participants at the jirga welcomed the government's assurance of transparency and community consultation in all future security matters. They demanded immediate action against known terrorist elements in certain areas and pledged to continue standing by the state in its efforts to uphold peace and national integrity.

MPA Arshad Umerzai: A leader of people

F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: Member Provincial Assembly (MPA) Arshad Khan Umerzai has emerged as a beacon of hope for the people of District Charsadda. As MPA of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, he has earned the distinction of being the most popular leader among the masses.

This is emotion of every resident in the premises and claimed that everyday hundreds of people flock to MPA Arshad Khan Umerzai's hujra, seeking solutions to their problems. With a warm smile and a listening ear, he attends to each and every individual, ensuring that their issues are addressed in a timely and effective manner.

MPA Arshad Khan Umerzai is not alone in his

efforts to serve the people. His brothers, Khurshid Khan and Haji Hidayat Khan, are also actively involved in serving the community, working tirelessly to ensure that the needs of the people are met.

What sets MPA Arshad Khan Umerzai apart from others is his unwavering commitment to the people. He is a leader who truly understands the needs and concerns of his constituents, and works tirelessly to address them.

In a region where politics is often seen as a game of power and privilege, MPA Arshad Khan Umerzai stands out as a beacon of hope. His dedication to the people and his willingness to listen and serve have earned him the love and respect of the



masses. As District Charsadda looks to the future, MPA Arshad Khan Umerzai's leadership provides a glimmer of hope. With his vision, commitment, and dedication, the people of Charsadda can expect a brighter future, one that is built on the principles of service, compassion, and justice.

Special Education Complex Mardan shines in SSC results

Anees Takar

MARDAN: The Special Education Complex Mardan has showcased outstanding academic performance in the recently announced Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations, with students overcoming speech and hearing impairments to achieve remarkable success.

In the SSC Part-II (Metric) examination, 14 students (12 male and 2 female) appeared. Mst. Malika secured the top position with 1035 marks out of 1200, followed by Mr. Hamza with 1026 marks in second place, and Mr. Adnan Shah stood third with 1001 marks. Among the candidates, 4 students earned A1 grades, 2 received A grades, while one each secured B and C grades.

Similarly, in the SSC Part-I examination, 8 students (6 male and 2 female) appeared. Mst. Hamad Allah secured the top spot with 480 out of 600 marks, Zabeehullah came second with 476 marks, and Younas achieved third place with 474 marks.

The exceptional results underscore the dedication of students, teachers, and staff at the Special Education Complex Mardan, proving that physical challenges are no barrier to academic excellence.

CEO Huner Kada visits Pakhtunkhwa Arts College: Chief Executive of HunerKada Islamabad Syed Jamal Shah visited the Pakhtunkhwa College of Arts under Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan. On this occasion, he inspected various departments of the college including the museum, Swat Gallery and Photography Gallery and expressed keen interest in the artwork.

Syed Jamal Shah, while appreciating the building, teaching environment and student work of the Pakhtunkhwa College of Arts, expressed interest in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between HunerKada Islamabad and Abdul Wali Khan University. He said that both institutions can promote mutual cooperation for the promotion of fine arts and training of young artists.

On this occasion, he met with Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Jamil Ahmed, in which

issues related to the promotion of arts and culture were discussed. During the visit, HunerKada Director Amna Shah, Swat Syndicate Member Hassan Raza and Principal Pakhtunkhwa College of Arts Fazal Sattar Durrani and Dr. Ijaz were also present.

Dr. Adnan defends PhD thesis F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: A scholar Muhammad Adnan Khan successfully defended his Ph. D thesis at the Department of Chemistry department in the Gomal University Dera Ismail Khan.

He completed his research work titled "Synthesis and Photocatalytic Applications of Bi2O3-Mn2O3 Based Nanoscale Materials" under the supervision of Prof Dr Kamran Tahir. Prof Dr Afzal Shah of the University of Science and Technology, Bannu evaluated the research thesis as the external examiner.



GAZA: Palestinians, driven to the brink of starvation under the Israeli army's attacks and blockade, gathered at an aid distribution point in Netzarim Corridor.

US pushes to revoke scientific ruling that underpins climate regulations

WASHINGTON (AFP): President Donald Trump's administration moved to reverse a foundational scientific determination that underpins the US government's authority to limit greenhouse gas emissions from motor vehicles and, more broadly, to combat climate change.

Speaking at an auto dealership in Indianapolis, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lee Zeldin argued that the 2009 Endangerment Finding was based on flawed reasoning and had inflicted serious economic harm.

"If finalized, today's announcement would amount to the largest deregulatory action in the history of the United States," said the former Republican congressman. He was joined by Energy Secretary Chris Wright, a former fracking company CEO, whose department published a climate science study cited in the EPA action.

The proposed reversal -- first announced in March -- will be subject to a 45-day public comment period and is certain to face legal challenges. While Zeldin cast the move as a way to undo what he called the "Biden-Harris administration's electric vehicle (EV) mandate," revoking the Endangerment Finding could also unravel the legal basis for a wide array of climate regulations, including those on power plants and oil and gas operations. In his remarks, Zeldin accused the EPA under former president Barack Obama, a Democrat, of

making "mental leaps" in determining that heat-trapping gases posed a threat to public health and welfare. The EPA said in a press release that the finding had "been used to justify over \$1 trillion in regulations" and undoing it would save \$54 billion annually.

A 302-page document outlining the rationale for the revocation makes a number of bold claims around climate science, including the assertion that "extreme weather events have not demonstrably increased relative to historical highs," citing the Energy Department report. It also speaks about the "beneficial impacts" of carbon emissions on plant growth and agricultural productivity. The Endangerment Finding was grounded in overwhelming scientific consensus and peer-reviewed research. It followed a landmark 2007 Supreme Court ruling that found greenhouse gases qualify as air pollutants under the Clean Air Act and directed the EPA to revisit its position. Transportation accounts for 28 percent of US greenhouse gas emissions -- more than any other sector. If it were a country, the US transportation sector would rank as the fourth largest emitter of greenhouse gases globally, while the power sector would be fifth.

Environmental groups and states are expected to swiftly sue. The case could ultimately reach the Supreme Court, which may need to overturn its own 2007 precedent to side with the

current Republican administration. Dan Becker of the Center for Biological Diversity told AFP the Endangerment Finding has survived multiple legal challenges by industry over the years, "but this time, it's the government itself mounting the attack." "Hopefully they will recognize that this is science and not politics -- that there was a good reason for that precedent and no good reason to revoke it," said Becker. "But this is a very political court." He added that the administration's cost-saving arguments were misleading, pointing to official data showing that rules now targeted for repeal saved the average American driver \$6,000 in fuel and maintenance over the lifetime of vehicles built under the standards. Camille Pannu, an environmental law specialist at Columbia University, told AFP the Trump administration had failed to present robust legal arguments grounded in scientific evidence in its proposal. "I think they're hoping they can just refuse to regulate for four years and do crazy things during that time while it's all tied up in court," she said. Since returning to office, Trump has withdrawn the US from the Paris Agreement and launched a sweeping campaign to expand fossil fuel development. The announcement comes as tens of millions of Americans are baking under a brutal heat dome in the Southeast, while climate-fueled flooding earlier this month killed more than 100 people in Texas.

Ivory Coast's president says will seek fourth term in office

IVORY COAST: Ivory Coast President Alassane Ouattara has announced he will seek a fourth term leading the West African nation, as tensions rise over the exclusion of many heavyweight opposition candidates. Earlier, he had been officially nominated by his ruling Rally of Houphouetists for Democracy and Peace (RHDP) party as its candidate, but had not yet said if he would contest the October 25 election. With the country's most high-profile opposition politicians ruled ineligible, Ouattara is the clear frontrunner.

The 83-year-old president, who has led the country since 2011, declared his plan in a televised announcement. "For several months, I have received numerous calls from fellow citizens regarding my potential candidacy in the presidential election," he said. Referring to the coun-

try by its name in French, he went on: "Women and young people from all regions of Cote d'Ivoire, and countless anonymous voices from our neighbourhoods, towns, and villages have reached out. "In response to those appeals, I announced on June 22 that, as president of all Ivoirians, I would, after careful reflection, make a decision guided solely by the best interest of the nation."

Ouattara won a third term in 2020 after the constitution was changed to reset the presidential term limit. He had said he was not going to run again, but he changed his position following the death of his hand-picked successor, Prime Minister Amadou Gon Coulibaly. Critics of Ouattara accuse him of tightening his grip on power and strongly oppose his running again. The opposition has accused the authorities of targeting their

opponents by legal means, but the government insists the judiciary acts independently. The two main opposition parties have launched a joint campaign to demand the reinstatement of their barred leaders ahead of the presidential election. This alliance brings together the African People's Party of Ivory Coast (PPA-CI) - led by former president Laurent Gbagbo - and the Democratic Party of Ivory Coast (PDCI), the country's largest opposition force, headed by former international banker Tidjane Thiam.

Gbagbo, his former right-hand man Charles Ble Goude and ex-Prime Minister Guillaume Soro have been struck from the electoral register due to criminal convictions. Ouattara's most prominent rival, Thiam, was barred from running by a court on the grounds that he was still a French citizen at the time

he declared his candidacy, even though he later renounced his French nationality. Ivorian law bans dual nationals from running for president. Some previous elections in the Ivory Coast have been fraught with tension and violence. When Ouattara announced his third-term bid, several people were killed in the ensuing violence. There have been protests against the court's decision to bar Thiam from contesting the election.

Ouattara is the latest among a growing number of leaders in West Africa who remain in power after changing the constitutional term limit. Coup leaders in the region have used alleged corruption within democratic governments and electoral changes as a pretext to seize power, leading to a split in the regional bloc, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). — Al Jazeera

Canada intends to recognize Palestinian state at UN General Assembly: Carney

OTTAWA (AFP): Canada plans to recognize a Palestinian state at the UN General Assembly in September, Prime Minister Mark Carney said, a major policy shift that drew an angry response from US President Donald Trump and was rejected by Israel.

Carney said the move was necessary to preserve hopes of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a long-standing Canadian goal that was "being eroded before our eyes." "Canada intends to recognize the State of Palestine at the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2025," the prime minister said.

This makes Canada -- a G7 nation -- the third country, following recent announcements by France and the United Kingdom, to signal plans to recognize a Palestinian state in September. Carney said the worsening suffering of

civilians in Gaza left "no room for delay in coordinated international action to support peace." Israel blasted Canada's announcement as part of a "distorted campaign of international pressure," while Trump warned that trade negotiations with Ottawa may not proceed smoothly. "Wow! Canada has just announced that it is backing statehood for Palestine," the US president wrote on his Truth Social platform. "That will make it very hard for us to make a Trade Deal with them." Asked by reporters if there was a scenario where Canada could change its position before the UN meeting, Carney said: "there's a scenario (but) possibly one that I can't imagine." Canada's intention "is predicated on the Palestinian Authority's commitment to much-needed reforms," Carney said, referring to the body led by President Mahmoud

Abbas, which has civil authority in parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Carney said his plans were further predicated on Abbas's pledge to "hold general elections in 2026 in which Hamas can play no part, and to demilitarize the Palestinian state." With announcement, Carney positioned Canada alongside France, after President Emmanuel Macron said his country would formally recognize a Palestinian state during the UN meeting, the most powerful European nation to announce such a move. The Israeli embassy in Ottawa said "recognizing a Palestinian state in the absence of accountable government, functioning institutions, or benevolent leadership, rewards and legitimizes the monstrous barbarity of Hamas on October 7, 2023." The PA's Abbas welcomed the announcement as a "his-

toric" decision, while France said the countries would work together "to revive the prospect of peace in the region." Canada's plan goes a step further than this week's announcement by British Prime Minister Keir Starmer.

Starmer said the UK will formally recognize the State of Palestine in September unless Israel takes various "substantive steps," including agreeing to a ceasefire in Gaza. Carney stressed that Canada has been an unwavering member of the group of nations that hoped a two-state solution "would be achieved as part of a peace process built around a negotiated settlement between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority." "Regrettably, this approach is no longer tenable," he said, citing "Hamas terrorism" and the group's "longstanding violent rejection of Israel's right to exist."

Malta to recognise Palestinian state in Sept

VALLETTA (Reuters): Malta will declare recognition of a Palestinian state during the general assembly of the United Nations in September, Prime Minister Robert Abela said. Abela made the announcement hours after a similar declaration by British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and days after France also announced its recognition plans.

"Our position reflects our commitment to efforts for a lasting peace in the Middle East," Abela said in a Facebook post. The Malta government had been under increasing pressure from within its ranks to recognize a Palestinian state and the centre-right Opposition in mid-July also called for immediate recognition. The Mediterranean EU island has a history of support for Palestinian causes and has backed efforts for a two-state solution. Abela first announced plans for recognition of a Palestinian state in May, saying it would take place at a United Nations conference in June, but the conference was later postponed. Ireland, Norway and Spain recognised Palestine as an independent state in May.

Storm surges of up to four metres (12 feet) were predicted for some parts of the Pacific, after the 8.8 quake struck off Russia's Kamchatka peninsula. The tsunami warnings caused widespread disruption. Peru closed 65 of its 121 Pacific ports and authorities on Maui cancelled flights to and from the Hawaiian island. But fears of a catastrophe were not realised, with country after country lifting or downgrading warnings and telling coastal residents they could return. In Japan, almost two million people had been ordered to higher ground, before the warnings were downgraded to an advisory for large stretches of its Pacific coast, with waves up to 0.7 metres still being observed.

"We urge the public not to go in coastal waters and please stay away from coasts," a seismologist at Japan's meteorological agency said. The only

Attack on mly base in Burkina Faso kills 50 troops

LAGOS (AP): An attack by an armed group on a military base in northern Burkina Faso has left about 50 soldiers dead, according to accounts by a community leader and a resident.

The Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal-Muslimin group, or JNIM, was suspected of carrying out the attack on the base in Dargo in Boulsa province in the northern region of the landlocked West African nation.

The two sources, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because they feared repercussions from the military, said about 100 militants participated in the attack, and that the gunmen burned and looted the base after the killings. The military government has yet to publicly acknowledge the attack. JNIM, one of several armed groups conducting attacks across West Africa, has been blamed for hundreds of civilian and military deaths. Burkina Faso is witnessing a surge in attacks by armed groups who are in control of most of the country, especially outside of the capital. The deteriorating security situation has led to political shifts in the country and served as the pretext for back-to-back coups. The military leader, Ibrahim Traore, has been unable to rein in the Islamist groups despite his redrawing of political and military allies.

US FBI opens office in New Zealand

WELLINGTON (Reuters): The FBI has opened a stand-alone office in New Zealand's capital in part to improve the United States and New Zealand's ability to counter China's presence in the Pacific region, FBI Director Kash Patel said. Patel said in a statement that opening a dedicated law enforcement attaché office in Wellington would strengthen and enhance Washington's longstanding co-operation with one of its key partners in the southwestern Pacific.

"Some of the most important global issues of our times are the ones that New Zealand and America work on together - countering the CCP (the Communist Party of China) in the Indo PACOM theatre, countering the narcotics trade, working together against cyber intrusions and ransomware operations and most importantly protecting our respective citizenry," he added in a video released by the US Embassy in Wellington. The FBI has had a suboffice in New Zealand since 2017 and the two countries work closely on policing issues including child exploitation and organised crime. New Zealand and the US have been working more closely together amid concerns about China's increasing influence in the Pacific.

Millions return home as Pacific tsunami warnings lifted

MOSCOW (AFP): Countries across the Pacific rim lifted tsunami warnings, allowing millions of temporary evacuees to return home. After one of the strongest earthquakes ever recorded rattled Russia's sparsely populated Far East, more than a dozen nations -- from Japan to the United States to Ecuador -- warned citizens to stay away from coastal regions.

Storm surges of up to four metres (12 feet) were predicted for some parts of the Pacific, after the 8.8 quake struck off Russia's Kamchatka peninsula. The tsunami warnings caused widespread disruption. Peru closed 65 of its 121 Pacific ports and authorities on Maui cancelled flights to and from the Hawaiian island. But fears of a catastrophe were not realised, with country after country lifting or downgrading warnings and telling coastal residents they could return. In Japan, almost two million people had been ordered to higher ground, before the warnings were downgraded to an advisory for large stretches of its Pacific coast, with waves up to 0.7 metres still being observed.

"We urge the public not to go in coastal waters and please stay away from coasts," a seismologist at Japan's meteorological agency said. The only

reported fatality was a woman killed when her car fell off a cliff in Japan as she tried to escape, local media reported. In Chile, authorities conducted what the Interior Ministry said was "perhaps the most massive evacuation ever carried out in our country" -- with 1.4 million people ordered to high ground. Chilean authorities reported no damage or victims and registered waves of just 60 centimetres (two feet) on the country's north coast. In the Galapagos Islands, where waves of up to three meters were expected, there was relief as the Ecuadoran navy's oceanographic institute said the danger had passed. Locals reported the sea level falling and then rising suddenly, a phenomenon which is commonly seen with the arrival of a tsunami. But only a surge of just over a meter was reported, causing no damage. "Everything is calm, I'm going back to work. The restaurants are reopening and the places tourists visit are also open again," said 38-year-old Santa Cruz resident Isabel Grijalva.

Earlier, national parks were closed, schools were shuttered, loudspeakers blared warnings and tourists were spirited off sightseeing boats and onto the safety of land. The worst damage was seen in Russia, where a tsunami

crashed through the port of Severo-Kurilsk and submerged the local fishing plant, officials said. Russian state television footage showed buildings and debris swept into the sea. The surge of water reached as far as the town's World War II monument about 400 meters from the shoreline, said Mayor Alexander Ovsyannikov.

The initial quake also caused limited damage and only light injuries, despite being the strongest since 2011, when 15,000 people were killed in Japan. Russian scientists reported that the Klyuchevskoy volcano erupted shortly after the earthquake. "Red-hot lava is observed flowing down the western slope. There is a powerful glow above the volcano and explosions," said Russia's Geophysical Survey. Quake was the strongest in the Kamchatka region since 1952, the regional seismic monitoring service said, warning of aftershocks of up to 7.5 magnitude. The US Geological Survey said the quake was one of the 10 strongest tremors recorded since 1900. It was followed by dozens of aftershocks that further shook the Russian Far East, including one of 6.9 magnitude. The USGS said there was a 59 percent chance of an aftershock of more than 7.0 magnitude in the next week.

New York detectives head to gunman's home in Nevada

NEW YORK (Reuters): New York City detectives investigating this week's mass shooting were interviewing the attacker's associates in his home state of Nevada, as gun safety advocates expressed dismay that he was able to buy a gun there legally last month despite two reported mental health hospitalizations.

Authorities say Shane Tamura, 27, drove from his Las Vegas home to Manhattan, marched into an office skyscraper and fatally shot four people, including an off-duty police officer, with an assault-style rifle before taking his own life. Tamura legally purchased a revolver in Nevada in June at a gun store, New York police said, even though, according to multiple news reports, he was hospitalized under an emergency "mental health crisis hold" in 2022 and again in 2024.

The details of those episodes were not known. Authorities have said Tamura carried a note in which he claimed he suffered from chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or CTE, a brain disease linked to football and other contact sports that can affect behavior. The disease can only be confirmed after death. New York City's medical examiner said in an email that Tamura's brain would be examined as part

of a complete autopsy but did not say whether it would be screened for CTE. Tamura, who shot himself in the chest, bought the rifle he used in the attack from a supervisor at the casino where he worked for \$1,400, CNN reported, citing law enforcement sources. Nevada law requires private gun sales to go through a licensed firearms dealer and include a background check.

Whether he obtained the rifle legally or not, advocates for stricter gun laws said the case showed a need for tougher regulations nationwide, especially for people with mental health problems. "It is horrifying ... that a man with documented mental health struggles was able to purchase a weapon, let alone a weapon of such devastating capability," New York City mayoral candidate Zohran Mamdani told reporters, urging a national ban on assault rifles. New York is one of 10 states that bans such weapons, according to the advocacy group Everytown for Gun Safety.

The National Rifle Association, the New York State Firearms Association and the New York State Rifle & Pistol Association did not immediately respond to requests for comment. The groups oppose restrictions on guns as an infringement on individual rights. Under

Nevada law, officers can detain individuals on emergency holds in mental health facilities or hospitals for up to 72 hours for evaluation. In a handful of states including New York - which has some of the strictest gun laws in the nation - such emergency holds trigger some version of a ban on possessing guns, according to experts. But in most states, including Nevada, as well as under federal law, only a court-ordered involuntary commitment results in a prohibition on buying and owning guns. "What this shooting in New York highlights more than anything else is that we're only as safe as the laws of the weakest state," said Nick Suplina, Everytown's senior vice president for law and policy.

Nevada has enacted a series of gun limits since an October 2017 mass shooting that killed 58 people in Las Vegas. Giffords, another gun safety advocacy organization, gave Nevada a "B-" grade in its annual scorecard of gun laws, compared with an "A" for New York. A new Nevada law that took effect this month - too late to apply to the Manhattan shooter - allows law enforcement officers to take away guns temporarily from someone who is on an emergency mental health hold.

Science of tracing climate deaths in heatwaves

LONDON (AFP): A heat-wave scorching Europe had barely subsided in early July when scientists published estimates that 2,300 people may have died across a dozen major cities during the extreme, climate-fuelled episode. The figure was supposed to "grab some attention" and sound a timely warning in the hope of avoiding more needless deaths, said Friederike Otto, one of the scientists involved in the research.

"We are still relatively early in the summer, so this will not have been the last heatwave. There is a lot that people and communities can do to save lives," Otto, a climate scientist at Imperial College London, told AFP. Heat can claim tens of thousands of lives during European summers but it usually takes months, even years, to count the cost of this "silent killer". Otto and colleagues published their partial estimate just a week after temperatures peaked in western Europe. While the underlying methods were not new,

the scientists said it was the first study to link heatwave deaths to climate change so soon after the event in question.

Early mortality estimates could be misunderstood as official statistics but "from a public health perspective the benefits of providing timely evidence outweigh these risks," Raquel Nunes from the University of Warwick told AFP. "This approach could have transformative potential for both public understanding and policy prioritisation" of heatwaves, said Nunes, an expert on global warming and health who was not involved in the study. Science can show, with increasing speed and confidence, that human-caused climate change is making heatwaves hotter and more frequent. Unlike floods and fires, heat kills quietly, with prolonged exposure causing heat stroke, organ failure, and death. The sick and elderly are particularly vulnerable, but so are younger people exercising or toiling outdoors. But every summer,

heat kills and Otto -- a pioneer in the field of attribution science -- started wondering if the message was getting through. "We have done attribution studies of extreme weather events and attribution studies of heatwaves for a decade... but as a society we are not prepared for these heatwaves," she said.

"People think it's 30 (degrees Celsius) instead of 27, what's the big deal? And we know it's a big deal." When the mercury started climbing in Europe earlier this summer, scientists tweaked their approach. Joining forces, Imperial College London and the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine chose to spotlight the lethality -- not just the intensity -- of the heat between June 23 and July 2. Combining historic weather and published mortality data, they assessed that climate change made the heatwave between 1C and 4C hotter across 12 cities, depending on location, and that 2,300 people had likely perished.

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World Court backs climate-friendly pacts and laws

THE general view is that the International Court of Justice at The Hague is an ineffective international institution because it cannot enforce its verdict. So, when the court said that it is incumbent on national governments to implement the Paris Agreement on climate of 2013 whereby greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) should be limited in such a way that the global temperature would be held below 1.5 Degrees Celsius of the pre-industrial era, it evoked amusement.

Not all countries submit themselves to the international court's jurisdiction. And those that do are not bound to strictly follow the directives of the court. It is the view of experts that what the ICJ has said about the governments' obligation to make policies and to penalize those contributing to the climate crisis will carry certain weight in terms of international agreements and customary international law.

The conventions of international law can be breached with impunity indeed, but the climate activists in many countries are going to cite the court's verdict as a precedent in their legal battles in national courts. It is of course for the higher judiciary in different countries to take note of the ICJ's directions on climate.

The court had implied that even those countries which had walked out of the Paris Agreement – the United States was not named but the implied reference was quite clear – had the binding power of an international agreement. The ICJ verdict will be used by climate litigants, both against governments and private sector players, for ignoring the environmental concerns and warnings.

Greenpeace Netherlands had been fighting a case in the ICJ, and it is based on its plea that the ICJ gave the verdict about taking note of the climate issues. Three countries – the United States, Saudi Arabia and Norway – had contested that national climate policies are not legally binding. The court did not agree.

It would be difficult for the higher judiciary in the national capitals to dismiss the views of ICJ as of no consequence or of no weight. The ICJ's verdict may not be legally binding but it adds up to the legal evidence.

Climate change litigation is sporadic in various countries, and the case law is not developed enough. But it is going to gain ground in the coming years as national governments are bound to legislate on climate-related issues because they will affect the life and livelihoods of the people, and also the places they live in.

Private sector will indeed be resentful and it is likely to contest any legislation that restricts its profit-seeking ventures. Jonathan Martel of the US legal firm, Arnold and Porter, which fights cases for private industry on environmental issues, expressed apprehension that the ICJ's verdict will raise issues.

He said, "This (the ICJ verdict) might create a further obstacle for those who would advocate against regulatory action based on scientific uncertainty regarding the existence of climate change caused by anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases."

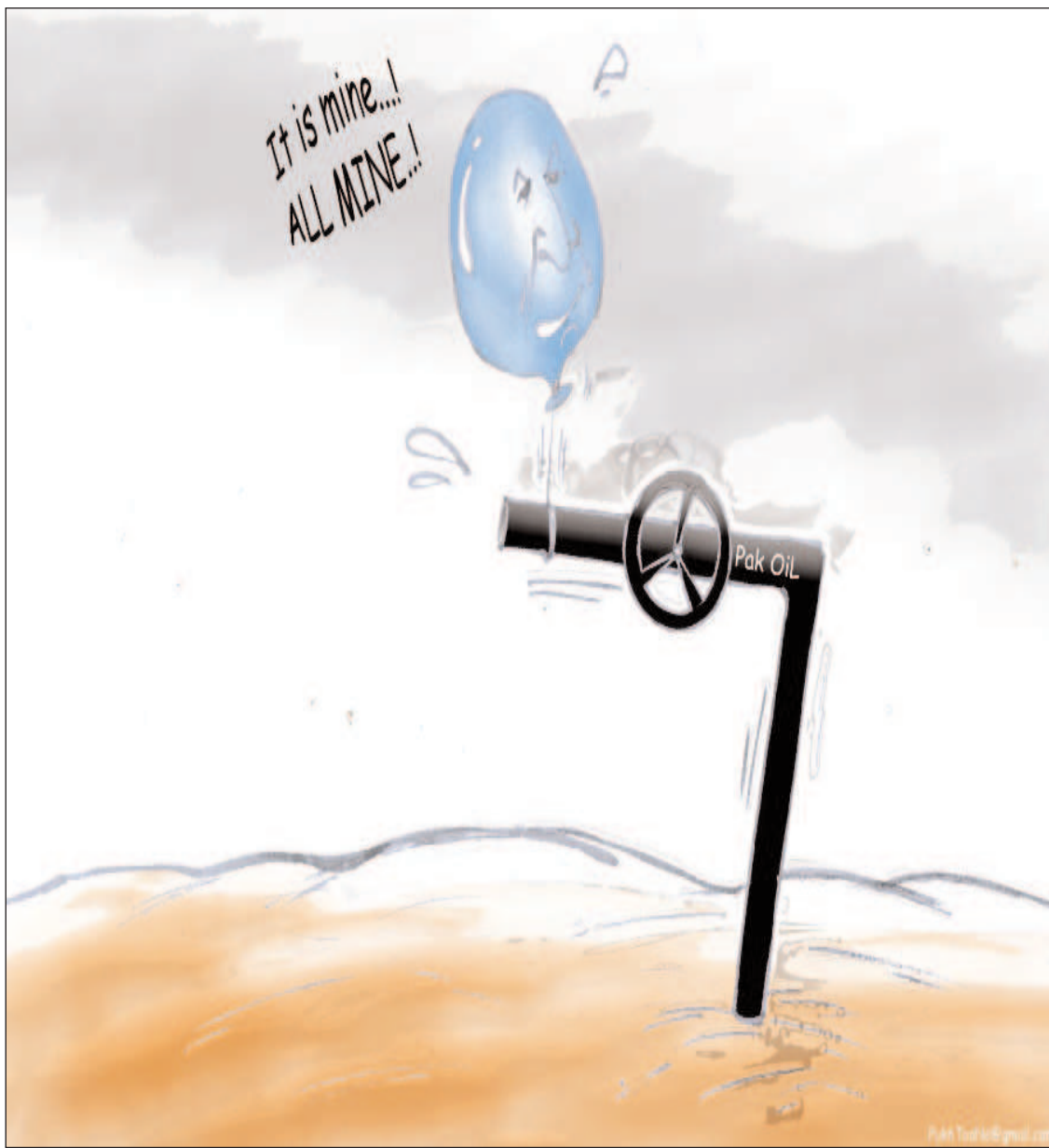
Many in the industrial sector recognize the dangers posed by climate change to their own enterprises. They see a future where their businesses stand ruined because of the extreme weather events caused by climate change. That is why, they are willing to invest in green technologies, switch to electricity and adopt climate change mitigation processes.

There are however a minority in the private sector who deny climate change and they are unwilling to take corrective action. It is to counter the prejudices of the few powerful tycoons, including US President Donald Trump.

Majority of national governments are convinced that climate change is a serious issue and that policies will have to be put in place to face the challenge. It is the legal remedies that will support climate-friendly actions of governments.

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Former EU ambassadors warn: Europe's silence on Gaza is complicity

TO the Presidents of the European Council, the European Commission, and the European Parliament, and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of the European Union,

To the Heads of Government and Foreign Ministers of the EU Member States,

We, 58 former ambassadors of the European Union, were appalled and outraged by the slaughter of innocent Israelis and hostage taking on October 7, 2023 by Hamas and others. No cause can justify such acts, and we condemn them outright.

Today, however, we are witnessing the horrifying spectacle of Israel carrying out, on a daily basis, atrocity crimes against the Palestinian people – above all in Gaza, but also in the occupied West Bank, amounting to a systematic campaign of brutalisation, dehumanisation, and displacement.

The European Union and nearly all of its Member States have failed to respond meaningfully to these horrific events.

As former ambassadors of the EU we dedicated our professional lives to upholding and promoting core European values and international law, building the reputation of the European Union and defending the interests of its peoples. Those interests and that reputation are now in serious jeopardy as a consequence of EU inaction.

For over 21 months, the Netanyahu government has pursued a relentless campaign of violence and destruction in Gaza. About ten percent of Gaza's entire population, including tens of thousands of children, have been killed, maimed and seriously injured by the Israeli military's indiscriminate bombardments.

Most of Gaza has been reduced to rubble. Those who survive bombs and bullets face hunger, malnutrition, disease, and a collapsed health system deliberately targeted by Israel.

The ongoing siege is starving the population by blocking supplies of humanitarian aid from UN agencies and international NGOs.

Replacing UNRWA and other established international providers of aid to Gaza by a politicised and militarised aid operation run by mercenaries is a violation of the UN's humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, which all UN Member States – including Israel – must respect in their entirety.

The concrete humani-

58 Former Ambassadors of the European Union

tarian measures reportedly agreed under the deal the EU High Representative Kaja Kallas secured with Israel have not been made public, nor has the arrangement ever been confirmed by the Israeli authorities. To the contrary, since Ms Kallas' announcement, hundreds of men, children and women have been killed by Israeli soldiers while desperately seeking food and water for their families. This includes an alarming number of civilian deaths caused by Israeli military shooting at Zikim, one of the key border crossing points, that we understand formed part of the humanitarian EU agreement with Israel.

Now, with appalling predictability, Israeli leaders are forcing swathes of Gaza's population into concentration zones – militarised enclosures designed to confine civilians under intolerable conditions, with the clear aim of pressuring them into "voluntary" displacement.

This, along with other illegal Israeli policies in the West Bank, constitutes de facto forcible population transfer, a serious war crime under international law. The Israeli ministers of defense, finance and security have all openly called for the permanent removal of Palestinians from Gaza, and a senior "migration administration" has been created to facilitate it. These are calculated steps towards ethnic cleansing.

Meanwhile, in the West Bank, violent Israeli settlers, with full protection by the Israeli military, have waged a campaign of terror against Palestinian communities. Homes are torched, inhabitants are murdered, families expelled, water sources poisoned, herding animals stolen, olive groves destroyed, and land annexed in violation of international law. The perpetrators who act with impunity are armed and encouraged by state officials. These settlers are not rogue actors – they are the front-line agents of a government-driven agenda to annex and ethnically cleanse Palestinian land.

The evidence of Israeli malfeasance and its flagrant violation of all known humanitarian and human rights laws is overwhelming. The United Nations, humanitarian organisations, and independent observers – including Israeli and Jewish voices – have documented these crimes in detail.

The International Court of Justice has determined that there is a plausible risk of genocide in

Gaza and that Israel's prolonged occupation of Palestine is not only unlawful but even constitutes the crime of segregation or apartheid. European public opinion and the majority of young people, including in countries like Germany and Italy, are clearly in favour of their governments acting to stop this horror.

We welcome the recent condemnation of Israel's actions in Gaza and the West Bank by 28 Foreign Ministers, including those of 20 EU Member States, but words are not enough. We call urgently on all EU leaders and governments, especially those who prevented the Foreign Affairs Council, 15 July, from acting against Israel's egregious humanitarian and human rights violations, to take all necessary and feasible measures under international, European, and national law to bring these atrocities to an end. Action should comprise the following:

1. Resume international aid deliveries immediately at scale and flood the Gaza Strip with humanitarian supplies, in full respect of the core principles of international humanitarian law.

2. Suspend with immediate effect all arms and dual-use exports to Israel.

3. Ban trade with Israel's illegal settlements in occupied Palestinian territory and prohibit EU and member states' commercial and investment relations with any entity or company doing business in or benefiting from Israel's illegal settlements.

4. Suspend all preferential commercial arrangements for Israel under the Association Agreement.

5. Cancel Israel's participation in Horizon Europe and all dual-use research, academic and technology programmes of the EU.

6. Impose targeted sanctions on Israeli Ministers, government officials, military commanders, and violent settlers responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity, facilitating genocide and carrying out State-sanctioned terrorism.

7. Support international and national judicial mechanisms – including the International Criminal Court and domestic courts under universal jurisdiction – to bring perpetrators to justice.

8. Provide political, legal, and financial support to Palestinian civilian victims, human rights defenders, and humanitarian organisations operating under impossible conditions.

9. Recognise

create the necessary prerequisite for a two-state solution.

On July 17, the Day of International Criminal Justice, the European External Action Service recalled that in regard to crimes against humanity, war crimes, genocides ... "history has too many moments when silence followed horror ..."

The world will remember how the EU and its member states respond to this catastrophic tragedy. Silence and neutrality in the face of genocide constitutes complicity. Inaction emboldens perpetrators and betrays every principle the Union and its member states claim to uphold.

While continuing to call unceasingly for the return of the hostages, a permanent ceasefire and the end to the war, the European Union, long a champion of human rights and the rule of law, must act now in the name of international law, humanity, and justice for the Palestinian people – or risk forfeiting its credibility, influence and moral standing in the world.

Signatories:

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New York conference ends US monopoly on Palestine issue

Osama Al-Sharif

IT has been decades since the international community sent a decisive message of unity and clarity on the need to resolve the question of Palestine through the two-state solution. Co-hosted by Saudi Arabia and France, a conference at the UN headquarters in New York and attended by delegates from no less than 125 countries issued such a message this week.

The final communique presented a comprehensive and unanimous approach to ending the war in Gaza, establishing tools to protect the Palestinian people while rejecting unilateral changes to the demography and geography of the Occupied Territories. But most importantly, it underlined that the only just and viable resolution to the conflict is through ending the occupation and implementing the two-state solution.

The international conference, boycotted by the US and Israel, was a collective response by a majority of members of the UN's General Assembly to Israel's genocidal war on Gaza, its declared intention to carry out ethnic cleansing through the forced displacement of Palestinians and its plan to annex Palestinian territories. The final communique was anchored in international law and UN resolutions, as well as on the public positions of an overwhelming majority of states regarding the two-state solution.

While Israel's immediate rejection of the conference's message and intentions can be understood in the context of the policies of the country's most radical government in history, it is the position of the US that is both disappointing and puzzling. For decades, successive American administrations have had a monopoly over the workings of the so-called Middle East peace process. That process, which began with the Madrid Conference in 1991 and culminated with the signing of the Oslo

America's exclusive sponsorship of the peace process and negotiations between the Palestinians and Israel, which ended with President Barack Obama's first term, was corrupted by Washington's grim failure as an honest broker. The US did nothing to hold Israel accountable for its aggressive policy of building and expanding illegal settlements in the West Bank. The US stood aside as a far-right Israeli government unleashed a wave of settler terrorism against Palestinians. It did nothing when Benjamin Netanyahu declared that Oslo was dead and that the Palestinian Authority must be disbanded. It did nothing when Netanyahu declared on more than one occasion his intention to annex the West Bank and bury the hopes of Palestinian statehood for good. President Donald Trump's first term offered little to the Palestinians. During his second term, Israel has caused the most horrific humanitarian crisis in Gaza, while massacring civilians and carrying out their ethnic cleansing.

Accords, failed to deliver on its initial goal: a final status settlement of the conflict.

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Netanyahu used the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attack as an excuse to speed up the liquidation of the Palestine question. He offered nothing to the Palestinians as Israeli extremists roamed the West Bank, killing and injuring native inhabitants while carrying out a campaign of state-sponsored terror.

But by carrying out wholesale war crimes in Gaza, Netanyahu has caused Israel great harm in the international arena. The

world can no longer stomach the horrific scenes coming out of the Gaza carnage. Public opinion has shifted against Israel and weekly protests put pressure on Western leaders to take a stand.

This is when Riyadh and Paris decided to end the current stalemate. Saudi Arabia made it clear that the lack of a just solution to the Palestine issue was the root cause of regional instability. Netanyahu and his far-right partners have no answer to the nagging question: what to do with the Palestinians? Oct. 7 was a milestone that brought agony to Israel and a second Nakba to the Palestinians. For both people not to go through another Oct. 7, a just settlement must be implemented.

Israeli officials will use subterfuge, hubris and threats to debunk calls for Palestinian statehood. They will claim that France and the UK — both of which plan to recognize Palestinian statehood in September — are only rewarding Hamas and hampering an end to the war. They will join the more than 140 countries that have already done so. But Palestinians, more than 12 million of them around the world, have earned their right to self-determination. The only assurance of Israel's security is a Palestinian state next to it, living in peace and harmony. The New York conference was a moment of awakening across the globe. This is a blow to Netanyahu and his extremist partners. But they are still in a position to do harm. Netanyahu has so far rejected any permanent end to the Gaza war. He is still banking on US support to help him extend the blood-bath in the hope of driving millions of Gazans out of the war-torn enclave.

To keep his coalition alive, he could go as far as to implement a recently adopted Knesset resolution to annex most of the West Bank. He could also pull

out of Oslo and disband the PA. But he could only do so if he knew that the US would have his back. All such illegal acts will only deepen Israel's political isolation and may create an international backlash of sanctions. A few weeks ago, Netanyahu looked at the region and proudly announced that Israel had created a new Middle East. He had humbled Hezbollah, helped bring the Assad regime down and dealt a painful blow, with America's assistance, to Iran's nuclear program. But despite all these critical geopolitical achievements, his war on the Palestinians has not been won. Israel's war crimes in Gaza and use of mass starvation as a weapon have failed to fulfill the fundamental goals of the war, while triggering an unprecedented wave of anti-Israel sentiment across the world. The fact that Britain, of all countries, is now ready to recognize Palestinian statehood is a symbolic form of delayed justice.

Netanyahu is taking Israel into a dark place from which it may never return. The Saudi-French initiative is already creating momentum that promises to get stronger by the day because of the terrible choices that Israel and the US are making. While Palestinians suffer and are forced to pay a heavy price, leaving decent people around the world angry and supportive, Israel is now isolated and vindictive.

But the choice at the end of the day is Israel's. It can choose to live in peace with the Palestinians and ensure an end to decades of enmity, or it can allow zealots and radicals to push it into a corner. That would be the wrong choice.

Another reason to be skeptical of Trump’s Epstein concessions

THE Trump administration’s efforts to allay concerns about its handling of the Jeffrey Epstein files by pushing for more information have been suspect, at best. The moves seem to be geared more toward creating the appearance of action than producing anything that would amount to the extensive transparency it promised.

The administration is practically daring people – including many MAGA supporters – to balk at the thin gruel it’s serving up.

And a new filing from the Justice Department overnight reinforces how little light the administration’s moves could shed.

The filing lays out its case for unsealing grand jury testimony, which was President Donald Trump’s first announced concession.

Plenty of experts regarded that move with skepticism. They noted the courts are often reluctant to disclose grand jury materials – an effort to unseal Epstein-related material in Florida already failed just last week – and those materials themselves will often be limited, even if they are released.

That certainly appears to be the case here. In the filing, the Justice Department cites just two witnesses who remain alive whose testimony would be released.

“Here, there was one witness—an FBI agent—during the Epstein grand jury proceedings,” the filing says. “There were two witnesses—the same FBI agent from the Epstein grand jury proceedings and a detective with the NYPD who was a Task Force Officer with the FBI’s Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking Task Force—during the [Ghislain] Maxwell grand jury proceedings.”

That would suggest the testimony is largely second hand, relying on law enforcement officials relaying the accounts of witnesses. Indeed, the filing says these officials “described statements of others, including statements of and concerning victims, many of whom are still alive.”

And beyond that, the filing says many of those accounts were already aired in criminal and civil trials – and by the

witnesses themselves.

“Many of the victims whose accounts relating to Epstein and Maxwell that were the subject of grand jury testimony testified at trial consistent with the accounts described by an FBI agent and the detective from the New York City Police Department (‘NYPD’) in the grand jury and some have also made public those factual accounts in the course of civil litigation,” the fil-

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Aaron Blake

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In addition to the judge in Florida already rejecting the release of grand jury materials (the

gled the prospect of a pardon over Maxwell, reinforcing her likely motivation to say what the Trump administration wants.

On top of that, questions continue to be raised about the administration’s one big, recent disclosure: video footage of the area near Epstein’s cell on the night he died. The administration presented it as “raw” footage and proof that he couldn’t have been

Countries should act unilaterally in recognizing Palestine

Faisal J. Abbas

IN the tangled web of geopolitics and moral responsibility, recognition of Palestine stands today not merely as a diplomatic choice, but as a litmus test of integrity, courage, and commitment to global justice. As the world watches yet another cycle of suffering unfold, it is time to call out the procrastinators, praise the bold, and demand that the international community act unilaterally in embracing the two-state solution — starting with the immediate recognition of Palestine.

The UK’s recent stance — threatening to recognize Palestine if Israel fails to meet certain conditions — encaps-

thwart the establishment of a Palestinian state should support the strengthening of Hamas.”

Recognition is not about legitimizing terrorism. It is about affirming the rights of millions of Palestinians who have nothing to do with Hamas, and have endured statelessness, displacement, and daily suffering. It is about offering a framework for peace that includes Israelis, who also deserve security and stability. Not to mention ending the illegal occupation of Palestinian lands, as stipulated by the UN — an organization Israel is a member of but does not seem to

Let us not forget that these are elected officials who have, without remorse, described the people of Gaza as “human animals,” called for nuclear strikes, and openly encouraged mass displacement. When such rhetoric becomes policy, and cruelty is cloaked in nationalism, the moral compass of governance is not just broken — it is weaponized.

That is why the global community, especially nations untainted by historical baggage, must act. A coalition spearheaded by Saudi Arabia and France, embracing the two-state solution through unilateral recognition of Palestine, is the only viable path forward. Waiting for consensus or

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warns that recognition of Palestine equates to rewarding Hamas — a curious argument, given that his government’s long-term policies over more than 16 years have emboldened the very group he now seeks to vilify. Netanyahu’s devious support for Hamas is well-documented. “For years, Netanyahu propped up Hamas. Now it’s blown up in our faces,” read a headline in The Times of Israel in the immediate aftermath of the horrible Oct. 7 attacks. In 2019, the Israeli leader reportedly said: “Those who want to thwart the establishment of a Palestinian state should support the strengthening of Hamas.” Recognition is not about legitimizing terrorism. It is about affirming the rights of millions of Palestinians who have nothing to do with Hamas, and have endured statelessness, displacement, and daily suffering. It is about offering a framework for peace that includes Israelis, who also deserve security and stability. Not to mention ending the illegal occupation of Palestinian lands, as stipulated by the UN — an organization Israel is a member of but does not seem to respect. Whether Netanyahu and his coalition of far-right nationalists accept it or not, the two-state solution remains Israel’s safest path forward — both in terms of regional normalization and long-term peace. Saudi Arabia has repeatedly signaled that full normalization is contingent upon the creation of a Palestinian state. The Arab and Muslim worlds are prepared to integrate Israel into a region brimming with economic potential and strategic value. Peace, prosperity, and progress are within reach — if only the leadership dares grasp it.

ulates the paradox of delayed justice. “Too little, too late” is apt for a nation that played a pivotal role in creating the current geopolitical landscape. Yet, “better late than never” is equally valid if London finally chooses to right historical wrongs. Former colonial powers such as Britain and France share a legacy of deep entanglement in the Middle East, and the latter’s courageous move to recognize Palestine deserves both praise and emulation.

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Sadly, many in Israel’s current ruling elite remain ideologically opposed to any peaceful settlement. These are individuals who have overseen West Bank annexations, weaponized hunger, and now face accusations of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Their worldview is not anchored in coexistence; it thrives on perpetual conflict and expansionism. For them, any compromise — even one that could save lives — is tantamount to betrayal.

negotiating around extremists only prolongs the suffering. This is no longer about diplomacy — it is about justice.

Now, more than ever, the stars seem aligned. Hamas and Hezbollah are weakened. Iran is notably quiet. We have a US president who is focused on negotiating peace deals between Ukraine and Russia, India and Pakistan, and Thailand and Cambodia. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman happens to be leading Saudi Arabia and has emerged as a pragmatic regional leader with transformative ambitions. This is a historic window to reimagine the Middle East not as a perennial battleground, but as the next Europe — a region of stability, trade, cooperation, and cultural exchange.

In the end, recognition of Palestine is not an act of defiance; it is a pledge to uphold human dignity. It is a call to end decades of suffering, and a step toward a future where Israelis and Palestinians can live not just side by side, but as equal partners in peace.

History won’t wait. Neither should we.

Axing of The Late Show reveals how monopolisation has gutted US media

CBS’ recent cancellation of the popular The Late Show with Stephen Colbert is yet another case of heavy-handed political and corporate meddling in the role of media in the US. It occurred just three days after the comedian and talk show host criticised CBS’s parent company Paramount for settling a multimillion-dollar lawsuit with Trump, with Colbert calling that settlement “a bribe.”

In its announcement, CBS stated it will end The Late Show after May 2026 due to a declining audience, marking the end of a 33-year run for the live-audience series.

But, lower Nielsen ratings or not, the timing of Paramount’s move to cancel one of its signature series may itself prove that the decision was about more than profit. It cannot be ignored that within a few days of both moves, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) finally approved the Skydance-Paramount merger after months of stalling, an \$8bn deal that will add to the mountain of monopolistic moves in US media.

“This is pure cowardice,” David Letterman, The Late Show’s previous host from 1993 to 2015, said of Paramount’s recent decisions to cancel the show and settle the Trump lawsuit.

The US news media’s

never-ending coverage of everything Trump over the past decade and the constant back-and-forth over his policies, policies and practices have played a significant role in its decline. As the US lurches ever closer towards autocracy, the Fourth Estate has increasingly taken on the role of stenographer, with its normalisation of lies, gossip, craven policies and corruption as “disinformation” and “misinformation”.

But the age of Trump is just the tip of the iceberg. The combination of constant realignment to ingratiate media corporations with the political class, along with their monopolisation of media in the US over the past 45 years, has simply devastated the field. This retrenchment has severely skewed news coverage and destroyed the idea of a free press.

The landscape of US media began evolving with the gradual deregulation of both media ownership and the scope of editorial freedom in the 1980s. After 40 years of what was once the Fairness Doctrine in US media law (requiring multimedia broadcasters to air opposing views on topics of national importance, not just one perspective), the FCC voted to abolish the requirement in 1987. This came after Congress had failed to override President Ronald Reagan’s veto of their attempt to codify the doctrine in a bill.

Attempts to re-establish the Fairness Doctrine have failed over the years, including the Restore the Fairness Doctrine Act that the now Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard sponsored in 2019. That bill never made it to the House floor for a vote. In a truly bipartisan effort during the 1990s, many of the remaining regulations that protected US media from monopolisation and the influence of billionaires and mega-corporations were dismantled. The lobbyist-influenced Telecommunications Act of 1996 made its way through Congress with overwhelming support, with only 16 “No” votes out of 430 in the House of Representatives, and five voting “No” out of 96 in the Senate.

The deregulations, intended to foster more competition between media corporations and their multimedia platforms, actually did the opposite by extending media monopolisation. Between 1983 and 2015, the number of corporations that collectively owned 90 percent of the entire US media market fell from “more than 50 to just six companies”, including books, newspapers, magazines, mobile and cable television, internet and music, films and professional athletic teams.

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Donald Earl Collins

the deal that allowed Murdoch to buy 20th Century Fox and acquire Fox broadcast stations. This occurred after Murdoch had become a naturalised US citizen, as federal regulations at that

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time limited foreign ownership of and investment in broadcasting. Eleven years later, and just months after the Telecommunications Act of 1996’s passage, Murdoch and media executive Roger Ailes founded Fox News under the ironically deceptive slogan “Fair and Balanced”. With the Fairness Doctrine gone and the need to provide balanced media coverage removed, Fox News’ decidedly biased far-right slant was deliberate, built solely for profit. “People don’t want to be informed, they want to feel informed,” the late Ailes apparently said more than once in justifying Fox News’

approach to news coverage.

In recent years, with billionaires buying major news outlets like The Washington Post, The Los Angeles Times, and The Wall Street Journal and dictating editorial decisions, Americans

build a monopoly and usher in the age of fact-free journalism helped set off this buying frenzy, with profit prioritised over fairness every step of the way. By the end of the 1980s, the reign of conservative and far-right radio talk shows had begun, with the late Rush Limbaugh leading the pack with his nationally syndicated The Rush Limbaugh Show. His constant barrage of racism, sexism, queerphobia and other hyper-masculine talking points became an echo chamber for about 15 million listeners for the next 30 years.

Although centre-left radio programming like Air America made minor inroads in the 2000s, progressive ventures have often fizzled out. They have frequently lacked sufficient financial support and political protection in an increasingly monopolised and ideologically skewed media world. At the height of MSNBC’s “Lean Forward” days, when critics saw its merely centrist political news coverage between 2010 and 2016 as “liberal”, its executives denied MSNBC was the leftist equivalent of Fox News. Phil Griffin, who ran MSNBC from 2008 through early 2021, once said, “No. We don’t put out talking points all day” like Fox News. “Corporations are ... like sharks. They just move toward the money. That’s all they do,” one former

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build a monopoly and usher in the age of fact-free journalism helped set off this buying frenzy, with profit prioritised over fairness every step of the way. By the end of the 1980s, the reign of conservative and far-right radio talk shows had begun, with the late Rush Limbaugh leading the pack with his nationally syndicated The Rush Limbaugh Show. His constant barrage of racism, sexism, queerphobia and other hyper-masculine talking points became an echo chamber for about 15 million listeners for the next 30 years.

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executive for the news organisation said. In 2016, eugenicist tech billionaire Peter Thiel essentially destroyed the progressive tabloid Gawker. Furious that Gawker had outed him as queer in 2007, Thiel helped the late wrestler Hulk Hogan win a \$140m lawsuit against Gawker for its publication of his sex tape.

It is often said that good journalism reflects the happenings of the world like a mirror, without bias and with every effort to expose the truth behind news events. If this is truly the definition of what makes good journalism, then US journalism has been staring into a mirror with a multitude of fractures for decades. In 2025, it is not just that many Americans do not believe in the media they consume or only believe the news when it fits their personal narrative. Many in the US know that the nation’s media regularly peddles lies, half-truths and gossip in a never-ending search for easy profit, all while dumbing down their consumers.

Reporting on the spread of autocratic rule, calling out complicity in genocide, or interrogating the ethics of billionaires and mega-corporations in a monopolised media world? Any efforts towards fairness and truth can easily cost anyone in the media their job, or worse, even someone as influential as Stephen Colbert.



SCCI dismayed over SB decision to keep policy rate unchanged

— govt, SBP urged to reconsider 11% interest rate

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry voiced strong frustration over the State Bank of Pakistan's decision to maintain the status quo on interest rates and warned that the policy continues to choke economic growth and industrial recovery.

Fazal Moqeem Khan, president Abdul Jalil Jan, senior vice president Shchryar Khan, vice president along with members of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry's executive committee expressed intense disappointment over the SBP's decision to keep the interest rate unchanged at 11 percent.

They described the move by the central bank had

undermined business sentiment and posed challenges for industrialists, entrepreneurs, and investors.

The SCCI chief emphasized that such high interest rates have rendered Pakistan's industrial sector uncompetitive in the regional and global markets.

Senior office bearers urged the central bank to reconsider the 11 percent interest rate amid economic growth concerns.

Fazal Moqeem Khan said they have consistently made the demand of a single-stroke cut of 500bps to align monetary policy with the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) and the Prime Minister's vision for industrial growth, export promotion, and import substitution.

By disregarding the longstanding demand of the SCCI to bring the interest rate into the single digits, the central bank has dashed their hopes for economic recovery and growth, senior office bearers lamented.

The SCCI chief went on to say that this was a good opportunity for the SBP to reduce the interest rate to a single digit, offering hope to disappointed businesspeople and boosting economic growth.

He said the chamber acknowledged that apprehensions and factors that have restrained SBP to bring down policy rate but it is also completely contradictory to take such a decision by ignoring the ground realities.

The rationale behind not

reducing the policy rate despite a visible decline in inflation, Moqeem questioned.

He claimed the interest rate was being kept artificially high without economic justification.

At such a critical juncture, this decision seems ill-timed and presents a potential obstacle to the country's economic progress," he said.

The SCCI president expressed hope that the government, along with the Finance Minister and the Governor of the State Bank, would recognize the urgency of the situation and engage with the business sector, and take concrete steps towards restoring economic confidence and accelerating recovery.



QUETTA: Senators Anusha Rahman and Saleem Mandviwala chairing a joint press conference of Senate Standing Committees on Commerce and Finance & Revenue at Quetta Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

No sugar crisis, sufficient stock available: Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Categorically dismissing reports of a sugar shortage due to exports as a misleading perception, Federal Minister for National Food Security, Rana Tanveer Hussain asserted on Thursday that Pakistan continued to hold a surplus of the commodity and the government has implemented a system to ensure sugar remains available at officially fixed prices.

"A perception is being created as if there is a major issue regarding the availability, supply, or pricing of sugar," the minister said while addressing a press conference. He added that the government has launched a crackdown on hoarders and profiteers, including retailers and even mill owners were being checked, to control manipulation in the market.

Referring to criticism over the government's initial approval of sugar exports followed by import plans, Rana Tanveer said these narratives ignored historical trends and factual data. Citing records from the past ten years, he explained that sugar exports have traditionally been allowed soon after the crushing season and were occasionally followed by imports—except in one or two years.

The minister explained that the Sugar Advisory Board—which includes federal ministers, secre-

taries, representatives from all four provinces, and industry stakeholders—approved exports last year on basis of data. At the beginning of the season, Pakistan had an opening stock of 800,000 metric tons. The crushing season yielded 6.8 million metric tons of sugar, while the country's annual domestic consumption stood at 6.3 million metric tons—leaving a surplus of 1.3 million metric tons.

"To prevent a supply glut that could harm both farmers and millers, the government had allowed gradual sugar exports," he said. Contrary to concerns that exports would lead to domestic shortages or price hikes, the market experienced a decline in prices—from Rs138 per kg to Rs119 per kg—after the export decision in October 2024.

"This proves that the export decision was not responsible for any artificial shortage or price inflation," the minister added.

Rana Tanveer acknowledged that initial projections for the 2024–25 season estimated sugar production at 7 million metric tons, slightly higher than the previous year. However, climate change adversely impacted agricultural output, including sugarcane yield. As a result, actual production dropped to 5.8 million metric tons.

Responding to the short-

fall, the Prime Minister ordered an immediate halt to further exports in January 2025. By the end of the crushing season on April 30, the total available stock—including a buffer of 0.5 million metric tons—stood at 6.3 million metric tons, which matches national consumption requirements. Currently, the country holds around 2 million metric tons of sugar—enough to meet consumption needs for the next three months.

The minister attributed recent price increases to market manipulation by mill owners, wholesalers, and hoarders, particularly following a rise in sugarcane procurement prices from Rs450 to Rs700 per 40 kg.

He said the government intervened and negotiated with stakeholders to fix the ex-mill price at Rs165 per kg and the retail price at Rs173 per kg.

To ensure compliance, the government has launched enforcement operations against violators across the supply chain. "Implementation will take some time, but the system is in place and action is underway," he said. Currently, retail prices have stabilized between Rs172 and Rs173 per kg, while ex-mill prices are holding at Rs165.

Rana Tanveer noted that sugar prices in Pakistan are broadly aligned with those

in neighboring countries: India (Rs150/kg wholesale), Bangladesh (Rs187), Afghanistan (Rs173), and Iran (Rs250).

The minister added, Pakistan earned \$402 million from the export of 750,000 metric tons of sugar last year. However, the minister acknowledged that earlier approval could have fetched higher export rates. To manage domestic availability, the government approved sugar imports of up to 500,000 metric tons, although only 300,000 tons are expected to be brought in, costing approximately \$150 million.

Downplaying the sugar issue as overblown, Rana Tanveer urged media and policymakers to shift their focus toward strategic national developments.

Shipping activity at PQ

KARACHI (APP): Five ships, Bremen Express, Hansa Africa, Polygoys, Equity and Abilene scheduled to load/offload Container, Furnace oil, Steel Coil and Coal, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal, FOTCO oil Terminal, Marginal Wharf-2 and Marginal Wharf-4 Terminal respectively on Wednesday. Meanwhile six more ships, Searay, Ullswater, Yashar, DSI Phoenix, Twin Delight and Evanthis carrying Palm oil, LPG and Coal are also arrived at outer anchorage during last 24 hours.

A total of nine ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them a container carrier 'Bremen Express' left the port on Thursday early morning, while six more ships, Hansa Africa, Maritime Kelly Anne, Equity, Desert Dignity and Akra expected to sail.

Cargo volume of 219,708 tonnes, comprising 160,094 tonnes imports cargo and 59,614 export cargo carried in 6,783 Containers (4,459 TEUs Imports 2,324 TEUs Export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 17 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them six ships, Banglar Agrajatra, Blue Bird, Ullswater, Yashar, Evanthis and Fortune Tiger another ship 'Catalonia' carrying Palm oil, Mogas, LPG, Coal and Container are expected to take berths at LCT, FOTCO, SSGC, EVTL, PQEPT, PIBT and QICT respectively, while another containers ship 'EF Olivia' due to arrive at outer anchorage today (Friday).

SAPM visits Engineering Development Board

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan on Thursday visited the Engineering Development Board (EDB).

Welcomed by EDB CEO Khuda Bux, the SAPM inspected the organization building and reviewed the available facilities, including emergency exits and safety equipment, said a news release.

While speaking to officials, he emphasized the need to fully digitize the operations of the EDB. "The entire system of EDB must be brought online and made

fully digital," he stated.

Haroon reiterated Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's vision of establishing a transparent and merit-based system. "EDB has a critical role in the development of the engineering sector and the enhancement of exports," he noted.

The SAPM acknowledged the misconceptions held by the public regarding the EDB and stressed that such perceptions can be changed through merit and transparency. "We must work towards building an institution that meets international standards," he added.

In a key development, Haroon announced the

establishment of a Complaint Redressal Portal and a dedicated committee to address public concerns related to the EDB.

"I am personally monitoring the performance of the Engineering Development Board," he stated. "Developed countries focus on outcomes. We, too, must implement result-oriented initiatives through transparent processes."

He concluded by underscoring the importance of teamwork in institutional progress. "Institutions only move forward when we work together with a shared vision and commitment," he remarked.

PSX continues with bullish trend, gains 978 more points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 Index continued with bullish trend on Thursday, gaining 978.17 more points, a positive of 0.71 percent, closing at 139,390.42 points against 138,412.25 points last trading day.

A total of 577,348,593 shares were traded during the day as compared to 425,836,625 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 36.348 billion against Rs 24.999 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 483 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 235 of them recorded gains and 215 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 33 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Bank of Punjab with 82,936,839 shares at Rs 14.06 per share, Invest Bank with 37,156,865 shares at Rs8.99 per share and Oil and Gas Dev. with 24,206,621 shares at Rs 233.01 per share.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 477.94 per share price, closing at Rs 33,497.96, whereas the runner-up was Pakistan Services Limited with Rs36.02 rise in its per share price to Rs 1,015.01.

PIA Holding Company LimitedB witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs2,542.49 per share closing at Rs 28,756.51 followed by SS Oil Mills Limited with Rs60.84 decline in its share price to close at Rs730.24.

Gold dip by Rs2,000 to Rs353,000 per tola
The price of 24 karat per tola gold witnessed a decrease of Rs.2,000 on Thursday and was sold at Rs.353,000 against its sale at Rs. 355,000 on the previous trading day. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported.

The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also decreased by Rs. 1,714 to Rs.302,641 from Rs. 304,355 whereas the price of 10 grams of 22 Karat went down to Rs277,421 from Rs278,992.

The rates of per tola silver and ten gram declined by Rs63 and Rs53 to close at Rs.3,900 and Rs.3,344 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$20 to \$3,303 from \$3,323 whereas silver was traded at \$36.51 against \$37.90, the Association reported.

Pak-US trade pact to be game changer: LCCI

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) Thursday warmly welcomed the newly finalised trade agreement between Pakistan and United States and described it as a game changer for the country's economic future.

In a media statement issued by the chamber here, the LCCI President Mian Abuzar Shad, Senior Vice President Engineer Khalid Usman and Vice President Shahid Nazir Chaudhry hoped that the agreement would open new avenues for Pakistani exports and significantly strengthen bilateral trade relations. They said that this development is not only timely but also a clear indicator of growing international confidence in Pakistan's economic potential.

The LCCI office-bearers said, the United States has historically remained Pakistan's largest export destination and the new trade

agreement is expected to provide preferential access to a wide array of Pakistani goods including textiles, leather products, surgical instruments, IT services, sports goods and agricultural commodities. This breakthrough will not only enhance Pakistan's export volume but also improve its trade balance and generate employment. They also pointed out the strategic advantage Pakistan now holds due to the imposition of a 25 percent tariff on Indian products by the US government. This shift provides Pakistani exporters with a rare opportunity to capture additional market share in the US market, especially in sectors where Pakistani goods already enjoy a competitive edge.

Terming the development a direct outcome of strengthened ties, the LCCI leaders said that the recent high-level engagement between the two countries,

particularly the lunch hosted by US President Donald Trump in honor of Pakistan's Army Chief Field Marshal Syed Asif Munir, has played a pivotal role in resetting the tone of bilateral cooperation while the great untiring efforts by the Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar and Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb under the leadership of Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif's leadership have made this agreement finalized.

The office-bearers stated that the current trade volume between Pakistan and the United States has already crossed USD 12 billion in 2024, with Pakistan maintaining a healthy trade surplus. The new agreement is likely to accelerate this trend further by attracting foreign investment and boosting industrial productivity.

Additionally, the LCCI appreciated the inclusion of provisions for collaboration in the oil and energy sector, which they believe will be crucial for Pakistan's long-term energy security and economic sustainability.

The LCCI office-bearers urged the business community to seize the new opportunities created by this agreement. They assured exporters of their full support in accessing the American market and navigating the new trade framework. They said that the agreement with Pakistan and United States is more than a diplomatic achievement, it is an economic game changer that reflects Pakistan's rising profile in global trade.

Vietnam, Pak soon to finalize bilateral PTA for trade liberalization

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Vietnam to Pakistan, Pham Anh Tuan, on Thursday said that Vietnam and Pakistan have agreed to consider the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) as a strategic step for creating a stable legal basis to expand market access, reduce tariffs.

After finalization of bilateral PTA, both sides are to facilitate bilateral trade and investment to move towards a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in the future, Ambassador of Vietnam to Pakistan, Pham Anh Tuan, told APP in an exclusive interview here.

The Vietnamese envoy said that the 5th Meeting of the Pakistan-Vietnam Joint

Trade Committee (JTC) held in Hanoi on July 11, 2025, marked a pivotal achievement in our bilateral relations.

Vietnam officially submitted the draft of PTA on July 8, 2025, with a list of more than 80 key export items requesting Pakistan to consider reducing the tariff rate to 0-5 percent and Pakistan welcomed Vietnam's initiative and pledged to soon study and respond to conduct negotiations in 2025, he said.

The Ambassador said the reactivation of the Joint Trade Committee after eight years represents a strategic reset in our bilateral economic relationship, and this institutional forum serves as the cornerstone for system-

atic cooperation and provides a structured mechanism for regular dialogue.

The results of the sessions include, 5th meeting of the Pakistan-Vietnam JTC the two sides acknowledged the results achieved in exchanging business delegations, organizing fairs and exhibitions, he said.

The envoy said that in the meeting, Vietnam required Pakistan to create more favorable conditions for Vietnamese enterprises to participate in trade promotion activities in Pakistan, and invited Pakistan to attend major events in Vietnam such as Saigontex, Hanoitex, SaigonFabric, and HanoiFabric.

In return, Pakistan also invited Vietnam to partici-

pate in TEXPO, HEMS and FoodAg.

He said that Vietnam highly appreciates Pakistan as the 14th largest fiber supplier to Vietnam, and wishes to expand the import of cotton, fabric and raw materials from Pakistan to serve the export textile and garment industry.

To promote Aquaculture cooperation, he said that although pangasius (Fish) fillets account for 98% of Vietnam's seafood exports to Pakistan, the two sides agreed to consider removing barriers, limited logistics and competition from other countries.

Vietnam asked Pakistan to consider removing technical barriers, simplifying administrative procedures,

and reducing import taxes on Vietnam's key products such as pangasius, pepper and tea, he said.

On the halal trade development, he said the two sides will strengthen technical cooperation in the Halal field, especially in product inspection and certification and towards mutual recognition of Halal certification.

In addition, he said the two sides also discussed the potential for cooperation in other areas such as aviation, finance-banking, healthcare, human resource development and visa facilitation. On the opportunities for bilateral trade and investment, he said the opportunities for enhanced bilateral trade and invest-

ment are multifaceted and substantial.

According to 2024 trade data, Pakistan's key exports to Vietnam include cereals (\$117.26 million), cotton (\$65.64 million), raw hides and leather (\$26.59 million), meat products (\$14.33 million), and pharmaceutical products (\$10.67 million). Vietnam's main exports to Pakistan include electrical and electronic equipment (\$186.67 million), coffee, tea and spices (\$30.70 million), and man-made filaments (\$20.63 million), he said.

The Vietnamese envoy said that both countries have identified priority sectors for cooperation, including textiles, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, informa-

tion technology, and energy.

The envoy said that Vietnam has expressed particular interest in increasing imports of Pakistani rice, textiles, and leather products, while welcoming Pakistani investment in Vietnam's manufacturing and technology sectors.

He said the complementary nature of our economies offers immense potential - Vietnam's strength in electronics, machinery, and processing capabilities perfectly complements Pakistan's expertise in textiles, agriculture, and pharmaceuticals.

Speaking on bilateral long-term economic and trade partnership, "Our long-term vision encompasses a comprehensive

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Struggling Pakistan and West Indies look to bounce back in the USA

F L O R I D A (ESPNcricinfo): What a difference a few decades make. Through the 1980s and '90s, these two sides were arguably the most marketable in world cricket, the three drawn Test series they contested during West Indies' famous 15-year unbeaten run among the more iconic ones in cricketing history. Now, West Indies and Pakistan are fine-tuning their warm-ups ahead of a T20I series in Lauderdale, Florida, reportedly dogged by poor ticket sales amid last-minute slashed prices.

Each side is coming off torrid T20I series. West Indies found themselves swept aside 5-0 at Australia's hands over the

last fortnight, while Pakistan spent that time losing 2-1 to a Bangladesh team that has struggled for T20 form leading up to those games. Both teams have been dragged down to the lower ends of the cricketing food chain, and with institutional problems plaguing each of them, the fear is that they look set to stay there for the foreseeable future.

The lopsided scoreline against Australia perhaps does not quite do justice to West Indies' top order batting, which made up in explosiveness what it lacked in consistency. However, injuries to Brandon King and Shimron Hetmyer, two of the hosts' better batters against Australia, threaten

to expose West Indies' relative lack of depth. Alick Athanaze - with a T20 strike rate of 116.52 - and 36-year old Johnson Charles - whose best days are well behind him - have been called up to replace the pair.

However, that series against Australia certainly falls in line with the larger trend of a dismal T20 record for the side that, remember, is the joint-most successful in T20 World Cups. It is the 2026 edition of that tournament that this series is in service to as each side looks to mould themselves into their best version by that time.

West Indies have won one just one of their 12 T20Is since December 2024, against Ireland.

They were whitewashed 3-0 in a home series against Bangladesh last December as complete wipeouts have become the norm; it would be followed up by three losses against England in June before Australia made it five more.

Pakistan's situation isn't quite as dire, but the picture isn't rosy, either. The new coach Mike Hesson has attempted to rejuvenate the T20 side with a focus, theoretically anyway, on more aggression with the bat, and though it was realised in a trouncing of Bangladesh at home on pliant surfaces, Pakistan were reminded of the frustrating non-linearity of progress as they fell apart in the corresponding

away series.

That the T20 side needed an overhaul was obvious enough. Pakistan have been a bad T20 side for a long time, with the numbers to back it up. Since May 2024, they have won one fixture against one of the traditional top eight sides out of a possible 13 - a solitary win in a 4-1 series loss against New Zealand. Moreover, there have been losses against Ireland, USA, Zimbabwe and Bangladesh in this time, with off-field mayhem closely tracking on-field performances. Four different men have taken the T20I captaincy in this time, three different coaches have attempted to lead them, and they have the squad turnover to

show for it.

While a wide variety between the ceiling and floor of the big-hitting batters is expected, Pakistan continue to wrestle with how to go about balancing their bowling line-up. Against Bangladesh, they almost tried to do away with full-time bowlers altogether, no fewer than six part-time bowlers available to make up the overs alongside Abbas Afridi and Ahmed Daniyal. Hesson has appeared to view the importance of specialist bowlers in T20 cricket almost as anachronistic, valuing the importance of "six, seven, eight bowlers...who if you get certain matchups can do a job". It did mean leaving out all of Pakistan's three

biggest-name quicks - Shaheen Shah Afridi, the injured Haris Rauf and Naseem Shah. Perhaps with West Indies' big hitting ability in mind, Pakistan have now walked that back somewhat, recalling Afridi and Haris, as well as Hasan Ali, who spent the last two months playing T20 cricket for the Birmingham Bears in England.

In a way, though, this series is less about the sides playing as about where it is being held. For years, cricket has attempted to break into the United States' colossal domestic market. That ambitious goal, however, is nowhere close to being realised. In its absence, cricket administrators

have settled for the more modestly achievable aim of capitalising on a wealthy South Asian diaspora starved of live cricket in the region, with match and hospitality tickets orders of magnitude pricier than they'd be for equivalent packages in the Caribbean. Lauderdale has emerged as the most appropriate venue, owing to its mix of warm weather, proximity to the West Indies and sizeable South Asian and Caribbean diaspora.

But in the nation that declared the customer always right in matters of taste, the relatively sluggish ticket sales offer as damning a verdict of the state of these two nations' cricket as any win-loss chart.

Daniyal wins 17th Islamabad Open

ISLAMABAD (APP): Daniyal Ijaz clinched the title of the 17th Islamabad Open Bowling Championship, outplaying his competitors with an impressive score of 268 points.

Faheem Khan secured second place with 187 points in the event held in the federal capital.

The championship, organized by the

Islamabad Tenpin Bowling Association (ITBA) in collaboration with the Pakistan Tenpin Bowling Federation (PTBF), attracted participation from top bowlers across Islamabad.

President of the PTBF, Ijaz-ur-Rehman, distributed trophies among the winners during the prize-giving ceremony. Also present at the occasion

were former PTBF Secretary General Muhammad Hussain Chattha and ITBA President Rana Afzal Akhtar.

In their congratulatory remarks, Ijaz-ur-Rehman, Chattha and Akhtar lauded Daniyal Ijaz for his dominant performance and extended best wishes to Faheem Khan for securing the runner-up position.

National Under-16 volleyball players returned

F.P. Report

BUNER: The Volleyball Players Faizan Ullah and Hayat Sher Khan from the Buner volleyball team have returned to Buner after winning the Volleyball Under 16 Championship in Thailand.

A ceremony was organized in their honor at the Buner Press Club on Thursday. The ceremony was attended by Press Club members, volleyball team organizers, lawyers of the Buner Bar, both the shining players. The shining players Faizan Ullah and Hayat Sher Khan, founder of the Buner volleyball team Iqbal Khan's son Sher Hassan Khan, Volleyball team General Secretary Zeeshan Khan, Press Club President Mukhtar Khan, and President of the Buner Bar, Israr Advocate addressed.

The shining players were given honorary shields to honor and encourage. On this occasion, the shining players thanked the public for the warm welcome they received in Buner and also thanked the Buner Press Club for the honorary shield and honor.

Rain forces early lunch

LONDON (ESPNcricinfo): A sudden downpour in London forced India and England back into the changerooms early after 23 overs of play at The Oval. Shubman Gill, having lost the toss yet again, was in the middle dealing with challenging batting conditions but profiting thanks to a drop in the quality of bowling among the opposition. The visitors went to the break at 72 for 2.

Gus Atkinson, one of four changes for England, acquitted himself very well, playing his first Test two months. He provided the first breakthrough, trapping Yashasvi Jaiswal lbw in the fourth over of the day. The on-field decision was not-out prompting stand-in captain Ollie Pope to review and finally get one right. He had not had any luck with his previous 14 calls but this one was perfect. Atkinson finished the session with figures of 6-1-7-1.

KL Rahul was solid again but fell for 14 off 40. With 8mm of grass left on the pitch and most of the session taking place under overcast skies, the batters were very careful when the ball was pitched up in the 4-6m area but anything either side they knew they had to attack. Chris Woakes bowled short but not wide enough for the cut. Rahul went for the shot because of the pressure that had been built - England had given only five runs in the previous six overs - and was bowled off the inside edge.

That brought Gill to the middle and he ticked past 732 runs, which means he has the most runs by an India captain over a Test series. Sai Sudharsan was at the other end, looking solid as well and exposing the drop offs between Archer and Stokes, who couldn't play this game, and Josh Tongue (11 runs in wides in his first over) and Jamie Overton (3-0-16-0) who replaced them.



SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA: Julian Huxley of the Wallabies runs with the ball during the match between Classic Wallabies and British & Irish Legends at North Sydney Oval on Thursday in Sydney, Australia.

ICC set to approve continental qualification system for Olympics

DUBAI (ESPNcricinfo): The ICC is set to approve a continental qualification system to decide the six participating teams in the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. That means that Full Members such as Pakistan, New Zealand and Sri Lanka among others, could miss out on cricket's much-anticipated return to the Olympics after over a century.

ESPNcricinfo understands that the board discussed a proposal at the recent AGM which allows for one team from each continent. Though some details still need to be finalised, in essence, the majority approval for a regional qualification system is in place, with a minority of members expressing dissent.

Six teams each in the men's and women's categories will contest for Olympic medals between

July 14 and 29 in 2028 after the International Olympic Committee (IOC) allowed cricket to be added to the roster for the first time since the 1904 Games. While the ICC's initial thinking was that it would shortlist the top six-ranked teams at a pre-determined cut-off date, several Full Member countries believed such an approach wouldn't allow for a wider representation of countries from across the globe.

That has now changed to a one-country-per-continent qualification system, which is thought to be more in line with the Olympic participation ethos.

Which countries are shortlisted will be based on the rankings on a set date. But if the ICC plan goes through, it could mean the Olympics may not have one of the most widely watched contests in global

sport: India vs Pakistan. Based on the current ICC T20 rankings, India (No. 1) will qualify from Asia, Australia (2) from Oceania, England (3) from Europe, with one between USA or one of the islands from the Caribbean from the Americas, while South Africa (5) qualify from Africa. ESPNcricinfo understands that the ICC is still discussing the participation of USA, who potentially get direct entry as hosts.

But questions remain around the make-up of the USA men's team, the majority of whom are US residents but not naturalised US citizens. The ICC is also concerned that the USA women's team are not in the top 20-ranked teams at the moment. A final decision is likely to be taken at the ICC's next quarterly meeting in October.

The ECB, along with

Cricket Scotland and Cricket Ireland, have formed Great Britain Cricket as an entity, which will help facilitate players from England, Scotland and Ireland to represent Great Britain at the Games.

As for West Indies, CWI wrote to ICC in May, pitching two ideas that could allow one of the regional countries to represent the Caribbean in the Olympics. One suggestion was an internal qualifying tournament conducted among the Caribbean countries with the winner heading to the Olympics. The other involved conducting a global qualifying pathway that would pit countries in the five ICC development regions alongside regions in the West Indies.

For the sixth team, the ICC is considering the option of a global qualifier, the structure for which is still being fine-tuned.

Saudi Motorsport Company earns FIA's top environmental accolade

JEDDAH (Arab News): Saudi Motorsport Company has received the prestigious Three-Star rating under the FIA Environmental Accreditation Program, marking a significant step forward in the Kingdom's drive to combine elite motorsport with international sustainability standards.

The award, the highest recognition granted by the Federation Internationale de l'Automobile, follows a detailed independent audit that assessed the company's environmental practices across 17 key criteria. The rating places the Saudi entity among an elite group of motorsport organizations globally, being certified at the top level.

The audit evaluated the company's environmental management system using international frameworks, including ISO 14001.

According to the federation, the Three-Star rating is reserved for stakeholders that demonstrate "best practice and continu-

ous improvement," reflecting a strategic, long-term commitment to sustainability.

The company's achievement represents a broader shift in how motorsport is being positioned in Saudi Arabia, as a vehicle for both entertainment and environmental consciousness.

It has integrated sustainability across its operations, from event logistics and infrastructure to energy use and resource management.

This approach aligns closely with Saudi Vision 2030, which promotes economic diversification, sustainable development and a more vibrant society. It also reinforces the goals of the Saudi Green Initiative, launched to combat climate change and accelerate the transition toward renewable energy.

Saudi Motorsport Company said in a press release: "Receiving the Three-Star rating is a testament to the dedication and vision behind every

event we deliver. It's not just about hosting races, it's about doing so responsibly, in a way that contributes positively to society and the environment."

The certification also signals the company's intention to become a regional benchmark for sustainability in motorsport, using high-profile events such as the Formula 1 Saudi Arabian Grand Prix, Dakar Rally, and WRC Rally Saudi Arabia to promote environmental awareness and green practices. Founded under the umbrella of the Saudi Automobile and Motorcycle Federation, the Saudi Motorsport Company plays a central role in shaping the Kingdom's motorsport ambitions.

With more than 180 professionals overseeing everything from track operations at the Jeddah Corniche Circuit to international partnerships, the company is positioning Saudi Arabia as a key player in global motorsport.



In brief

12 drug dealers arrested

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police on Thursday apprehended 12 drug traffickers during targeted operations conducted by Kohsar, Margalla, Shalimar, Golra, Noon, Khanna, and Kirpa police stations, recovering a substantial quantity of narcotics. A public relations officer told APP that the police teams seized 12 kilograms of hashish, 4.37 kilograms of heroin, 2.361 kilograms of ice, and 32 bottles of liquor from the possession of the arrested individuals. The operations were carried out under the special directives of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi. FIRs have been registered, and comprehensive investigations are underway. Police are also pursuing facilitators linked to these networks. Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police Islamabad Muhammad Jawad Tariq reaffirmed that the ICT Police would continue its crackdown against those involved in poisoning the youth through drug networks. "No malicious elements will be allowed to destroy the future of our younger generation," he added.

NPO to hold webinar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Productivity Organization (NPO) is going to organize a webinar titled "Fire Safety and Fire Fighting" on August 07 (Monday). The webinar aims to equip participants with essential skills to prevent, manage, and extinguish fires effectively, according to the NPO document shared here on Thursday. The session will cover key topics including fire hazards, safety protocols, and the correct use of firefighting equipment such as extinguishers and hoses. The webinar will also provide information about the major causes of fires, learn how to prevent fires, possible fire hazards and report them, awareness of fire safety devices, familiarity with the building's emergency procedures, and how to evacuate quietly and calmly.

Rawal Dam spillways closed

ISLAMABAD (APP): Authorities closed the spillways of Rawal Dam on Thursday after a brief water release operation triggered by a rise in water levels due to rainfall in Islamabad and nearby areas. According to the spokesman of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration, water levels in Rawal Dam increased following rainfall in the federal capital and surrounding areas, prompting officials to open the spillways at 6 a.m. when the dam's level reached 1,750 feet. The controlled release of water from the dam continued for six hours. Once the level dropped to 1,749 feet, the spillways were shut down to prevent further outflow, he added. Before the spillways were opened, relevant departments, including Rescue 1122, were stationed at bridges, streams, and low-lying areas to ensure safety and monitor any potential risks from the discharge.

473,100 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 473,300 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 534,700 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1538.00 feet which was 136.00 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet.

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East and Africa (CAMEA) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), in collaboration with the Pakistan Africa Institute for Development and Research (PAIDAR), organized an event to commemorate Morocco's 'Enthronement Day'. The proceedings began with the national anthems of Pakistan and the Kingdom of Morocco and were moderated by Ms. Amina Khan, Director CAMEA. Speakers included Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Director General ISSI; Ambassador Mohammed Karmoune, Dean of the African Diplomatic Corps and Ambassador of Morocco to Pakistan; Ambassador Syed Adil Gilani, Ambassador of Pakistan to Morocco; and Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BOG ISSI. The Chief Guest on the occasion was Mr. Mushahid Hussain Sayed, President PAIDAR, and the Keynote Speaker was Ambassador Hamid Asghar Khan, Additional Foreign Secretary (Africa), MOFA. Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, highlighted the historical context of

Pakistan-Morocco relations, recalling Pakistan's support for Morocco during its struggle against colonial rule. He shared how prominent Moroccan leader Ahmed Balafrej was granted Pakistani passport and how Pakistan's then Foreign Minister, Sir Zafarullah Khan, facilitated him to present Morocco's case at the United Nations. He also noted Morocco's rich civilizational heritage, referring to the world's oldest University in Fez and the legendary 14th-century traveler Ibn Battuta. Mr. Mushahid Hussain Sayed commended the warmth and affection of the Moroccan people and underscored the importance of close collaboration between Pakistan and Morocco to further reinforce the enduring bonds between the two peoples.

Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, in his remarks, said that over the past 26 years, under His Majesty King Mohammed VI's wise and dynamic leadership, Morocco has been on a journey of forward-looking and systematic reform leading to remarkable renewal and progress. He noted that the Kingdom has made impressive strides in people-centered governance,



infrastructural transformation, industrial diversification, green transition and innovation, social inclusion, human development especially youth empowerment, and active global engagement. At the same time, Morocco has remained firmly rooted in its civilizational heritage and continued to promote inter-faith dialogue, mutual understanding, and peaceful coexistence. He further said that Morocco and Pakistan have long enjoyed a relationship of friendship and goodwill, based on

mutual respect and anchored in a shared commitment to solidarity and cooperation. Our diplomatic relations, established in the 1950s, have grown from strength to strength over the decades. As active members of OIC, the Group of 77, and the Non-Aligned Movement, Pakistan and Morocco share a common vision for regional peace, sustainable development, and an equitable international order. Pakistan deeply appreciates Morocco's principled positions on key regional and global

issues and looks forward to continuing close engagement in all relevant fora. He concluded by underlining ISSI's intent in forging cooperative ties with Moroccan think-tanks and research institutions as part of people-to-people links.

Ambassador Karmoune highlighted Morocco's economic and social progress despite global challenges, noting significant growth in industrial exports and tourism. He invited Pakistani investors to explore opportunities in Morocco's large-scale

development projects and benefit from its extensive trade network. Emphasizing the cordial bilateral relations rooted in shared history and mutual interests, he called for stronger collaboration between Pakistan and Morocco. He noted that upcoming high-level meetings between the two countries are aimed at identifying new areas for cooperation.

Ambassador Hamid Asghar Khan said the glue that holds Morocco together is His Majesty, whose leadership ensures good governance and a focus on public service. He noted the country's success, owing to its active foreign policy. He praised Morocco's excellent infrastructure and called it a safe and hospitable country. He added that tourism brings 17.5 million visitors annually and contributes 14% to the GDP. He said Pakistan and Morocco have enjoyed warm relations, and there is a need to enhance cooperation as Morocco is not just a regional leader but a continental one with immense potential.

Ms. Amina Khan highlighted that the relationship between Pakistan and Morocco is marked by

mutual trust, cultural affinity, and a shared vision for peace and prosperity. Moreover, she said that we view Morocco as a vital partner in advancing Pakistan's engagement with Africa. She further opined that there is enormous potential to enhance cooperation between Pakistan and Morocco in key sectors including higher education, climate resilience, renewable energy, agriculture and digital connectivity.

Ambassador Syed Adil Gillani, while expressing his views, said that Morocco is an example of prosperity and development with landmark achievements in various fields like governance. He further said that Morocco is a global leader in sustainable development, with access to good health care and education. He concluded by saying that Morocco's global influence is equally remarkable.

Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, in his vote of thanks, expressed his good wishes for the people of Morocco and said that the relationship between Pakistan and Morocco is exemplary and the strategic location of Morocco provides it with a gateway to international markets.

Islamabad, Saudi Arabia explore urban investment ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Randhawa, held a high-level meeting with the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, Nawaf bin Said Ahmed Al-Malki, on Thursday aimed at bolstering bilateral cooperation.

The meeting, described as cordial and constructive, focused on deepening collaboration in urban development, cultural exchange, and investment opportunities, particularly in Islamabad's hospitality sector.

A key agenda item was a proposed Memorandum of Understanding between the CDA and Saudi Arabia concerning the iconic Faisal Mosque, a symbol of Pakistan-Saudi friendship.

Highlighting the strong brotherly ties between the

two nations, Randhawa said, "Pakistan and Saudi Arabia share a bond rooted in faith, friendship, and mutual respect. Islamabad is committed to further strengthening this cooperation."

He also reaffirmed that Islamabad would remain open and welcoming to Saudi investments and partnerships, particularly in areas related to urban planning and cultural heritage.

The Saudi envoy commended CDA's ongoing efforts to enhance the capital's urban landscape and civic amenities. "The difference in quality of life and beauty of Islamabad is being felt day by day," said Ambassador Al-Malki, praising CDA's horticulture initiatives and a newly developed state-of-the-art nursery, dubbed the "Gardenia Hub."

Ambassador Al-Malki also emphasized Saudi

Arabia's sustained interest in supporting Pakistan across economic, cultural, and religious spheres.

He shared that targeted meetings between Saudi investors and Pakistani officials are underway, particularly with a focus on establishing high-end hotels in the capital. In addition, both sides discussed preparations for Saudi Arabia's upcoming National Day on September 23.

Randhawa assured the Ambassador of Capital Development Authority (CDA)'s full support in coordinating necessary arrangements in collaboration with other government departments.

The meeting concluded with a mutual pledge to enhance Pakistan-Saudi relations through practical cooperation in urban development, tourism, and cultural initiatives.

DG NLPD distributes certificates

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director General of the National Language Promotion Department (NLPD), Prof. Dr. Muhammad Saleem Mazhar, distributed certificates among students of Thal University Bhakkar upon the completion of their internship at the department.

He also presented them with books from the department as a gift.

Two students from the BS Urdu program at Thal University Bhakkar, Faisal Shehzad and Rimsha Malik, successfully completed a six-week internship at the NLPD, according to a press release issued here on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Saleem Mazhar said, "Practical training holds great significance in the lives of young students. The process of learning continues throughout life, and such training programs play a vital role in the academic and intellectual development of the youth."

He further emphasized that the NLPD remained fully committed to the promotion of the Urdu language and literature.

Executive Director of the NLPD, Dr. Rashid Hameed, said that practical training was an effective means of nurturing a conscious, upright, and knowledge-loving young generation.

He reiterated that the NLPD would continue its efforts to provide students with high-quality training in the national language.

"Such beneficial training programs will continue to be organized in the future," he assured.

Teacher honoured

ISLAMABAD (APP): A Farewell ceremony was organized here in honour of Professor Tahir Mahmood, a seasoned educationist, who retired on Thursday after completing over 42 years of public service, including more than 33 years in federal government colleges under the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE).

He began his teaching career in 1992 following a nine-year tenure with the Pakistan Post Office Department. Professor Tahir served in various federal colleges, with a long and impactful association with Islamabad Model Postgraduate College H-8.

He was also an active leader of FGCTA from 2009 to 2013, where he advocated for teachers' rights. A large number of in-service and retired principals attended his farewell reference.

Notable speakers included Prof. Javaid Iqbal Mughal (H-9), Prof. Athar ul Islam (H-8), Prof. Rashid Saleem (F-10/4), Khalida Makhdoom (F-7/2), Prof. Ali Yar (F-10/4) and Professor Muhammad Ashraf. They praised his dedication and said his services would be remembered with deep respect.

CTO imposes full ban on heavy vehicles, loader rickshaws in Capital

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Captain (R) Syed Zeeshan Haider has imposed a complete ban on the entry of heavy vehicles, overloaded trucks and loader rickshaws into Islamabad. The sweeping measure, enforced across the federal capital, aims to eliminate the persistent problems of traffic congestion and fatal accidents caused by such vehicles.

A police spokesman told APP on Thursday that the order was implemented as part of a broader initiative to upgrade the city's traffic management system and ensure the safety of citizens.

He said that additional traffic personnel have been deployed on all major roads and intersections to regulate

late traffic and enforce the ban strictly. Vehicles found violating the new order will be impounded and legal action will be taken against the drivers.

CTO Zeeshan added that the ITP has launched a zero-tolerance policy against all forms of traffic violations, including signal breaking, speeding, lane violations, and illegal parking. Offenders will face immediate fines, and in serious cases, their vehicles will be shifted to police stations.

He said drone surveillance is being expanded to monitor real-time violations and ensure timely intervention. This tech-based monitoring system will strengthen road discipline and deter habitual violators.

He said the Islamabad Traffic Education Unit has also been mobilized on main thoroughfares to educate commuters about traffic rules and safe road behavior. Senior officers will remain present in the field to personally supervise operations and assist the public.

CTO Zeeshan Haider assured that all measures will be enforced without discrimination. "Equal implementation of the law is our top priority. No violator—regardless of status—will be spared," he said, urging citizens to fully cooperate with traffic authorities for a safer Islamabad.

SDPI, IRP to collaborate on climate action

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and Islamic Relief Pakistan (IRP) have signed MoU to strengthen collaboration on climate change, sustainable economic practices, and social development initiatives across Pakistan.

The MoU, signed by SDPI Executive Director Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri and IRP Country Director Asif Ali Sherazi, sets out a three-year framework for joint action in areas such as climate adaptation and mitigation, disaster risk reduction, policy advocacy, humanitarian response, circular economy promotion, green jobs creation, and digitalization for sustainable development, said a press release issued on Thursday.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Dr. Suleri emphasized the importance of partnerships in tackling Pakistan's most pressing development challenges. "Collaborative efforts between research institutes and humanitarian organizations can bridge knowledge gaps and translate evidence-based policy recommendations into real-world impact," he said.

Asif Ali Sherazi highlighted Islamic Relief's commitment to advancing climate justice and social protection for vulnerable communities. "This partnership will allow us to pool resources, expertise, and networks to scale up our impact on climate action and humanitarian response across the country," he stated.

Under the MoU, both organizations will engage in joint research initiatives, capacity-building programmes for the youth and corporate sector, policy dialogue platforms, and advocacy campaigns aimed at accelerating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Pakistan. The agreement also allows for joint funding applications and consortium-based projects to maximize outreach and effectiveness.

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Pakistan honours rangers on World Rangers Day

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan on Thursday officially revealed its first-ever scientific estimate of the country's elusive snow leopard population: 167 individuals now confirmed in the mountainous north.

The announcement, made during World Rangers Day celebrations in Islamabad, marks a major step forward in the nation's efforts to protect one of its most iconic — and endangered — species.

The data was shared by Dr. Muhammad Ali Nawaz, Director of the Snow Leopard Foundation, at a seminar organized by the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination in collaboration with the Foundation.

"This is a historic moment for Pakistan's wildlife," said Dr. Nawaz. "For the first time, we have a science-based population estimate of snow leopards — a vital step in their conservation."

He added that this new data places Pakistan as the fourth-largest snow leopard range country in the world,

after China, Mongolia, and India. The snow leopard, known for its elusive nature and role as a top predator in fragile high-altitude ecosystems, is listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List. Until now, conservation efforts in Pakistan had operated without any verified numbers.

In addition to the scientific milestone, the event celebrated seven outstanding rangers and field officers for their frontline efforts in protecting wildlife. Each award was named after a key native species, symbolizing the rich biodiversity these individuals work to defend.

The 2025 Wildlife Protection Awards recipients were: Muhammad Ismail (Azad Jammu & Kashmir) – Snow Leopard Award, Sher Afghan Ali (Gilgit-Baltistan) – Blue Sheep Award, Sakhawat Ali (Gilgit-Baltistan) – Brown Bear Award and Wolf Award, Israrullah (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) – Ibex Award, Muhammad Saleem (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) – Markhor Award and Mahboob Shah (Azad Jammu & Kashmir) – Musk Deer Award.

"These individuals are the true heroes of our wild spaces," said Shizra Mansab Khara, Minister of State for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination. "Their courage, sacrifice, and commitment are preserving Pakistan's natural heritage and reinforcing our national resilience in the face of climate change."

The event also featured the premiere of the documentary "Beyond Borders: The Heartbeat of Chitral's Rangers," highlighting the often-overlooked role of community rangers in high-altitude conservation work. Sardar Khan Jamali, Pakistan's Wildlife Ambassador, lauded both the awardees and the snow leopard research team. "Protecting wildlife is not just about animals — it's about sustaining ecosystems and securing the future for our next generations," he said.

Child body recovered

KABUL (Pajhwok): The body of a child who drowned in the river in central Panjsher was recovered on Thursday morning, a police official said. Police spokesman Haqmal Saad told Pajhwok Afghan News that the child had drowned on Wednesday in the village of Malsapa, located in Bazarak district. Just a few days earlier, a 6-year-old child had also fallen into the river and was found the following day in the Abshar district.

The Frontier Post

Safar 06, 1447 — Friday, August 01, 2025

300 Afghans freed from jails

KABUL (Pajhwok): MoRR said that nearly 300 Afghan refugees have returned to their homeland after being released from prisons in Pakistan and Iraq. The ministry announced in a post on its official X account on Thursday that the individuals were released and repatriated during the outgoing week. Citing sources from the migration transfer departments at Pul-i-Abrisham in Nimroz province, Spin Boldak in Kandahar province, and Torkham in Nangarhar province.

Asia is comparable to a living body composed of soil and water. The heart that beats inside the body is Afghanistan. The destruction of Afghanistan would be the destruction of Asia. And in its progress and prosperity lies the well-being of Asia. - Allama Iqbal

\$37m solar power, substation projects inaugurated

PUL-I-ALAM (Pajhwok): Construction work commenced on a solar power generation plant and a substation in central Logar province on Thursday, with an investment of nearly \$37 million. The power plant will have a generation capacity of 40 megawatts, and the substation will have a capacity of 126 megavolt-amperes.

Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS) said that the projects are being implemented in the Mohammad Agha district of Logar province, with a total investment of \$36.74 million by the Ghazanfar Group and Regional Group, under the auspices of DABS.

The groundbreaking ceremony for the two power generation projects was held on Thursday in the presence of high-ranking officials from the Islamic

Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA).

Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, speaking at the inauguration, highlighted the importance of electricity for national development.

He identified the lack of sufficient electricity as a key barrier to Afghanistan's progress.

"Afghanistan has vast potential for energy generation," he said, "but unfortunately, these resources have not been properly utilized, making the country heavily reliant on electricity imports, which cost hundreds of millions of dollars annually."

He noted that since the re-establishment of the IEA, significant strides have been made in various sectors, including energy. Projects focusing on renewable

energy generation have been launched across several provinces, alongside initiatives for electricity distribution, industrial zone support, and expanding access to electricity for the general population.

Baradar reiterated the Islamic Emirate's commitment to achieving energy self-sufficiency and said Afghanistan not only has the capacity to meet its own electricity needs but also to export surplus power to neighboring countries. However, he stressed the importance of proper water resource management and the efficient use of solar and wind energy, areas in which the government is developing long-term strategies.

He also directed the contracting company to prioritize work quality and ensure timely completion

of the project.

Speaking at the event, DABS CEO Dr. Abdul Bari Omar said that four decades of conflict had destroyed much of the country's infrastructure, including in the power sector.

However, he expressed optimism about the current developmental momentum.

"We are committed to delivering electricity to all corners of Afghanistan," he said. "With improved security, transparency, and a national commitment to development, it is time for everyone to contribute to rebuilding the country."

He emphasized the vital role of electricity in driving industrial growth and education. "Without electricity, there is nothing. We must teach our children science so that they can generate power for the nation's future."

Shahabuddin Dilawar, Director of the Red Crescent Society, said the launch of such projects reflects the transparency within the Islamic Emirate's governance.

He noted that Afghanistan possesses abundant natural energy resources that could not only ensure self-sufficiency but also enable power exports.

He added that work is ongoing on several infrastructure projects, including dams, railways, roads, and mines, and that Afghanistan's strategic geographic location makes it essential to regional connectivity and trade.

Acting Minister of Economy Qari Din Mohammad Hanif described the inauguration as a step toward national progress and enlightenment.

He stressed the central



role of electricity in attracting investment and driving economic growth.

"Afghanistan is rich in energy sources, including water, wind, coal, and gas. Unfortunately, over the past 20 years, these resources

were not properly utilized. Had they been, Afghanistan could have become a major electricity exporter," he said. He also revealed that at least 404 development projects are currently underway across various sec-

tors in the current year alone.

Mohammad Ismail Ghaznifar, CEO of Ghaznifar Group, assured that electricity generated through the project in Logar would meet international standards.

\$5m agreement inked to develop Torghundi port



KABUL (Pajhwok): Afghanistan and Turkmenistan have signed a \$5 million agreement for investment and development at Torghundi Port to enhance railway cooperation and infrastructure along the Torghundi-Herat corridor.

The Ministry of Public Works (MoPW) said in a statement that Deputy Minister for Railways, Maulvi Mohammad Ishaq Sahibzada, signed a memorandum of understanding

with Sardar Kurbanov, head of Turkmenistan's Demiryollary (Railways) Joint Stock Company, outlining a \$5 million plan for investment and development at Torghundi Port.

The project includes the design, construction, and activation of new warehouses and loading/unloading facilities along the Torghundi-Herat railway corridor, to be implemented at the dry port in the region.

According to the Ministry, the investment will be made by Turkmenistan.

The project will be carried out in accordance with Afghan laws on Afghan soil and under Turkmen laws on Turkmen territory.

The statement noted that once the project is completed and operational, the total cost will be reimbursed to the Turkmen company through revenues generated by the new facilities.

ARCS warns of aid decline

KABUL (TOLONews): The Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) states that the international community's failure to recognize the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has had a negative impact on humanitarian aid to the country.

During a program highlighting their one-year achievements, the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) officials called on the international community not to politicize aid and to increase assistance based on the actual needs within Afghanistan.

According to Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS), over the past year, more than 4.69 million people across the country have received humanitarian support, including cash assistance, food, and non-food items.

Azizurrahman, Deputy Head of the Afghan Red Crescent Society, said: "The Afghan Red Crescent Society, based on its seven fundamental principles, delivers humanitarian services in coordination with other national institutions. This work is completely independent of politics and should not be politicized."

Officials also reported that in the past year, six psychological therapy centers have provided care and mental health services to 2,383 patients.

Ruhullah Abdussalam, Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) Deputy for Operations, stated: "Over the past year, the Afghan Red Crescent Society has provided health services to 3,897 million people across the country."

The Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) is a non-budgetary organization currently operating in seven zones across Afghanistan with more than 3,000 employees.

According to its officials, the organization's budget is funded through partnerships with international donors, domestic support, and contributions from other aid organizations.

Mes Aynak copper project nears launch

LOGAR (TOLONews): The contracting company for the Mes Aynak copper project in Logar province has announced efforts to begin practical operations on the project this year.

According to company officials, the delay in launching the project has been primarily due to insecurity and the presence of archaeological remains. The company says it has so far invested over \$430 million in the mine.

It further states that 400 Afghan workers are currently employed in the project, and once extraction begins, around 4,000 job opportunities will be created.

Deng Guoping, a representative of MCC (Metallurgical Corporation of China), said: "The company has already invested more than US\$430 million,

but had not any income. Being suffering loss of the minerals and facing the challenges of huge increase of the investment because of the protection of the cultural heritage, so how could the company get benefit from that? This point reminds the company of the importance to pay more attention on telling the truth."

The total cost of the project has risen from \$2.8 billion to \$5 billion due to changes in extraction technologies and methods.

MCC states that the road leading to the Mes Aynak mine is nearing completion, and efforts to launch practical operations have entered a new phase.

According to the company, power supply through the Bagh Dara hydropower project is also being planned, and serious efforts

are underway to commence copper extraction this year.

Deng Guoping added: "Now, the project is just very close to the start point of a new area, and the company is ready to start the construction in this year if the follow-up procedures with the government go smoothly."

The project was awarded to China's MCC under a 30-year contract; however, nearly 17 years later, it has yet to reach the extraction phase. Company officials cite security challenges, archaeological remains, landmines, and lack of infrastructure as key reasons for the delay.

However, some experts criticize the contractor's performance, arguing that significant progress could have been made over the past 17 years.

Abdul Ghafar Nezami, an economic expert, said: "This contract has been in place for about 17 years. Major issues that stall large-scale projects should be anticipated from the outset."

Another expert, Abdul Basir Tahraki, said: "Work expected to be completed within four years unfortunately was not carried out. Political factors played a role. If China is serious about extraction, it must act decisively."

The Mes Aynak project is more than just a mining venture, it offers a vision for economic growth, infrastructure development, technical capacity building, and the preservation of Afghanistan's cultural heritage.

According to geological studies, the mine contains over 12 million tons of high-grade copper ore.

Ten armed clashes reported at border

KABUL (TOLONews): The Drug Control Agency of Tajikistan has reported ten armed clashes between its security forces and drug traffickers from Afghanistan along the shared border between the two countries.

According to Sammad Zafar, the head of the agency, 54.4 percent of the 3,107 kilograms of drugs seized during this period were intercepted at the Afghan border.

A Russian media outlet quoted: "The Press Service of the Drug Control Agency under the President of Tajikistan reported that in the first half of 2025, the country seized 3,107 kilograms of narcotics from illegal circulation. According to agency direc-

tor Zafar Sammad, 54.4 percent of these narcotics were seized at the border with Afghanistan."

Ahmad Khan Andar, a military affairs analyst, stated: "Tajikistan's concern about drug trafficking from our country is unfounded. Afghanistan shares dry borders with all of its neighboring countries, and any of them could potentially be misused as a transit route for trafficking narcotics into Tajikistan."

Political analysts believe that the Islamic Emirate has made serious efforts to combat drug trafficking and cultivation, but they emphasize that regional cooperation is essential to achieving lasting results.

Fazl-ur-Rahman Oria, a

political analyst, said: "If Tajikistan truly wants to fight drug trafficking effectively, especially considering Pakistan is the source of much of it, then it must establish broader and more effective coordination with the Afghan government."

Since the return of the Islamic Emirate to power, its leadership has issued a decree banning the cultivation and trafficking of narcotics. The Ministry of Interior has repeatedly stressed that drug cultivation and smuggling have been brought down to zero.

Meanwhile, the United Nations has consistently reported that drug cultivation and trafficking in Afghanistan have dropped by more than 90 percent.

Severe drought uproots over 200 families

KANDAHAR CITY (Pajhwok): More than 200 families have left their homes and moved to other areas in southern Kandahar province due to severe drought. The displaced families are now asking the government provide them with urgent assistance, an official said.

Nasrullah, a resident of Ghozang village in Nish district, who has moved to Shah Walikot district, told Pajhwok Afghan News: "I can see my dried-up gardens with my own eyes. These gardens were our entire life. Our village has dried up. Now we are forced to move to Shah Walikot".

Previously, groundwater was found up to 60 meters deep in their area, but now the level has dropped to 120 meters, making it impossible for them to afford to dig such deep wells and purchase solar panels to extract water, he added.

Mir Mohammad, another

resident, explained: "We are unable to dig deep wells. We drilled one well, it dried up, we drilled another, it did not produce water. We are no longer able to farm and live in our area".

Abdul Rauf, a resident of Pir Qadam area of Ghorak district, is among those who have been forced to leave their area due to severe drought.

"There was no water, our fig and other tree gardens dried up, we had to walk for three hours to get drinking water, there was nothing else to live on there", he claimed.

According to him, many of the people remaining there are still facing the problem of water shortage and want to move to other areas, but due to economic problems, they cannot leave their homes.

They asked the government to ensure proper water management, build dams, and provide emergency assistance to the displaced

families.

Mohammad Hamid, a professor at Kandahar University and an environmental protection expert, said that Kandahar's economy is based on agriculture and that if water is not managed properly, an economic crisis will occur.

If the situation continues like this and serious measures are not taken for water management, not only Ghorak and Nish districts but the entire Kandahar province will face drought, Hamid explained.

Their department is working with other institutions to build dams in districts to control water and prevent drought, spokesman for Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock Department Mohammad Hanif Haqmal said.

"Nearly 40 percent of residents of the Mianko, Wachi Kandi, Landi Kandi, Kholgai, Kochne Karez, Chargombat, and Ghozang areas of Nish district are facing severe drought.

Some gardens there have also dried up, and many families have been forced to leave their areas".

He said there were no exact figures, but more than 200 families from Nish and Ghorak districts had migrated to other areas due to the drought.

Climate change, its impacts on Afghanistan The Earth's climate is changing rapidly; global warming is causing drought in some areas, but severe storms, rains, and floods in others.

Afghanistan is one of the countries with the lowest greenhouse gas emissions (0.19 percent), but is reported to be the fourth most vulnerable to climate change. This situation has severely affected the country's agricultural sector, which is still the main source of livelihood for nearly 80 percent of Afghans. Unseasonal rains and floods linked to climate change are also causing crop failures.

Afghanistan, Indonesia discuss boosting fruit exports

KABUL (BNA): Senior Afghan and Indonesian officials on Thursday have discussed enhancing agricultural cooperation, particularly focusing on expanding exports of Afghanistan's fresh and dried fruit to Indonesia, as Kabul seeks new economic partners and international trade opportunities.

Mawlawi Sadr Azam Usmani, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Livestock under the Islamic Emirate, met in Kabul with Indonesia's Chargé d'Affaires, Nanda Evalist, to explore avenues for bilateral trade in agriculture, horticulture, and livestock products.

The meeting emphasized the potential for Afghan agricultural goods in the Indonesian market. Deputy Minister Usmani highlighted the Islamic Emirate's ongoing efforts to combat narcotics, ensure national security, support farmers, and advance strategic development projects.

He also underscored the high quality of Afghan produce — particularly fresh and dried fruits — and called on Indonesia to facilitate import access while encouraging Indonesian investors to explore opportunities in Afghanistan. "We believe favorable conditions now exist for sustainable economic activity," Usmani said.

In response, Chargé d'Affaires Evalist welcomed the Islamic Emirate's initiatives and reaffirmed Indonesia's support for Afghan farmers and herders. "We will convey the message of Afghanistan's Ministry of Agriculture to our government, our people, and our investors," she said. "We will also work to ease the export process for Afghan fruit products into Indonesia."

EU envoy visits Khost, promises humanitarian aid

KHOST (BNA): The European

Union's chargé d'affaires to Afghanistan, Veronica Bosovic Puhar, met with Khost provincial governor Mawlawi Abdul Qayyum Rohani during her recent visit aimed at assessing humanitarian projects and reinforcing coordination with local authorities.

In a meeting held at the provincial governor's compound, Puhar stated that the EU delegation's visit was intended to evaluate ongoing development and aid projects in Khost, strengthen cooperation with provincial institutions, and work toward enhancing the quality of humanitarian services.

Puhar noted that, under current EU funding, health programs are operational in 28 provinces across Afghanistan, delivering essential healthcare services to vulnerable populations, many of whom remain severely affected by decades of conflict and displacement.

During the discussion, Puhar announced a 7 million contribution specifically allocated to support the laboratory division of the provincial health department in Khost. She further pledged that an additional 7 million in funding would be disbursed in the near future to help bolster this critical

sector.

In addition to health efforts, the EU envoy highlighted the Union's continued commitment to addressing the challenges faced by Afghan refugees and displaced families. She emphasized that the EU would sustain its assistance to ensure basic services — such as shelter, healthcare, and education — are accessible to these vulnerable groups.

"Finding durable solutions for the displaced and returning families is not just an Afghan issue — it's a regional matter tied to stability and development," said Puhar, underlining that the EU's humanitarian focus would remain steadfast in these areas.

Governor Rohani welcomed the EU delegation and expressed gratitude for their sustained support. "The people of Afghanistan have suffered deeply from years of war. Today, they are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance," he said.

He also affirmed that Khost now offers a secure and enabling environment for NGOs and aid agencies to carry out their work. "We hope that international partners continue to fulfill their responsibilities with transparency and effectiveness," Rohani added.





WASHINGTON: Finance Minister, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb meets US Secretary Commerce, Howard Lutnick.

Russia kills 13 in drone, missile strikes on Kyiv

KYIV: An overnight Russian drone and missile attack on Ukraine's capital Kyiv has killed at least 13 people, including a six-year-old boy, as well as wounding 132 others, according to Ukrainian authorities.

The Russian barrage caused damage at 27 locations across four districts of Kyiv, city military administrator Tymur Tkachenko said on Thursday. Rescue teams were searching for people trapped under the rubble. Russia's latest deadly attack on Ukraine came after United States President Donald Trump on Monday issued a 10- or 12-day ultimatum to Moscow to halt its invasion of Ukraine, now in its fourth year, or face sanctions.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Thursday that Russia had used more than 300 drones and eight missiles in the attack as he posted a video of burning ruins on social media. Zelenskyy also urged allies after the latest deadly attack to push for "regime change" in Russia, an unlikely scenario fraught with deep concerns of European nations being brought into direct conflict with Moscow.

"Today, the world once again saw Russia's response to our desire for peace, shared with America and Europe," Zelenskyy wrote. "That is why peace without strength is impossible. But forcing Moscow to make peace, compelling them to come to a real negotiating table – all the tools needed for this are in the hands of our partners." Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said it was a "horrible morning in Kyiv".

"The brutal Russian strikes destroyed entire residential buildings and damaged schools and hospitals," Sybiha said. "This is unequivocally one of the largest attacks that we've seen in recent weeks and the majority focusing on Kyiv," Al Jazeera's Charles Stratford said, reporting from Kyiv. A "large residential area ... with box flats all around" was hit, he said, adding, "The majority of the windows in those flats have been blown out."

"According to the minister of the interior [Ihor Klymenko], ... the power of this attack was so strong that people were literally hurled out of their apartment build-

ings." Yana Zhabborova, a resident of one of the damaged buildings, woke up to the sound of the explosions, which blew off the doors and windows of her home. "It is just stress and shock that there is nothing left," said Zhabborova, a 35-year-old mother of a five-month-old and a five-year-old.

Russia's Defence Ministry said the attack had targeted and hit Ukrainian air-fields and ammunition depots as well as businesses linked to what it called Kyiv's military-industrial complex. The Ukrainian air force later said its air defences intercepted and jammed 288 of the 309 drones involved in the attack and three of the eight missiles.

Ukrainian drones later struck an electronics plant in the western Russian city of Penza, according to Governor Oleg Melnichenko and an official from the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU). The official said the plant, which produces combat control systems for the Russian military, caught fire. Melnichenko confirmed that it caught fire. Drone wreckage also halted some trains in the Volgograd region, state rail operator Russian Railways said. Russia's Ministry of Defence said on Thursday that it had shot down 32 Ukrainian drones overnight.

Meanwhile, Russia said it had captured the town of Chasiv Yar, which had been a strategically important military hub for Ukrainian forces in the east. The town in the Donetsk region "was liberated by Russian forces", Russia's Defence Ministry said in a statement. Ukraine has not commented on the reported retreat.

If confirmed, the capture of the town, which had been the site of battles for months, would be the latest locality to fall to Russia's incremental but steady territorial gains. The fall of the hilltop town now paves the way for Russian forces to advance on the remaining civilian strongholds in Donetsk, like the garrison city of Kramatorsk and Sloviansk, important logistical bases for the Ukrainian military and home to many civilians who have, up until now, not fled the fighting. — Aljazeera

Mashal elected Senator on woman seat

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tahrir e Insaf candidate Mashal Azam has been elected Senator on woman vacant seat during by-election in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly here on Thursday.

The seat was fallen vacant after the resignation of senator Sania Nishtar. Polling for a vacant woman Senate seat started in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly here on Thursday. According to Provincial Election Commission, Mashal Malik was elected Senator on the lone vacant seat of woman.

The Provincial Election Commissioner of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Saeed Gul, along with other polling officers, supervised the election process. A total of five candidates contested the election. Polling started at 9 a.m and continued until 4 p.m.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, Speaker Babar Salim Swati, opposition leader Dr Ebad Khan and other members provincial assembly cast their votes. The counting started soon after completion of voting process. PTI has issued ticket to Mashal Azam Yousafzai while other political parties also fielded their candidates.

UK, US and allies accuse Iran

LONDON: The United Kingdom and 13 allied nations have publicly accused Iran's intelligence services of orchestrating a wave of assassination attempts, abductions and intimidation campaigns against individuals residing in Europe and North America.

In a joint statement issued on Thursday, governments including the United States, France, Germany and Canada denounced Tehran's alleged extraterritorial operations as a flagrant breach of national sovereignty. "We are united in our opposition to the attempts of Iranian intelligence services to kill, kidnap, and harass people in Europe and North America in clear violation of our sovereignty," the group said.

The signatories – which also included Albania, Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the UK – urged Iranian authorities to halt these activities, which they claimed were increasingly carried out in partnership with international criminal groups. A UK parliamentary committee recently attributed at least 15 plots targeting individuals in the UK since 2022 to Iranian intelligence operatives.

British officials have responded with tighter measures. In March, the UK government said Iran would be required to register any political influence activity inside the country, citing "escalating aggression" from its intelligence services. In May, UK police arrested seven Iranians over alleged threats to national security, which Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs denounced as "suspicious and unwarranted". — Aljazeera

KP govt launches ILMpact program for enrollment of out of school children

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Kkyber Pakhtunkhwa Govt here Thursday launched "ILMpact" Programme to enrol out-of-school children and improve education quality.

"ILMpact" was launched in collaboration with the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO). The programme is being implemented through the British Council and was officially launched by Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur at a ceremony held at the Chief Minister's House Peshawar.

The launch ceremony was attended by Provincial Minister for Elementary and Secondary Education Faisal Khan Tarakai, British Council Country Director James Hampson, officials from the Elementary and Secondary Education Department, and representatives of partner organizations.

The ILMpact programme aims to benefit 80,000 out-of-school children across eight districts namely Battagram, Mansehra, Swabi, Buner, Shangla, Khyber, Mohmand, and Dera Ismail Khan. Under this initiative, comprehensive efforts will be made to enroll out-of-school children and to improve the standard of education in these selected districts. As part of the programme, master trainers will be prepared to deliver modern training to teachers, and capacity-building initiatives will be undertaken for Parent-Teacher Councils and School Management Committees in government schools.

The programme places particular emphasis on the education of girls, underprivileged and special children and those from minority communities. Additionally, awareness cam-



aigns will be launched to promote education, especially girls' education in the selected districts.

Addressing the ceremony, Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur expressed his gratitude to all partner organizations for making the ILMpact programme a reality. "Our government's mission is not just to provide education but to ensure the provision of quality education. From the outset, we have prioritized the provision of missing facilities in schools. For the current year, we have set a target that no child in a government school should be without a chair or desk, and funds have already been allocated to achieve this."

He further said that the programme is a vital step in the broader set of reforms being introduced to modernize the province's education system. "Only an enlightened nation can stand on its own feet, and awareness comes through education. Our government is paying special attention to girls' education, as only an educated mother can raise an educated nation,"

he remarked.

Highlighting his government's commitment to education, the Chief Minister noted that an education emergency has been declared in the province, with a substantial increase in the budget for elementary and secondary education. "This year, 21 percent of the total provincial budget has been earmarked for elementary and secondary education," he said.

The Chief Minister further revealed that during the last one year, 1.3 million out-of-school children have been enrolled in schools, and a target has been set to enroll an additional one million children during the current academic year. "Plans are also underway to provide free textbooks, stationery, and school bags to students in government schools. In parallel, attention is being given to improving the quality of education through teacher training, and the recruitment of 18,000 new teachers on merit is currently in progress", he added.

Achakzai flays alleged theft of public mandate on Feb 8

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Chairman of the Tehreek Tahaffuz-e-Aeen Pakistan (Movement for the Protection of the Constitution of Pakistan), Mehmood Khan Achakzai, on Thursday condemned the alleged theft of the public mandate on Feb 8.

This he calimed during the opening address of a two-day All Parties Conference (APC) in Islamabad. He asserted that on February 8, the people's will was subverted through financial incentives and intimidation, with electoral victory determined by the highest bidder. This, he claimed, resulted in the subsequent auctioning of state machinery, including government positions and resources.

Achakzai argued that the country's foundation rests on a voluntary social contract enshrined in the Constitution, which he believes has been rendered ineffective. He contended that after independence, elections for a constituent assembly to draft a consensus-based constitution should have been prioritized. Instead, he said, the

nation operated under the 1935 Act for nine years, followed by the imposition of divisive concepts like parity and One Unit, ultimately contributing to the country's division.

He accused powerful, undemocratic elements of disregarding the Constitution. Citing the example of PTI (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf), Achakzai claimed the party's electoral symbol was removed through judicial processes, but citizens still voted for its candidates. However, he alleged, their mandate was subsequently seized.

Achakzai highlighted the nation's struggles with corruption, mismanagement, and poverty, with 45% of the populace living below the poverty line. He criticized the state of government institutions and advocated for empowering nationalities with rights over their resources and granting them political and economic autonomy. He lamented the lack of basic necessities like drinking water in resource-rich areas, while regions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and other Pashtun and Baloch territories face regular

bombardment. He questioned the justification for these actions against civilians.

He further criticized the restrictions on the opposition's ability to hold conferences, even in private venues in the capital. He denounced the imprisonment of the PTI leader and its workers, along with the disqualification of its elected officials. Simultaneously, he warned of the implications of shifting international power dynamics in the region.

Achakzai called upon democratic forces to unite and create a new charter and social contract to restore constitutional democracy. He proposed protesting the current Prime Minister, who he alleges holds power through an illegitimate mandate.

Finally, he cautioned international entities that the current administration lacks popular representation, thus rendering any resource or mineral agreements void. The first day of the APC saw participation from opposition parties, lawyers, journalists, and representatives from various organizations.

US sanctions Palestinian Authority officials, PLO men

WASHINGTON (AFP): The US imposed sanctions on Palestinian Authority officials and members of the Palestine Liberation Organization on Thursday, saying the groups are undermining peace efforts as American officials separately seek to salvage ceasefire talks in Gaza.

The move prevents those targeted from receiving visas to travel to the United States, the US State Department said, although it did not list any specific individuals. "It is in our national security interests to impose consequences and hold the PLO and PA accountable for not complying with their commitments and undermining the prospects for peace," the department said in a statement.

The State Department said the two Palestinian groups had "taken actions to internationalize its conflict with Israel," including through the International Criminal Court, and said both had continued "to support terrorism." Representatives for the Palestinian Authority and the Palestine Liberation Organization could not immediately be reached for comment.

The sanctions come as US special envoy Steve Witkoff was expected to arrive in Israel on Thursday in a bid to save Gaza ceasefire talks and tackle a humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian enclave. Israel faces growing world pressure over the war in

Gaza, and several Western powers have said they will recognize a Palestinian state.

Israel has been waging a nearly 22-month-long war in Gaza that human rights experts at the United Nations have compared to a genocide. More than 60,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's military campaign, with more at risk of dying from hunger as a result of its blockade of the territory. Meanwhile, since the war started on October 7, 2023, illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank have increased, as has violence against Palestinians there.

Nearly 1,000 Palestinians in the West Bank have been killed in attacks, some by settlers, others by members of the Israeli armed forces.

Israel faces several international legal challenges as the result of those actions. In November 2024, for instance, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, based on accusations of war crimes in Gaza. Other countries, including South Africa, have brought cases before the International Court of Justice alleging that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza.

The US, however, has been an unwavering ally of Israel throughout its war in Gaza and has supplied the Israeli government with billions of dollars in military aid. It also has opposed

efforts in international court to bring Israel to account for human rights abuses, arguing that neither the US nor Israel are subject to the courts' jurisdictions.

But Palestine is a non-member observer state at the UN, which governs the International Court of Justice. And it is also a member of the Rome Statute, the founding document of the International Criminal Court. The State Department's order on Thursday comes as several Western countries, among them France, the United Kingdom and Canada, pledge to recognise Palestine's statehood at the upcoming UN General Assembly in September.

Trump, however, has dismissed such efforts as inconsequential. He has also warned that recognition of Palestinian statehood would serve as a "reward" to Hamas, a group that has fought the Palestinian Authority for power. The US has issued a series of sanctions in recent months seemingly poised to weaken individuals and entities that have been critical of Israel.

In June, for instance, it sanctioned judges on the International Criminal Court who were involved in the decision to issue arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant. And earlier this month, it also sanctioned a special rapporteur at the UN, Francesca Albanese, whose job is to monitor the human rights situation of Palestinians.

CJCSC meets Egypt President

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC) General Sahir Shamsad Mirza, NI (M) called on President of Arab Republic of Egypt Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, General Abdel Mageed Ahmed Abdel Mageed Saqr, Minister of Defence and Military Production and Commander-in-Chief of Egyptian Armed Forces, Admiral Osama Mounier Mohamed Rabie, Chairman and Managing Director Suez Canal Authority and Professor Dr. Ahmed Mohamed Ahmed El-Tayeb, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar.

The CJCSC, who is on an official visit to Egypt for the 3rd round of Defence and Security Talks hold meetings with the military high up and dignitaries of Egypt, said a news release issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR). Discussions focused on bilateral military cooperation, security, counter-terrorism and prevailing regional situation.

Dignitaries from both sides emphasized upon the shared interest in further strengthening and expanding existing military-to-military relationship in the domains of training, joint military exercises and defence cooperation. While interacting with Professor Dr. Ahmed Mohamed Ahmed El-Tayeb, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, CJCSC highlighted the importance of religious and inter-faith harmony to promote tolerance, inclusivity and address underlying causes of terrorism.

The Egyptian dignitaries lauded the professionalism of Pakistan Armed Forces and acknowledged their sacrifices in the fight against terrorism. Earlier, upon arrival at Ministry of Defence, Chairman CJCSC was presented Guard of Honour by a smartly turned out contingent of Egyptian Armed Forces.

PHC seeks response Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) issued notices to the federal and provincial governments, federal secretary interior and other respondents against usage of public resources for protests by the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, on Thursday.

The counsel Muhammad Hamdan advocate argued that the protests result in the paralysis of daily life, causing hardships for citizens, and disrupt businesses. The lawyer emphasized that the government resources used in these protests belong to the public and cannot be utilized for party purposes.