

Woman dead in drone attack
F.P. Report

BANNU: A drone attack in Bannu district left one woman dead and three others injured, police said on Wednesday. Two quadcopter drones were used in the assault, one of which crashed into the residential area, killing a woman and injuring three others. The second drone hit the Miryan Police Station, though it did not cause any casualties.



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ISLAMABAD: Minister for Foreign Affairs of Türkiye, Hakan Fidan and Minister for National Defence of Türkiye, Yasar Guller called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

India using terrorism as state policy: ISPR DG

RAWALPINDI: Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Lt General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry has said that India's nefarious intentions were part of an organized conspiracy to destabilize and disrupt security in Pakistan, particularly in Balochistan.

The DG ISPR's reaction came after last month's bomb blast in Waziristan in which 16 soldiers embraced martyrdom while over 20 people sustained injuries, according to Al Jazeera TV. The attack was claimed by Fitna al-Khawarij (Taliban), it was further said. The DG ISPR said that Pakistan had a clear stance that India was directly involved in these attacks. "India is not only supporting but also financing terrorist activities in Pakistan," he added.

He explained the term Khawarij referred to armed

groups that attacked the Armed Forces and state of Pakistan. "The current Fitna al-Khawarij is a continuation of the misguided ideology that has historically led to the killing of Muslims under a false religious narrative," he said. He said that in Islam, the right to Jihad or armed conflict lies solely with the state — no individual, organization, or group is authorized to declare it. "Fitna al-Khawarij has no connection with Islam, humanity, Pakistan, or Pakistani traditions," he said.

Ahmed Sharif said that the term Fitna al-Hindustan was used in Pakistan to describe terrorists who were supported by India. "Fitna al-Hindustan is particularly active in destabilizing the country, especially in the province of Balochistan," he said. The DG ISPR said Pakistan has

made it clear that any aggression against the Islamic state was a threat to regional stability. "Even India's political leadership has admitted multiple times to supporting terrorism within Pakistan," he added. He pointed out Ajit Doval as the mastermind behind the Indian state-sponsored terrorism network. Even United States and Canada have also acknowledged Indian state terrorism, he said.

The DG ISPR reiterated Pakistan's political and diplomatic support for Iran, which he said had been a target of Israeli aggression. He said that Pakistan was a responsible and declared nuclear power and its nuclear program was completely secure. "Our nuclear capability is invincible and no one can dare to target our nuclear program," he added. — Aljazeera

Atta Tarar in Beijing for meeting

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaulah Tarar arrived in Beijing on Wednesday to participate in the prestigious Global Civilizations Dialogue Ministerial Meeting.

The Ministerial Meeting is organized by the Publicity Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the International Department of the CPC Central Committee, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China.

The event, taking place from July 10th to July 11th, is part of President Xi Jinping's vision of Global Civilizations Initiative (GCI), said a news release here. During the conference, the Minister is scheduled to deliver a key address at the sub-forum titled "Civilizational Exchanges and Mutual Learning: Cultural Inheritance and Innovation." His participation underscores the importance of fostering dialogue and collaboration between diverse civilizations in the areas of culture, media, and innovation.

In addition to his speaking engagement, the Minister will hold a bilateral meeting with Ms. Cao Shumin, Deputy Head of the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, and Minister and Party Secretary of the NRTA (National Radio and Television Administration China). The discussions will focus on strengthening ongoing media cooperation between Pakistan and China, as well as exploring new opportunities for collaboration to further enhance mutual understanding and cultural exchange.

Attaulah Tarar's participation at this high level event is reflection of the strong bond shared by the leadership of China and Pakistan and its people. The Minister's visit highlights Pakistan's commitment to strengthening ties with China, especially in the fields of media, culture, and communication, and demonstrates both countries' shared vision for enhancing global civilizational dialogue.

Nepra cuts power tariff

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) has announced a cut in electricity prices, bringing some relief to consumers struggling with rising utility bills. According to a notification issued by NEPRA, electricity prices for DISCOs (distribution companies) have been slashed by 49 paises per unit under the Fuel Cost Adjustment (FCA) for the month of May.

In a separate move, K-Electric consumers in Karachi will get a bigger cut of Rs4.60 per unit, as part of the FCA for the month of April. However, not everyone will benefit from the price drop. The new rates will not apply to lifeline consumers, prepaid meter users, and electric vehicle charging stations, the statement clarified.

The Frontier Post

IAF's fighter jet crashes

NEW DELHI: A twin-seater Jaguar fighter aircraft of the Indian Air Force crashed on Wednesday near Churu, Rajasthan, India. The aircraft had taken off from Suratgarh air base with two pilots onboard. Following the incident, the Indian Air Force choppers have been sent to the crash site. A similar incident took place in April, where a two-seater Jaguar of the IAF crashed during a night mission shortly after taking off from Jamnagar Airfield. — Agencies

Pakistan, Turkeye eager to increase trade volume to \$5b

Turkish Foreign Minister, Defence Minister call on PM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, Hakan Fidan and the Minister of National Defence, Yasar Guller, Wednesday called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

The Prime Minister was joined by the Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Chief of the Army Staff, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif, National Security Advisor Lt. General Muhammad Asim Malik and other senior officials, a Prime Minister's Office news release said.

While welcoming the Turkish delegation, the Prime Minister underscored the longstanding fraternal ties between Pakistan and Türkiye, that remain deeply rooted in shared history, culture, and mutual respect. He expressed satisfaction over the positive trajectory of bilateral relations and reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering commitment to further strengthening cooperation with Türkiye in diverse fields, including trade, investment, technology, and defence.

Recalling his interactions with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan during the year, including the most recent meeting between the two leaders on the margins of the 17th ECO Summit, the Prime Minister reaffirmed Pakistan's firm resolve to transform Pak-Turkiye relations into a strategic partnership in the days to come.

Welcoming the convening of the Joint Commission's meeting, co-chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar and Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, the Prime Minister expressed hope that the bilateral relations between the two coun-

Dar appreciates Pak-Turkiye growing cooperation

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar Wednesday underscored the close and brotherly relations between Pakistan and Türkiye and appreciated the growing momentum in bilateral cooperation. He also stressed the importance of expanding collaboration in areas such as trade, investment, and energy. On the invitation of DPM/FM Dar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye Hakan Fidan, co-chair of the Joint Commission under the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council (HLSCC) framework, and the Minister of National Defence Yasar Guler, co-chair of the Joint Ministerial Commission, visited Islamabad, Foreign Office Spokesperson, said in a press statement.

The Turkish foreign minister conveyed warm greetings from President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and reaffirmed Türkiye's strong desire to deepen cooperation with Pakistan. He highlighted the profound historical, cultural, and religious bonds that underpin the enduring relationship between the two nations. The two sides also exchanged views on a range of regional and global developments. They reaffirmed their shared commitment to peace, security, and development in the region. "It may be recalled that during the last session of the HLSCC, held in Islamabad in February this year, both sides had agreed to establish a Joint Commission, co-chaired by the two Foreign Ministers, to review the progress of the twelve Joint Standing Committees working under the HLSCC framework. Today, marked the first meeting of this Joint Commission," it was added. The DPM /FM expressed satisfaction in sharing that all twelve Joint Standing Committees had either already met or were scheduled to meet in the coming weeks. In addition, both sides noted the upcoming meeting of the Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC), which is expected to be held in the coming weeks.

tries would attain further momentum, leading to bolstering of cooperation in multifaceted areas.

While reiterating the commitment of the both countries to continue their strong and unwavering support for each other's core interests, the Prime Minister emphasized upon the need for closer coordination between the two sides amidst the fast evolving regional and global environment, particularly in the context of Gaza and Iran. He once again expressed his deepest gratitude to the Turkish nation and leadership for their steadfast sup-

port to Pakistan during the recent Indian aggression.

The Prime Minister stressed upon the need for concerted efforts by both sides to enhance bilateral trade to attain the mutually agreed target of USD 5 billion. Highlighting Pakistan's investor-friendly policies, he invited Turkish companies to expand their investment footprint in Pakistan and invited Turkish side to share its expertise to assist in Pakistan's structural reforms, economic growth and development efforts.

SBP to launch pilot for digital currency: Governor

KARACHI (Reuters): The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) is preparing to launch a pilot for a digital currency and is finalising legislation to regulate virtual assets, central bank Governor Jameel Ahmad said on Wednesday, as the country ramped up efforts to modernise its financial system.

Central banks globally are exploring the use of digital currencies as interest in blockchain-based payments grows. Pakistan's move follows similar steps by regulators in China, India, Nigeria and several Gulf states to test or issue digital currencies through controlled pilot programmes. At the Reuters NEXT Asia summit in Singapore, Ahmad said

Pakistan was "building up our capacity on the central bank digital currency" and hoped to roll out a pilot soon.

He was speaking on a panel alongside Sri Lanka's central bank governor, P Nandalal Weerasinghe, with both discussing monetary policy challenges in South Asia. Ahmad said a new law would "lay down the foundations for the licensing and regulation" of the virtual assets sector and that the central bank was in touch with some tech partners.

The move builds on efforts by the government-backed Pakistan Crypto Council, set up in March to drive virtual asset adoption. The PCC is exploring bitcoin mining using surplus energy, has appointed

Binance founder Changpeng Zhao as a strategic adviser and plans to establish a state-run bitcoin reserve. It has also held talks with US-based crypto firms, including the Trump-linked World Liberty Financial.

In May, the State Bank of Pakistan clarified that virtual assets were not illegal. However, it advised financial institutions not to engage with them until a formal licensing framework was in place. "There are risks associated, and at the same time, there are opportunities in this new emerging field. So we have to evaluate and manage the risk very carefully, and at the same time not allow to let go the opportunity," he said on the panel.

Saif: Punjab govt fails to justify Rs1tr financial irregularities

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, Barrister Dr. Saif, has stated that the Punjab Government has failed to provide any justification for serious financial irregularities amounting to Rs. 1 trillion.

He said the silence on the audit report is clear evidence of the ongoing corruption and looting in Punjab. "Maryam Nawaz has gulped down Rs. 1 trillion belonging to the people of Punjab. The audit report has officially confirmed her corruption," he added.

Barrister Dr. Saif further alleged that development projects in Punjab are launched not for public welfare, but merely to earn commissions. "After looting the public of Rs. 1 trillion, false claims of progress are being made on TikTok," he said. He emphasized that the Rs. 1 trillion scandal is only what has been revealed in the audit report, adding, "There is much more corruption beyond this figure, and this is just the story of the first year — wait and see what comes next."

Barrister Dr. Saif stated that corruption runs deep in

the Sharif family, accusing them of transferring public money from Punjab to London. "This family has been plundering the country for years, and their greed knows no bounds," he remarked.

He further said that the Sharif family refuses to back away from exploiting the public. "When the people rejected them through their votes, they clung to power through Form-47," he said, referring to controversial election results. "The Sharif family has ruled the country for decades, stealing taxpayer money and moving it abroad. That's why Pakistan has fallen behind in the race for progress. The common man is struggling for basic necessities, while the Sharif family's wealth continues to multiply," he added.

Barrister Dr. Saif also criticized Maryam Nawaz, calling her "incompetent" and accusing her of making false claims of development through social media. "Real development doesn't come through advertisements. It requires the elimination of corruption and investing public funds in public welfare," he stressed. "Corruption is an old habit of the Sharif family, and they are never willing to let

go of it," he concluded.

Meanwhile, Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, Barrister Dr. Muhammad Ali Saif, visited the Directorate of Civil Defence Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where he reviewed the institution's training activities, volunteer services, and operational preparedness.

Speaking on the occasion, Barrister Dr. Saif stated that Civil Defence is not limited to times of war, but serves as a critical line of protection for the public during natural disasters and humanitarian crises. He praised the department for silently performing a wide range of essential services, calling them commendable and invaluable.

He further added that the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is committed to modernizing Civil Defence and will utilize all available resources to transform it into a dynamic, professional, and responsive institution. Barrister Dr. Saif paid rich tribute to the officers and volunteers of the department, describing them as a proud asset of the province and exemplary symbols of selfless service.

ANP leader Samar Bilour joins PML-N



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Awami National Party (ANP) has suffered a significant political blow in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as its key party leader, Samar Bilour has officially joined the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N).

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif welcomed Samar Haroon Bilour, a prominent political figure from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, who formally joined the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in a meeting here at the Prime Minister's House. Samar Haroon Bilour lauded Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's leadership, describing it as instrumental in steering the country towards economic stability and growth. She praised the government's pro-people budget and commitment to national development, a PM Office news release said.

"I want to see Khyber Pakhtunkhwa follow the path of development seen in Punjab and at the federal level," said Samar Haroon Bilour, affirming her dedication to serving the people of the province alongside the party leadership. Welcoming Samar Haroon into the party fold, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed his best wishes for her future and commended her commitment to public service.

He also paid tribute to the legacy of the Bilour family, acknowledging their sacrifices and contributions to Pakistan's democratic and political journey. She was accompanied by Saeeda Jamshed and Jamshed Mohmand. The meeting was also attended by senior PML-N leaders, including Adviser to the Prime Minister Rana Sanaullah, Federal Minister for Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan Affairs and PML-N KP President Engineer Amir Muqam, Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Sardar Muhammad Yousaf.

Bilawal urges global probe into Pahalgam attack

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman and former Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari firmly dismissed India's accusations that Pakistan supports terrorist groups conducting attacks beyond its borders. "Pakistan neither allows nor endorses any group to carry out terrorist activities, whether inside or outside our country," he told Indian journalist Karan Thapar in an interview for The Wire.

Reflecting on Pakistan's heavy toll in the fight against terrorism, Bilawal highlighted the nation's sacrifices. "Pakistan has endured a brutal war against terrorism, losing 92,000 lives, including over 1,200 civilians in more than 200 attacks last year alone," he added. He warned, "If this trend continues, 2025 could be the bloodiest year in our history."

Drawing from personal tragedy, Bilawal — whose mother and former prime minister Benazir Bhutto

was assassinated — expressed empathy for victims of terrorism, saying, "As a victim myself, I deeply understand the pain of those affected by attacks like the one in Pahalgam." He outlined Pakistan's relentless efforts to combat terrorism, including military operations in South Waziristan during his father's presidency and in North Waziristan under subsequent governments. Bilawal also pointed to Pakistan's compliance with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), noting, "We underwent a rigorous FATF process with strict monitoring, proving our commitment to dismantling terrorist networks."

Rejecting India's claims about the April Pahalgam attack in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), Bilawal noted that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif offered to join an impartial international inquiry, an offer India declined. "Our hands

are clean," he asserted, criticising India for withholding evidence.

The interview comes in the context of recent military clashes in May, sparked by the Pahalgam attack, which escalated into a four-day conflict involving missiles, drones, and artillery—the worst in decades. Pakistan's retaliatory "Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos" targeted Indian military sites before a US-brokered ceasefire, credited to President Donald Trump, ended the hostilities.

While Pakistan praised Trump's mediation and nominated him for the 2026 Nobel Peace Prize, India disputed his role, claiming the ceasefire was not due to US intervention. Bilawal also highlighted his leadership of a parliamentary delegation to global capitals to counter Indian propaganda post-conflict, underscoring Pakistan's commitment to peace and truth. — Agencies

40 Palestinians killed in Gaza

GAZA STRIP (AP): At least 40 Palestinians were killed in Israeli airstrikes in the Gaza Strip, hospital officials said Wednesday, as international mediators raced to complete a ceasefire deal. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had a second meeting in two days with US President Donald Trump at the White House on Tuesday evening.

Trump has been pushing for a ceasefire that might lead to an end to the 21-month war in Gaza. Israel and Hamas are considering a new US-backed ceasefire proposal that would pause the war, free Israeli hostages and send much-needed aid into Gaza.

Nasser Hospital in the southern city of Khan Younis said the dead included 17 women and 10 children. It said one strike killed 10 people from the same family, including three children. The Israeli military did not comment on specific strikes, but said it had struck more than 100 targets across Gaza over the past day,

including militants, booby-trapped structures, weapons storage facilities, missile launchers and tunnels. Israel accuses Hamas of hiding weapons and fighters among civilians.

Many Palestinians are watching the ceasefire negotiations with trepidation, desperate for an end to the war. In the sprawling coastal Muwasi area, where many live in ad-hoc tents after being displaced from their homes, Abeer Al-Najjar said she had struggled during the constant bombardments to secure sufficient food and water for her family. "I pray to God that there would be a pause, and not just a pause where they would lie to us with a month or two, then start doing what they're doing to us again. We want a full ceasefire."

Her husband, Ali Al-Najjar, said life has been especially tough in the summer, with no access to drinking water in a crowded tent in the Middle Eastern heat. "We

hope this would be the end of our suffering and we can rebuild our country again," he said, before running through a crowd with two buckets to fill them from a water truck.

People chased the vehicle as it drove away to another location. Amani Abu-Omar said the water truck comes every four days, not enough for her dehydrated children. She complained of skin rashes in the summer heat. She said she was desperate for a ceasefire but fears she would be let down again. "We had expected ceasefires on many occasions, but it was for nothing," she said.

The war started after Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing around 1,200 people and taking 251 hostage. Most of the hostages have been released in earlier ceasefires. Israel's offensive in Gaza has killed more than 57,000 Palestinians, more than half of them women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.



KARACHI: Sindh CM Syed Murad Ali Shah, alongside Home Minister Ziaul Hassan Lanjar and IG Police Ghulam Nabi Memon, officiates the rank-wearing ceremony for newly promoted police officers at CM House.

Home secretary, US consul general discusses security cooperation

LAHORE (APP): US Consul General Kristin K Hawkins called on Punjab Home Secretary Dr Ahmed Javed Qazi at his office to discuss the law and order situation and professional capabilities of the province's security agencies.

During the meeting, Dr Qazi highlighted that Punjab is becoming safer with the help of advanced technology. "We have equipped law enforcement agencies with modern tools and digitised criminal data online for efficient monitoring," he said.

The secretary informed

that the Civil Defense Bomb Disposal Squad is being provided with robots, while payload drones and quadcopters have been supplied for operations in 'Kacha' areas. Additionally, 14 modern checkpoints are being established along inter-provincial borders to strengthen security.

Dr Javed emphasised the efforts on prison reforms and rehabilitation of inmates, stating, "We are providing technical training to prisoners to enable their economic self-sufficiency and rein-

tegration into society as productive members."

"We strictly follow a zero-tolerance policy against terrorists and focus heavily on public awareness to ensure the enforcement of laws," he added. US Consul General Kristin K Hawkins expressed optimism about exploring further avenues for cooperation between the two countries in the field of security. The meeting was attended by additional secretary Internal Security, additional secretary prisons and additional secretary police.

LHC orders release of 21 brick-kiln workers

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Wednesday ordered for release of 21 labourers, including women and children, who were recovered by police from a kiln near tehsil Samundri, district Faisalabad.

Justice Tariq Saleem Sheikh presided over the hearing on the petitions filed by citizens Shahid Masih and Ishtiaq Masih regarding illegal confinement of brick-kiln workers.

During proceedings, Dijkot Police produced the recovered workers, including children, before the court.

The petitioners' counsel, Advocate Suhail Shahid Gull, informed the court that kiln owner Anwar Gujar had kept the labourers in unlawful detention for the past four years and was not paying them any wages as per government labour laws.

In response, the kiln owner's legal representative argued that the labourers had taken advance payments and were working voluntarily under a mutual agreement.

After hearing arguments from both sides, the court ordered for immediate release of the recovered labourers.

WWB restores 11 technical institutes

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Members of the Workers Welfare Board

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has withdrawn the previous decision regarding closure of 11 technical institutes of WWB while regular status has been restored to all the 11 institutes now in the best public interest.

According to a notification issued from WWB, in a major decision made in the 105th board meeting, the board members unanimously approved the restoration of 11 previously closed technical institutes across various districts of the province. The decision was taken in the best public interest and reflects the board's commitment to vocational education and skill development.

The KP Workers Welfare Board earlier decided to close down these institutes. The regular status of all 11 institutions has now been fully restored following the approval of the competent authority. The reinstated technical institutions are Government Polytechnic Institute, Peshawar, Government Polytechnic Institute, Dera Ismail Khan, Government Polytechnic Institute, Tank, Government Mono-Tech Institute, Amangarh, Government Mono-Tech Institute, Akora Khattak, Government Mono-Tech Institute, Mardan, Government Mono-Tech Institute, Charsadda, Government Mono-Tech Institute, Gadoon Amazai, Government Mono-Tech Institute, Swat, Government Mono-Tech Institute, Hattar and Government Mono-Tech Institute, Bannu.

PM for sustainable agricultural reforms strategy in collaboration with provinces

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed the authorities concerned to formulate a comprehensive strategy for sustainable agricultural reforms in collaboration

with provinces, to significantly increase production and reduce production costs.

The prime minister, chairing a review meeting on the development of the agriculture sector, said that the agricultural reforms would commence with the provision of easy loans to farmers, for which a public-private partnership model would be adopted. He directed urgent reforms in the Zarai Taraqati Bank for a transparent provision of easy loans to farmers.

He said that the upcoming Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) will prioritize agricultural projects, focusing on mechanization, digitization, easy access to loans for farmers, and creating a business-friendly environment. Prime Minister Shehbaz said that the sustainable agricultural reforms would further boost the national economy and reiterated the government's commitment to an enhanced

focus on reforming the livestock sector alongside agricultural commodities.

He said that the federal and provincial governments would fully cooperate to implement agricultural reforms and called for proposals for short-term and long-term strategies to enhance storage capacity for agricultural commodities. The prime minister said that the agricultural development would primarily benefit farmers and rural areas and also emphasised collaboration among experts to develop the sector on modern lines.

He directed to utilize agricultural zoning and value chain strategies to boost agricultural exports and introducing agricultural technology tailored to the needs of small landholdings, besides using integrated digital platforms to provide farmers with access to new agricultural information. During the meeting, proposals were presented to the prime minister regarding agricultural reforms, particularly focusing on increasing agricultural production, improving infrastructure, establishing simple and sustainable regulations for a busi-

ness-friendly environment, and ensuring easy access to loans for farmers.

It was told that National Agriculture Innovation and Growth Action Plan focused on increasing farmers' income, enhancing production, and implementing reforms in the right direction. The prime minister was told that the measures were being taken to establish secure storage facilities for agricultural commodities and that a program for easy loans to farmers would be launched soon. Like other countries, Pakistan can also support farmers financially by creating a simple and transparent loan system, and artificial intelligence can be used to effectively increase per acre yield.

The meeting was told that value addition in the agricultural sector would enhance farmers' income and generate foreign exchange through exports. The meeting was attended by federal ministers Dr. Ahsan Iqbal, Rana Tanveer Hussain, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, and Dr. Musadik Masood Malik, Prime Minister's Chief Coordinator for the Agricultural Sector Ahmad Umair, private sector agri-

cultural experts, and senior government officials.

PM expresses satisfaction over record high remittances in 2024-25: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday expressed his satisfaction at the record high remittances received during fiscal year 2024-25 and resolved that the government was committed to economic prosperity after bringing economic stability.

The prime minister observed that during the year 2024-25, Pakistanis abroad had sent remittances worth \$38.3 billion which surpassed remittances recorded in the corresponding period of fiscal year 2023-24 by \$8 billion, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

He also termed the remittances increase by 26.6 percent as a positive trend. "The record surge in remittances reflects expatriate Pakistanis' valuable contributions and their confidence in the national economy," the prime minister added. He further opined that the recent positive economic indicators were manifestation of government's policies towards the right direction.

Azma slams PTI's Saif, calls him 'fake intellectual'

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari has rebuked Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif over his recent remarks, calling him a 'fake intellectual' and accusing him of misrepresenting audit figures for political propaganda.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, Azma urged Saif to "read the audit report thoroughly", asserting that the corruption figures cited by PTI pertain to the periods when Usman Buzdar and Chaudhry Parvez Elahi were chief ministers. "Take a look at

page 87 and 96 of the report — perhaps then you'll feel a little shame," she said.

The minister clarified that the much-discussed Rs. 1 trillion figure refers to wheat procurement and subsidies spanning from 2018 to 2023 — years when the PTI governed Punjab. "Every citizen knows this. These were PTI's years in power," she added.

Azma described PTI's four-year rule in Punjab as a "dark chapter" marked by "incompetence, systemic looting, and misgovernance," likening it to the party's 12-year tenure in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

She also pointed to high-profile corruption allegations involving former first lady Bushra Bibi and Farah Gogi, labeling them as "symbols of that corrupt era."

"Blinded by hatred for the Sharif family, their leader left the Prime Minister's House with just a diary in hand—and ended up in Adiala Jail," Bokhari remarked.

Concluding her statement with a warning, the minister said the path of PTI leaders like Ali Amin Gandapur and Barrister Saif is becoming increasingly evident. "Next stop—Adiala," she declared.

SACM chairs meeting on wheat storage, supply chain

LAHORE (APP): Special Assistant to Chief Minister (SACM) on Price Control and Commodities Management Salma Butt chaired a high-level meeting to review the status of wheat storage facilities and ensure the smooth functioning of the essential commodities supply chain across Punjab ahead of the monsoon season.

During the meeting, Secretary Price Control Dr Ehsan Bhutta gave a detailed briefing on departmental operations. Director General Food Naveed Shehzad updated the participants on the precautionary

measures being taken to protect wheat stocks in vulnerable areas.

SACM Salma Butt directed the DG Food to submit comprehensive details of all vacant warehouses along with their storage capacities in each district. She underscored the importance of proactive monitoring, especially in light of potential flooding, and instructed for uninterrupted oversight of essential commodity supply and demand at the tehsil level.

Secretary Dr Ehsan Bhutta informed that official correspondence, based on the recommendations of the

Commodities Management Department, is being issued to relevant commissioners and deputy commissioners to ensure timely administrative actions.

He added that the Special Monitoring Unit and the Engineering & Monitoring (E&M) Wing are actively tracking the prices of vegetables, fruits, and pulses at both the local and international levels to maintain price stability in the market. The meeting was also attended by the DG Food and Cane Commissioner Punjab, and Additional Secretary Commodities Management.

Tessori honors Fatima Jinnah on death anniversary

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori today commemorated the 58th death anniversary of Fatima Jinnah, the Mother of the Nation, praising her contributions to Pakistan. Tessori lauded Jinnah as a symbol of resolve, dedication, and integrity. He emphasized her crucial part in the nation's creation and her efforts to unite the subcontinent's women during the independence movement. He urged women to draw inspiration from Jinnah's life and beliefs, highlighting her significant role in advocating for democracy, women's rights, and national pride. The governor described Jinnah's contributions as a momentous chapter in history. He stressed the importance of educating younger generations about her ideals, service, and principles to empower them to contribute to the nation's progress and advancement.



LAHORE: A view of accumulated rainwater on the local market during heavy downpour in Provincial Capital on Wednesday. —INP Photo

WAPDA Hydro Union convenes emergency meeting

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: On the instructions of Haji Muhammad Iqbal, Chairman of the All Pakistan WAPDA Hydro Electric Workers Union Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Provincial Secretary General Noor-ul-Amin Haider has convened an extraordinary meeting of the Provincial Executive Body on Friday, July 11, at Iqbal Labour Complex, Peshawar.

The meeting will address the increasing fatal accidents in PESCO, the unusual delay in recruitment, marriage grants, scholarships, unfair cuts in off-day wages and TA bills, and the challenges faced by field staff. Strict decisions will be taken against these injustices. It is worth mentioning that Regional and Zonal Chairmen and Secretaries from all three power Distribution Companies of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will participate in the meeting.

Peshawar Teqball C'ship concludes with thrilling finals

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The five-day Peshawar Teqball Championship successfully concluded at the Qayyum Sports Complex, Peshawar.

A total of 55 male and female athletes from across the district participated in both individual and double categories. Organized with the support of United Consultants, the championship featured competitive finals in multiple categories.

In the men's singles final, Hidayat-ur-Rehman defeated Hasnain Riaz by two sets to one. In the women's singles, Safa Marwa secured a straight-sets victory (2-0) over Hina Khan. In the mixed doubles final, Hidayat-ur-Rehman and Safa Marwa triumphed over Munim and Hina with a 2-1 win, while in the men's doubles final, Munim Siddiqui and

Jalaluddin outplayed Hidayat and Yaseen, winning by 2-1.

The closing ceremony was graced by Director General Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Tashfeen Haider, who distributed prizes among the players.

Prominent attendees included Senior Vice President of KP Teqball Association Taufiq Ahmad, Chairman of Pakistan Teqball Federation Rahat Mian, Vice President of KP Teqball Association Akhtar Rasool, General Secretary of KP Teqball Association Mian Wajahat Ali, Regional Sports Officer Peshawar Kashif Farhan.

DG Sports praised the talent and performance of the participating athletes and assured continued support from the Directorate General Sports for the promotion of teqball in the province.



PESHAWAR Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, Barrister Dr. Saif, being presented a shield during his visit to Directorate of Civil Defence.

KP moves towards pro-people legislation

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: To enhance and streamline the legislative process in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a crucial meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Legislation was held under the chairmanship of Provincial Law Minister Aftab Alam Advocate at the Law Department's committee room.

The meeting was attended by Minister for Zakat, Ushr and Social Welfare Syed Qasim Ali Shah, Advocate General Shah Faisal Utmankhel, Secretary Law, Secretary Zakat and Ushr, Secretary Livestock, Director General Livestock, senior officials from the Finance Department, Information and Public Relations, SMBR, Science and IT, and other relevant departments.

The agenda included the proposed Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Science, IT and Innovation Endowment Fund Bill 2025, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Livestock and Poultry Production (Amendment) Bill 2025, proposed amendments to the Journalist Welfare Endowment Fund Act 2014, and the Zakat and

Ushr (Amendment) Bill 2025. Officials from the Department of Science and IT proposed changing the post of Director to Director General in the Directorate of Science and IT, along with other relevant suggestions for the proposed KP Science, IT and Innovation Endowment fund.

Director General Livestock Dr. Asal Khan gave a detailed briefing on the proposed Livestock and Poultry Production Act 2025, comprising 23 sections. The Law Minister emphasized the need to make the law investment-friendly and incorporate biosecurity provisions. He also stressed the importance of legal clarity and the inclusion of clauses to ensure accurate statistics in the registration process of poultry farms.

The Information and Public Relations Department presented a comparative review of the proposed amendments to the Journalist Welfare Endowment Fund Act 2014, including changes in sections 2, 4, 5, and 7. They also discussed the categorization of press clubs into A, B, C, D, E, and F categories. The Law Minister

suggested permanent representation from the Peshawar Press Club and rotational representation from Category B clubs in the Endowment Fund Committee, to be formalized as per regulations. Recommendations concerning medical reimbursements for journalists were also finalized and will be presented to the Cabinet for approval.

On the Zakat and Ushr (Amendment) Bill 2025, officials from the Social Welfare Department briefed the committee on actions taken regarding three prior recommendations. Minister for Social Welfare Syed Qasim Ali Shah emphasized the importance of refining and finalizing all proposals before submitting them to the Chief Minister, with the aim of bringing tangible improvements in the lives of ordinary citizens. The committee also reviewed suggestions for incorporating special provisions for differently-abled persons, presented by a sub-committee under the Additional Secretary of Social Welfare. Various legal amendments were discussed in this regard.

Khawarij menace under guise of drones and decisive actions of Army

PESHAWAR (APP): Technology has undoubtedly made human life more modern, fast-paced, and convenient. However, in the battlefield, it has become a double-edged sword.

On one hand, it is a source of progress, convenience, and defensive superiority while on the other, it is also a cause of destruction, deception, and empowerment of non-state actors. For a country like Pakistan, which has been fighting against terrorism for decades, the unauthorized and misuse of modern technology has become a serious threat to its peace and stability.

"In the past, wars were fought face-to-face on the battlefield. Soldiers would confront each other, and the enemy's face would be clearly visible. But times have changed, and technology has transformed the landscape of warfare," said Brigadier(R) Mehmood Shah, senior defense analyst and former Secretary Law and Order of erstwhile Fata while talking to APP.

He said now, the enemy hides in the shadows and strikes from afar. They use social media, drones, quadcopters, and IEDs (Improvised Explosive Devices) as modern weapons. These advanced methods have become the greatest challenge for the today's soldiers.

"In recent years, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Waziristan, the misuse of quadcopters and small commercial drones has emerged as a major security issue. Initially, this technology was only in the hands of state institutions, but now it has become accessible to the general public," he said.

A recent incident in the Hassan Khel area of North Waziristan highlighted this growing threat—Khawarij (a term used for extremist insurgents) used a quadcopter to drop explosives. The attack targeted not only

Pakistan Army soldiers but also resulted in the martyrdom of several civilians.

"This tragic event proves that the enemy is no longer just targeting military installations or patrols, but is also cowardly attacking innocent civilians," Brigadier Mehmood said.

This situation is dangerous not only for security forces but also for ordinary citizens, as such devices are now being used for covert surveillance, terrorism, and propaganda. Terrorists use quadcopters to conceal their hideouts, transport explosives, and plan attacks. This confirms that while modern technology is a convenience, it also poses a significant threat.

IEDs have become one of the most common weapons used by terrorists today. They are cheap, easy to assemble, and ideal for concealment. In several areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly the tribal districts, elements exist who locally manufacture explosives. Their aim is to attack Pakistan Army convoys, check-posts, or public routes to achieve their ulterior motives.

So far, dozens of Pakistan Army soldiers have been martyred in such attacks. Many have been injured and permanently disabled. The cowardice of these attacks is evident in the fact that terrorists strike from hiding, from a distance, or disguised among civilians by putting even the general public in danger.

Despite all these challenges, the brave soldiers of the Pakistan Army are not only confronting these modern threats but are also responding with the enemy's own weapons. In the war against terrorism, the Pakistan Army has effectively used drone technology, satellite monitoring, and intelligence networks. Operations like Zarb-e-Azb, Radd-ul-Fasaad, and recent covert missions have inflicted significant losses on the

enemy.

He said Pakistani soldiers are trained in the use of modern technology, and they have shown the world that there is no place on Pakistan's soil for Khawarij, terrorists, or individuals with hostile agendas. "However, this war is not the army's alone—it is the nation's war."

He said unfortunately, some local individuals knowingly or unknowingly facilitate these terrorists. They provide them shelter, share information, or help operate their equipment. Initial investigations into the recent drone attack in Waziristan revealed that the Khawarij used local people to smuggle the quadcopter into the area, without their knowledge that it contained explosives.

"If the public stops facilitating the Khawarij, not only can their operations be halted, but their existence can also be eradicated. It is the national, religious, and moral duty of every citizen to stand with state institutions and recognize the enemy.

Islam strictly forbids supporting those who spread chaos and disorder on earth. This is the true face of the Khawarij i.e rebellion, bloodshed, and the killing of innocents.

Now is the time for the public to understand the dangers of modern technology and exercise caution in its use. Quadcopters and drones should be handled only by authorized experts. Ordinary citizens should stay away from them, as their misuse could endanger not just their own lives but also the safety of the entire area. He said people must realize that the enemy does not always come from outside and it can exist within our own ranks. If we identify and eliminate the Khawarij and their facilitators from within our communities, Pakistan can become a safer and more peaceful country.

PHCBA condemns attack on lawyer

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court Bar Association (PHCBA) has strongly condemned the attempted murder of Advocate Nadir Ali, a member of the Swabi Bar, on Wednesday.

The PHCBA has demanded that the authorities take immediate action to arrest the perpetrators and ensure their swift prosecution.

The PHCBA held an emergency meeting, chaired by Amin ur Rehman Yousafzai advocate to discuss the attack on Advocate Nadir Ali.

The meeting was attended by the General Secretary, Advocate Ashfaq Daudzai, and other members of the association's cabinet.

The PHCBA condemned the attack in the strongest possible terms and demanded that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government and law enforcement agencies take immediate action to apprehend the culprits.

PHCBA also demanded that practical steps be taken to prevent such incidents in the future and ensure the safety and security of lawyers.

Advocate Amin ur Rehman Yousafzai stated that the PHCBA stands in solidarity with the entire legal fraternity and will continue to support and protect the rights of lawyers.

Dr Ilyas Syed resumes charge at PCP again



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Dr. Syed Muhammad Ilyas, CEO of the Paraplegic Center Peshawar, has resumed his official responsibilities as CEO again in accordance with the directive of the Peshawar High Court. Prior to his retirement, the Board of Governors of the Center had decided to retain him in his position for an additional four-year term.

Dr. Ilyas Syed is a Michigan Board Certified Physical Therapist who joined the PCP out of national commitment after serving in the United States for ten years.

Under his leadership, the institution has made remarkable progress in the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities.

What once started as a small facility with only a few beds has transformed into a self-sustaining and comprehensive teaching and rehabilitation center. Despite offering free treatment and rehabilitation services, the center manages to cover 45% of its expenses through non-governmental sources.

PHC orders AWKUM to decide assistant professors promotion in 2 months

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A two-member bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice Waqar Ahmad and Justice Sadiq Ali Mohmand ordered Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan (AWKUM) to decide in two assistant professors promotion to the position of Associate Professor, on Wednesday.

The court has directed the university's selection board to consider the case of the petitioners and make a decision within two months.

The university had advertised posts for Associate Professor in Grade 20 on March 6, 2020, and the petitioners, who were assistant profes-

sors, had applied for these positions.

However, the university administration allegedly favored certain individuals and ignored others, including the petitioners, who claimed that they were eligible for the positions and had a right to be considered.

AWKUM administration submitted a response to the court, but it was deemed unsatisfactory.

PHC has directed the university's selection board to consider the case of the petitioners and make a decision within two months.

The court has also noted that the Higher Education Commission (HEC) had directed the university administration to fill the positions in question.

PHC grants protective bail to PTI Sanam Javed

The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has granted a one-week protective bail to Sanam Javed, a female leader of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), and restrained the authorities from arresting her, on Wednesday.

PHC two-member bench comprising Justice Sahibzada Asadullah and Justice Dr. Khurshid Iqbal heard the petition.

The lawyers, Alam Khan Adinzai and Bashir Wazir, informed the court that the petitioner had served time in jail and was recently released on bail. However, they feared that she might be arrested in other cases that she was not aware of it. Sanam Javed told the

court that she had been consistently attending trials and was arrested at the jail gate after being released.

However, Justice Sahibzada Asadullah questioned why Sanam Javed was being not approached the high court in Punjab.

The court noted that it could not grant protective bail without seeing the FIRs (First Information Reports) but decided to grant a one-week protective bail to allow Sanam Javed to approach the relevant court.

PHC court directed the authorities not to arrest Sanam Javed in any case during the one-week period. The court also ordered Sanam Javed to approach the relevant court for further relief.

Advisor signs first E-summary on digital workspace

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a historic move towards paperless governance, Advisor to the Honourable Chief Minister, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, on Finance Department Mr. Muzamil Aslam today issued and signed the e-Summary through the KP Digital Workspace (KP-DWS), marking the official launch of the system in the Finance Department. This milestone underscores the provincial government's commitment to efficient, transparent and modern governance.

"This is not just a technological upgrade—it's a cultural shift in how we work," said Advisor Mr. Muzammil Aslam.

"By adopting KP-DWS, we are cutting delays, reducing costs, and setting a new stan-

dard for accountability. I commend my team and all stakeholders for making this transition seamless."

With the Finance Department now fully onboard, the provincial government has taken a decisive step towards eliminating manual processes. From 1st July 2025, all summaries must be routed through KP-DWS, ensuring faster approvals, traceable workflows, and significant savings on time and resources.

To guarantee smooth adoption, the KPRMP team and implementing partner has conducted extensive, hands-on training sessions across departments. The feedback has been resoundingly positive, with government officials quickly adapting to the new system. With the E-Summary Module now operational, focus has

shifted towards R&I Module to further streamlining government operations.

Government of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in collaboration with the World Bank under the program Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Resource Mobilization Program (KPRMP), has developed this system.

The platform will serve all administrative departments of the provincial government, enabling secure document handling, electronic approvals, and inter-departmental collaboration through a unified system. The implementation follows careful study of similar systems operating effectively elsewhere in Pakistan, with adaptations made to meet Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's specific administrative requirements.

Pakistan's scorching summer A nation on the frontlines of climate breakdown

Faiza Riasat

PAKISTAN is experiencing its hottest and most extreme summer of the decade, with temperatures soaring close to 50°C across multiple areas of the country. Entire cities have transformed into scorching heat zones, triggering widespread health emergencies, straining energy infrastructure, and deepening water scarcity.

This crisis is not a natural occurrence, but the result of years of unchecked environmental degradation that have pushed the climate system to a breaking point. What was once considered an anomaly is now becoming an alarming new norm.

In the first half of 2025 alone, Pakistan has been struck by two major climate-related disasters: an extreme heatwave in Sindh and a devastating glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) in Gilgit-Baltistan. The heatwave pushed temperatures in Jacobabad beyond 52°C, while the GLOF wiped out entire communities in Hunza Valley, displacing thousands.

Since April 2025, a series of intense heatwaves have struck Pakistan, with June bringing the most brutal temperatures. Dera Ghazi Khan recorded highs of 50°C, while Lahore, Sargodha, and other urban centers soared around 47°C to 49°C. Even regions like Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, historically known cooler zones, have reported unseasonably high temperatures.

Countless factors contribute to the single, predominant challenge of climate change. While Pakistan battles record-breaking heatwaves and growing climate instability, it's important to acknowledge a harsh truth: the country is suffering the consequences of a crisis it did not create.

Despite contributing less than 1% to global greenhouse gas emissions, Pakistan faces some of the most devastating impacts of climate change. Pakistan's climate change vulnerability is deeply linked to its



geography.

Pakistan lies at the crossroads of melting glaciers, arid zones, and low-lying coastal areas. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2021) places Pakistan among the ten most climate-vulnerable countries.

Global warming, which is driven largely by industrialized nations, has raised baseline temperatures around the world, setting the stage for more frequent and intense heat events. Shifts in atmospheric patterns, including high-pressure systems that trap heat, further exacerbate the problem.

In Pakistan's rapidly expanding cities, heat is magnified by the urban heat island effect, as concrete structures and reduced green cover retain and radiate warmth. Meanwhile, widespread deforestation and soil degradation leave the land dry and unable to cool naturally.

Adding to the crisis is a fragile and overburdened power system that often fails during the hottest parts of the day, cutting off electricity to millions. Without reliable power, many households are left without fans, air coolers, or even access to clean drinking water when they need it most.

The human cost of the heatwave is staggering. Hospitals in Sindh, Punjab, and Balochistan have reported surges in cases of dehydration, heatstroke, and heat-induced miscarriages. Outdoor laborers, street vendors, and elderly residents are at high risk, with minimal access to cooling centers or relief services. In 2024, over 568 heat-related deaths were recorded during a similar period, and

current trends suggest a repeat of that grim statistic.

In response to the intensifying heat, authorities and humanitarian organizations have set up over 1,000 heat relief camps in high-risk areas, offering water, shade, and first aid. Public advisories encourage people to stay indoors during peak heat hours, while hospitals have opened dedicated heatstroke counters.

Despite these efforts, gaps in access, medical supplies, and public awareness remain, particularly in low-income and remote communities.

While emergency responses provide short-term relief, long-term resilience depends on integrating sustainable urban planning, efficient water and energy management, and climate-conscious infrastructure.

Expanding green spaces, strengthening early warning systems, adopting heat-resilient building designs, and ensuring social protections for vulnerable groups are critical to reducing future risks. These measures, combined with international support and climate finance, are essential for Pakistan to adapt to a hotter, more unpredictable future.

The climate catastrophe facing Pakistan is no longer hypothetical; it is a present-day emergency. The events of 2025 should erase any remaining doubts about the urgency of the crisis. Heatwaves, glacial floods, and displacement are not rare events; they are becoming the new normal.

Pakistan's battle with deadly heatwaves is a stark reminder that climate change knows no borders and demands urgent, unified action before survival becomes the exception, not the norm.

If Pakistan fails to act decisively now, it risks spiraling into a future of perpetual recovery, where every season brings devastation, and every year resets developmental progress. The era for preparedness must begin today.

Writer is student of NUST, Environmental Engineering IESE

Journalists frontline soldiers in war against terrorism: Governor

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi on Wednesday said that journalists have played the role of frontline soldiers in the war against terrorism in the province and vowed to raise their concerns and represent them on every relevant forum.

He expressed these views while addressing the oath-taking ceremony of the newly elected cabinet of the Video Journalists Association at the Governor House Peshawar. The event was moderated by senior journalist Amjad Aziz Malik.

The ceremony was attended by President of Peshawar Press Club M. Riaz, President of the Association Sheikh Ashfaq Hussain, and the organization's founder Rizwan Sheikh, who also spoke on the occasion.

Governor Kundi congratulated the new cabinet on their democratic election and appreciated the continuation of constructive dialogue between the media and the Governor's office.

He said, "The Pakistan Peoples Party welcomes criticism aimed at reform. What we have started today should continue as a tradition at the Governor House."

He acknowledged the recognized status of video and photo journalism globally, highlighting the indispensable role of media workers.

"The importance and role of media can never be diminished. There is an inseparable bond between media and politicians," the Governor said.

He emphasized that while criticism for improvement is necessary, the spread of fake news must be curbed, and media stakeholders must play their part in this effort. He called for healthy competition within the media landscape of Pakistan.

Paying tribute to the sacrifices made by journalists, Governor Kundi said, "I salute the courage and contributions of media workers who have stood firm during difficult times. Some even sacrificed their lives for the peace of this province."

He assured journalists of Peshawar that he would take up their concerns with the Federal Minister for Information and act as their advocate.

In a humanitarian gesture, Governor Kundi announced that volunteers who have saved lives in Swat would be sent on Umrah. He also revealed that Red Crescent Swat will be provided with a special ambulance and five rescue boats, which will remain in contact with volunteer Hilal Khan. Earlier, Governor Kundi administered the oath to the newly elected office-bearers of the association. During the event, Association President Sheikh Ashfaq Hussain presented a vote of thanks, while Press Club President M. Riaz underlined the growing importance of video and photo journalism in today's media landscape.



In brief

Residents hold protest F.P. Report

LARKANA: The residents and shopkeepers has blocked the Miro Khan Chowk Road and burned tires against the increasing unrest by political and social organizations. The citizens participating in the protest held placards and banners and raised slogans saying "Peace and order should be restored". On this occasion, the organizers of the PPP (SB) district Larkana Abdul Sattar Jagirani, Mehrah Bhutto, Ali Khan Magasi and others protested strongly and said that last night, when the PPP (SB) leader took Parvez Rahojo, a resident of the locality, to his house, armed gunmen on a motorcycle robbed him of his motorcycle, mobile phone and cash and fled. When the news of the incident reached their house, a woman from the Rahoja community died in shock. The incident was reported to Waleed Police Station, but unfortunately, the police did not take any action against the criminals. When the residents of the area were openly looting the criminals. They have been suffering from severe anxiety due to fear of violence, but the district administration has not been able to take any action because Larkana has been left at the mercy of criminals by the police.

Crackdowns on edible items F.P. Report

Toba Tek Singh: Under the directives of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's "Quality Food, Healthy Punjab" vision, and the instructions of the Director General Punjab Food Authority, an ongoing crackdown against the adulteration mafia continues across Toba Tek Singh district. Food Safety Teams conducted inspections of 55 food outlets, commonly known as Pakwan Centres. As a result, 23 establishments were fined a total of Rs. 224,000 for poor hygiene practices and violations of food safety regulations. According to the Food Authority spokesperson, a spice grinding unit near the PASSCO warehouse was sealed due to serious violations. During the operations, a large quantity of expired and prohibited food items was confiscated and safely discarded. In several units, insect infestation was found in food processing areas, posing a significant risk to public health.

Setup of three sports facilities F.P. Report

SAHIWAL: The Government of Punjab will launch three new schemes in Sahiwal district during the current financial year to provide better sports facilities for the youth, the total cost of which has been estimated at Rs 396 million. This was stated by Deputy Director Development Muhammad Akram Wattoo while giving details of the projects. He said that to develop hockey talent, synthetic turf will be laid in the Hockey Stadium Sahiwal at a huge cost of Rs 275 million, while an open tennis court at Chichawatni will be constructed at a cost of Rs 46 million and a hotel and market at Zafar Ali Stadium Sahiwal will be constructed at a cost of Rs 75 million. Muhammad Akram Wattoo further informed that two ongoing important projects related to the provision of sports facilities will also be completed in the current financial year, which include the provision of funds of Rs 34.6 million for the construction and renovation of Sahiwal Gymnasium and Rs 99.46 million for the construction of a sports complex in Chak No. 52/5L Tehsil Sahiwal.

KUST signs MoU with GC varsity Faisalabad

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Vice Chancellor Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST), Professor Dr. Syed Zafar Ilyas, paid an official visit to Government College University Faisalabad (GCUF), where he held detailed discussions with Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Rauf Azam.

During the meeting, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the two universities to promote joint research, academic development, and scientific collaboration.

Under the agreement, both institutions will enhance mutual cooperation in key areas such as Physics, Chemistry, and Allied Health Sciences.



The MoU includes provisions for collaborative research projects, shared use of advanced laboratory facilities, faculty exchange programs, and providing MPhil/PhD students with modern research opportunities.

During his visit, Professor Dr. Zafar Ilyas toured Department of Physics at GCUF, where he inspected nanotechnology laboratories and other research facilities. He praised the university's scientific advancements and emphasized the need to equip young researchers with state-of-the-art tools and collaborative platforms to effectively address scientific challenges.

Professor Dr. Rauf Azam termed the partnership a significant step towards scientific progress and institutional development. He stated that inter-university collaboration will prove to be an effective means of bringing innovation in both research and teaching.

KKKUK gears up for fall 2025 admissions



F.P. Report

KARAK: Professor Dr. Tahir Khalily, Vice Chancellor of Khushal Khan Khattak University (KKKUK), today chaired a crucial meeting with all Heads of Academic Departments (HoDs) to strategize for the upcoming Fall 2025 admission campaign. The meeting focused on optimizing outreach and ensuring a successful intake of new students.

Dr. Fasih Ur Rehman, Director of Academics and Research, presented a comprehensive overview of the proposed campaign strate-

gies, outlining key initiatives and timelines. Following the briefing, HoDs provided valuable insights and recommendations, contributing to a robust discussion on effective student recruitment.

Vice Chancellor Dr. Khalily emphasized the paramount importance of knowledge dissemination as the university's core priority. He provided specific instructions regarding media strategies for the admission campaign, stressing the need for clear and impactful communication.

Dr. Khalily further highlighted that all university employees are vital stakeholders in this endeavor, underscoring a collective responsibility for the university's growth and success. The forum unanimously endorsed the proposed admission campaign, demonstrating a strong collective commitment.

The meeting concluded with a unanimous agreement among all attendees to work collaboratively for the betterment of Khushal Khan Khattak University, reinforcing a shared vision for its future.

Admn commits to end encroachments from riverside

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: The district administration has launched a massive operation against encroachments in the natural flow of the Swat River, following a tragedy that occurred on June 27. Deputy Commissioner Swat, Saleem Jan, announced this during a news conference, assuring the public that there is no imminent danger of flooding and tourists can visit Swat without fear.

The DC clarified that the operation is being carried out on lands owned by the communal land, and the encroachments are being removed legally. He emphasized that the Amir Muqam hotel is not considered an encroachment, as it has a

complete legal status and is supported by revenue records.

Saleem Jan revealed that 87 hotels have been identified in Kalam, out of which 33 have established encroachments despite a 2020 agreement. The administration will take action against these hotels and other commercial activities.

The Deputy Commissioner stated that a full investigation into the June 27 tragedy is underway, and a report will be issued by the Special Inquiry Committee of the Chief Minister's Inspection Team (CMIT).

Saleem Jan admitted that the rescue teams faced a severe shortage of boats, life jackets, ropes, and other necessary equipment during the

tragedy. He attributed the damage to the unusual nature of the flood, which included large stones along with water.

The Deputy Commissioner said that the district administration is taking steps to prevent such tragedies in the future and has written a formal letter to the government for the provision of modern equipment, including drone technology.

Saleem Jan appealed to citizens, hotel owners, and traders to cooperate with the administration in eliminating encroachments while respecting the law. He emphasized that the district administration is committed to making Swat a safe, law-abiding, and tourist-friendly area.

Court declares demolition at Qazi Medical complex illegal

Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: District Court has ruled that the district administration's actions against Muhammad pharmacy, a tenant of Qazi Hussain Ahmad Medical Complex Nowshera, were unconstitutional and illegal.

The court has ordered the district administration to immediately stop any further action against Muhammad Pharmacy has reinstated the stay order in his favor. This was claimed by Muhammad Pharmacy legal Advisor Muhammad Riaz Khan

along with Muhammad Naeem, Kashif Khan and Usman Khan advocates while addressing a press conference at Nowshera press club.

The district administration, led by AC Dr. Sher Zaman Dogar and Additional Assistant Commissioner Asif Iqbal, had taken action against Muhammad Farnasi despite a court order restraining them from doing so.

The court's decision was based on the fact that Qazi Hussain Ahmad Medical Complex Nowshera is an autonomous institution under the Medical Teaching

Institutions (MTI) Act 2015, and its Board of Governors has the authority to manage its affairs.

The court observed that the district administration's actions were not only in contempt of court but also in violation of the MTI Act 2015. The court directed the district administration, including the Assistant Commissioner, Additional Assistant Commissioner, police, and other relevant authorities, to refrain from interfering with Muhammad Farnasi's business or taking any coercive action against him.

ADC holds community engagement program F.P. Report

KARAK: Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Sahibzada Samiullah has on Wednesday held a community engagement program in the remote area of Palusa Sar of Karak district on the directions of Deputy Commissioner Karak Shakeel Ahmed Jan. DSP Headquarters Saadat Ali was also present on the occasion.

While explaining the aims and objectives of the program, the Additional Deputy Commissioner said that cooperation of local people is very important for sustainable peace in the area and elimination of social and communal evils from the society. He further said, if anyone sees suspicious people or objects, it should immediately be reported in the concerned police station. Furthermore, the ADC expressed joy that the crime rate in the area is negligible and the elders have also formed peace committees.

DSP Headquarters said that the police and the public are inseparable and it is not possible to eradicate evils without the cooperation of the public. He urged the parents to keep a vigil eye on their children and immediately contact the police in case of any problem. He also requested to refrain from aerial firing and cooperate with the police in this regard.

In the question and answer session, the establishment of the Alikhel Chowk police post, the demarcation of land between the two tribes, the land dispute in Palusa Sar due to which the road was left with asphalt for about 100, 100 feet at two places, severe drinking water problems in Wale Banda, Malagi Banda and Dora Algada, the shortage of teachers in the GMS Wale Banda and the school building were also raised.

Furthermore, about 2 months ago, in Malagi Banda, on the complaint of animals being swept away in a flood and not getting any assistance in this regard, Sahibzada Samiullah spoke to Additional Deputy Commissioner Relief Muhammad Saud Orakzai and recommended early action in the matter.

Admn starts measures for downpour F.P. Report

HANGU: District administration has taken precautionary measures for the expected monsoon rains on the special instructions of the Deputy Commissioner Hangu, on Wednesday.

In this regard, the drainage system was cleared in Ibrahimzai by the authorities concerned which was being declared dangerous for the urban flooding. Immediate steps are underway by the district administration Hangu to prevent flood situations during possible monsoon rains. Today, the SDO Irrigation, on the instructions of the Deputy Commissioner Hangu, visited Ibrahimzai Point, where temporary and permanent encroachments obstructing the water flow, were removed on the spot and was completely cleared.

It may be noted that the Commissioner Kohat Division had also taken notice of this point of Ibrahimzai in the previous meeting and had directed the DC Hangu to clear it before the monsoon rains, upon which Deputy Commissioner Hangu took action and cleared it accordingly.

Delay in Timergara-Kandro RCC bridge construction sparks public concern

Haleem Asad

LOWER DIR: Despite its approval in 2020, construction work on the much-anticipated RCC (Reinforced Cement Concrete) bridge at Timergara-Kandro over the Panjkora River has yet to begin, causing growing concern among local residents.

The project, approved under ADP No. 1898/190235621 with an estimated cost of Rs 621.03 million, was initiated due to efforts by MPA Malik Shafiqullah, former Advisor to the Chief Minister on Prisons during the PTI previous government. The project was widely welcomed by the public, as it was expected to ease traffic congestion in Timergara and improve connectivity for commuters.

However, five years

have passed without any visible progress on the construction. The reasons for the delay remain unclear, raising fears among the public that the project may be shelved altogether.

Citizens and local stakeholders have urged the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to take immediate action and ensure that work on the Timergara-Kandro bridge begins without further delay.

PML-N activist: Bahramand Syed, a former information secretary of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in Lower Dir, has distanced himself from political activities after being sidelined by the party leadership.

A dedicated party worker since his student life in the Muslim Students Federation, Bahramand Syed played a key role in

keeping the party active in Lower Dir. Despite serving the PML-N loyally for years—especially during difficult times—he claims to have received no recognition or benefits in return. He held the position of district information secretary and worked tirelessly to promote the party's presence in the region.

However, in recent years, he has not been invited to party meetings or included in any organizational activities. When contacted for comment, Bahramand Syed expressed deep disappointment, stating that the PML-N no longer values its senior and long-serving workers. "I have withdrawn from party activities because the leadership has completely ignored its sincere and experienced members," he said.

Cultural festival, poetry competition arranged

F.P. Report

GHALANAI: Under the auspices of the District Administration and District Sports Office Mohmand, a vibrant and colorful cultural festival was organized for the first time in District Mohmand, with collaboration of Regional Sports Office Peshawar.

The primary objective of the event was to promote the region's local culture and literature. The two-day poetry competition featured prominent and emerging poets from across the district, who captivated the audience with their eloquent poetry. The poetry focused on themes rooted in local language, traditions and cultural values, shedding light on important social dimensions.

Local poets, while expressing their views, appreciated the initiative, stating that it is the first

time such literary and cultural gatherings have been held under official patronage. They termed it a positive step that would not only help the younger generation reconnect with their language and literature but also strengthen the region's cultural identity.

Prior to the poetry competition, a Kabaddi tournament was organized with the support of the Regional Sports Office, featuring participation from local players. The tournament aimed to revive traditional sports and was well-received by the public.

These constructive activities spanning sports and literature have contributed significantly to the cultural revitalization of District Mohmand. The enthusiastic public participation and institutional interest clearly indicate that cultural activities in the tribal districts are gaining new momentum.

Speaking on the occasion, the District Sports Officer Mohmand stated that efforts are underway to promote sports and cultural engagements in the district, with the aim of encouraging youth participation in positive activities and preserving local traditions.

The public welcomed these initiatives and expressed hope for the continued organization of such events. The festivals not only provided a platform for local talent to shine but also offered healthy entertainment opportunities for the community. The three-day poetry competition and Kabaddi tournament in District Mohmand are part of the government's broader efforts to safeguard and promote cultural heritage. These activities are not only nurturing the region's rich traditions but also providing a sustainable avenue for the youth to connect with their identity.

DPO inaugurated library for policemen

F.P. Report

BUNER: District Police Officer (DPO) Buner has inaugurated the Anwar Mahmood Shaheed Library in Police Line Daggar. The children of Shaheed Anwar Mahmood were invited to the inauguration ceremony.

The library will help in the academic and educational development of police personnel. Police officers, President Buner Press Club Mukhtar Khan, Professor Kausar Saeed

from the University of

Buner and dignitaries of the area participated in the ceremony. DPO shared this library would have quality books on religion, science, history, general novels, poetry, police affairs and other topics will be available in this library. He added this library will prove to be a treasure trove of knowledge not only for police personnel but also for the younger generation and will lead to an increase in the professional skills of

the personnel.

DPO further said this is a modern digital access library in which computers connected to fiber optic internet have been installed so that readers can access online research and modern information. He claimed this library will have uninterrupted internet and newspapers will also be available on a daily basis so that police personnel can stay informed about national and international situations.

Decades long conflicts faced tribal society with mental issues

F.P. Report

WANA: A growing wave of mental health disorders is sweeping across the merged tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, as years of violence, economic hardship, and state neglect take a devastating psychological toll on the population.

Local sources report that depression, anxiety, and a deep sense of insecurity have become alarmingly common, particularly among schoolchildren, parents, and members of the business community. The residents, already

reeling from lawlessness and a collapsing economy, are now battling a silent epidemic — mental illness.

Parents express constant fear over the safety of their children, while traders describe a climate of hopelessness and psychological exhaustion in the face of financial ruin.

In a startling revelation, it has emerged that trauma centers were approved for the region following the 9/11 era — meant to support a population scarred by conflict and displacement. However, most of these facilities remain non-functional, existing only on paper.

Sources allege that despite the allocation of annual funds for trauma centers, corruption and political collusion have prevented their establishment.

"The funds are siphoned off through backdoor dealings," one insider claimed, "while the public continues to suffer without access to even basic mental health services."

Residents describe the constant stream of violence and insecurity as mentally crippling. "Our daily life is a battle with fear," said a local teacher.

Crisis to opportunity: The rise of fodder & guar

Mashal Rehman

THE recently released Pakistan Economic Survey 2024-25 reveals a worrying trend in the country's agriculture sector, which recorded a modest growth of only 0.56%, falling significantly short of its 2% target. This under performance is largely attributed to a sharp decline in the production of major crops including wheat (-8.9%), maize (-15.4%), cotton (-30.7%), sugarcane (-3.9%), and rice (-1.4%). These losses are mainly driven by erratic weather patterns, rising input costs, and water scarcity, leaving farmers vulnerable and food security at risk.

Amid this backdrop, fodder crops have quietly but significantly contributed to stabilizing

the sector. Classified under minor crops, fodder cultivation posted a healthy growth of 4.8% and played a key role in supporting the livestock sector, which remains the backbone of the rural economy. Livestock, contributing 63.6% of agriculture value addition, showed a growth of 4.72% in FY2025. This sector continues to serve as a safety net for millions of rural households and ensures the supply of milk, meat, and dairy products despite ongoing pressures on major crop production.

Fodder crops such as berseem, maize, lucerne, sorghum, and Napier grass are essential for maintaining the health and productivity of Pakistan's estimated 100 million ruminants. Due to climate change and declining crop yields, the importance of sus-

tainable and year-round fodder availability cannot be overstated. These crops are not only essential for livestock nutrition but also for maintaining the economic sustainability of small-scale farmers. Their resilience to rising temperatures and erratic rainfall makes them an increasingly important part of climate-smart agriculture.

In this current scenario, the potential of Guar (Cyamopsis tetragonoloba), a drought-tolerant leguminous crop, is gaining renewed attention in agricultural research and development programs. According to the Agricultural Research Institute Faisalabad (ARI), Guar is currently cultivated on approximately 198,000 hectares across arid and semi-arid regions of Punjab and Sindh, with its role expanding due to climatic stress

on conventional crops.

Guar thrives in sandy, low-fertility soils with very low water requirements, making it a suitable crop for the Cholistan belt, Thal region, southern Punjab, and parts of Sindh. Its natural ability to fix nitrogen improves soil fertility and reduces the need for synthetic fertilizers. Furthermore, its green biomass can be used as a nutritious summer fodder, rich in protein and digestible fiber.

In addition to its fodder value, Guar is an important industrial crop used in the production of guar gum, which has high demand in global markets particularly in food processing, pharmaceuticals, oil drilling, and textiles. While not explicitly included in the Economic Survey 2024-25, the consistent cultivation and

emerging intercropping trials indicate its growing relevance.

Some provincial initiatives, such as the Kissan Card subsidy scheme, have implicitly supported fodder seed inputs, and removal of GST on imported seeds and equipment in recent federal budgets has lowered costs for farmers and institutions working with Guar. These indirect policy moves, combined with increasing research attention, suggest that Guar could be more formally integrated into future cropping and fodder diversification strategies.

The establishment of demonstration plots, adaptive trials, and seed multiplication programs by fodder research stations, particularly in Bahawalpur and Bhakkar zones, further strengthens the case for Guar's inclusion in climate-resilient

cropping systems.

The Economic Survey serves as both a reality check and a road map. While major crops continue to suffer due to climate vulnerabilities, minor crops like fodder and Guar stand out as sustainable alternatives. With continued policy support, scientific validation, and farmer training, these crops could play a central role in restoring balance in Pakistan's agriculture sector ensuring both food security and environmental sustainability.

The writer is a Senior Scientist at Agricultural Research Station, Bahawalpur, working on drought-resilient fodder crop improvement, with a special focus on guar-based systems for arid and semi-arid regions. She contributes regularly to national agricultural development discussions.



GUATEMALA CITY: People gathered outside of a shopping mall after an earthquake in Guatemala.

Iraq's Kurdistan enjoys all-day state electricity

KURDISTAN (AFP): More than 30 percent of Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region now has 24-hour state electricity, authorities said Thursday, with plans to extend full coverage by the end of 2026. The northern region of Kurdistan has long promoted itself as a haven of relative stability in an otherwise volatile country. Despite Iraq's vast oil wealth, the national grid struggles to meet demand, leaving most areas reliant on imported energy and subject to frequent power cuts. "Today, two million people across the Kurdistan region enjoy 24-hour electricity... that's 30 percent of the population," including the cities of Arbil, Duhok and Sulaimaniyah, said regional prime minister Masrour Barzani. In 2024, the Kurdistan Regional Government launched "Project Runaki" to deliver round-the-clock power in a region where, like much of Iraq, residents often turn to costly and pol-

luting private generators. The region's electricity minister, Kamal Mohammed, said residents were now enjoying "uninterrupted, cleaner, and more affordable electricity." "Rollout to other areas is expected to be completed by the end of 2026," he told AFP. As part of the transition, roughly 30 percent of the 7,000 private generators operating across Kurdistan have already been decommissioned, he said, a move that has contributed to an estimated annual reduction of nearly 400,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions. The project also aims to lower household electricity bills, offering a cheaper alternative to the combined cost of grid power and private generator fees. However, bills will still depend on consumption and are likely to increase during peak summer and winter months. Mohammed said the project's success hinges on the introduction of "smart" meters to curb electricity theft, as well as a

new tariff system to promote responsible usage. "More power has been added to the grid to support 24/7 access," he said. Kurdistan has doubled its gas production in the past five years, and most of the power supply comes from local gas production, Mohammed said. Despite Iraq's abundant oil and gas reserves, years of conflict have devastated its infrastructure. The country remains heavily reliant on imports, particularly from neighbouring Iran, which frequently interrupts supply. It also imports electricity from Jordan and Turkey, while seeking to boost its own gas output. "We stand ready to offer our technical support and assistance" to the federal government, Mohammed said. In Arbil, resident Bishdar Attar, 38, said the biggest change was the absence of noisy and polluting generators. "The air is now clear," he said. "We can now use home appliances freely... as needed."

Zelenskiy to meet US envoy in Rome

ROME (Reuters): Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy was due to meet US President Donald Trump's Ukraine envoy, Keith Kellogg in Rome on Wednesday, the Ukrainian leader's spokesperson said, shortly after Trump pledged to send more defensive weapons to Kyiv. The two were travelling to Italy before a conference on July 10-11 dedicated to Ukraine's recovery and long-term reconstruction following Russia's invasion. Attempts by the US to end the war in Ukraine through diplomacy have largely stalled and, Trump aimed unusually direct criticism at the Russian president, Vladimir Putin. He said he had approved the supply of additional weapons to Ukraine, primarily defensive ones, to help it defend itself against Russian advances. On Wednesday, Zelenskiy is also expected to visit Pope Leo at the papal summer residence of Castel Gandolfo, and Italy's President of the Republic, Sergio Mattarella, at the Quirinale Palace. The Rome conference - the fourth such event since Russia's February 2022 invasion of its neighbour - is mainly aimed at mobilising international support for Ukraine. An Italian government source said about 500 billion euros (\$585.35 billion) would be needed for the reconstruction, recovery and modernisation of Ukraine, citing World Bank estimates. Kyiv has been asking Washington to sell it more Patriot missiles and systems that it sees as key to defending its cities. Germany said last week it was in talks on buying Patriot air defence systems for Ukraine to bridge the gap after the Pentagon briefly paused some shipments. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni will open the Rome conference with Zelenskiy and European Commission head Ursula von der Leyen on Thursday. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz is expected to be in Rome along with Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk, Dutch leader Dick Schoof and Greece's Kyriakos Mitsotakis among others, the source said.

France police raid far-right party

PARIS (AFP): The leader of France's National Rally said police seized documents from the far-right party's headquarters Wednesday, a raid prosecutors said was linked to a French probe into alleged illegal campaign financing. The party of Marine Le Pen, the longtime standard bearer of the French far right, has come under increasing scrutiny in recent years. The 56-year-old politician, who has three times run for president, suffered a stunning blow in March when a French court convicted her and other party officials over an EU parliament fake jobs scam. The ruling, which Le Pen has appealed, banned her from standing for office for five years, effectively scuppering her ambition of running in 2027 presidential elections. Le Pen has asked her top lieutenant, 29-year-old party leader and member of European Parliament Jordan Bardella, to prepare to campaign in her place.

Deadly temperatures blasted western Europe in record hot June

BARCELONA (AFP): Western Europe sweltered through its hottest June on record last month, as extreme temperatures blasted the region in punishing back-to-back heatwaves, the EU climate monitor Copernicus said Wednesday. Dangerous temperatures stretched into July, with separate research estimating that climate change made the heat up to 4C hotter, pushing the thermometer into deadly territory for thousands of vulnerable people and greatly worsening the projected death toll. Millions of people were exposed to high heat stress as daily average temperatures in western Europe climbed to levels rarely seen before - and never so early in the summer. Several countries recorded surface temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit), with heat of up to 46C (114.8F) in Spain and Portugal, the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) said. "In a warming world, heatwaves are likely to become more frequent, more intense and impact more people across Europe," said Samantha Burgess, the EU monitor's Strategic Lead for Climate. The two heatwaves, in mid and late June, were linked to heat domes trapping warm air over affected regions and worsening pollution and wildfire conditions. France, Italy, Portugal, Spain and much of the Balkans saw some of the hottest "feels-like" temperatures, which measure the impact on the human body by taking into account factors such as humidity. Maximum feels-like temperatures north of Lisbon hit 48C (118.4F), about 7C above average and associat-

ed with "extreme heat stress", said Copernicus. Large parts of southern Europe also experienced so-called "tropical nights", when overnight temperatures don't fall low enough to let the body recover. Heatwaves are particularly dangerous for the elderly, the sick, young children, outdoor workers, and anyone exposed to high temperatures for prolonged periods without relief. In separate research Wednesday, scientists drawing on historical weather data concluded the heat toll. Millions of people were exposed to high heat stress as daily average temperatures in western Europe climbed to levels rarely seen before - and never so early in the summer. Several countries recorded surface temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit), with heat of up to 46C (114.8F) in Spain and Portugal, the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) said. "In a warming world, heatwaves are likely to become more frequent, more intense and impact more people across Europe," said Samantha Burgess, the EU monitor's Strategic Lead for Climate. The two heatwaves, in mid and late June, were linked to heat domes trapping warm air over affected regions and worsening pollution and wildfire conditions. France, Italy, Portugal, Spain and much of the Balkans saw some of the hottest "feels-like" temperatures, which measure the impact on the human body by taking into account factors such as humidity. Maximum feels-like temperatures north of Lisbon hit 48C (118.4F), about 7C above average and associat-

surface temperatures in the western Mediterranean. They hit an all-time daily maximum in June. Sea surface temperatures across the western Mediterranean were "exceptionally high" in the month, some 5C above average in some areas. Temperatures surged to a record 27C on June 30, Copernicus said. The higher water temperatures reduced nighttime air cooling along the coasts, contributed to higher humidity, and harmed marine life. An AFP analysis based on Copernicus data, found that 12 countries and some 790 million people around the world experienced record heat last month. Dangerous heat blanketed parts of the United States, while in China, 102 weather stations logged the hottest-ever June day. Some measuring temperatures above 40C, according to state media. June saw a catalogue of weather extremes across the world. Devastating wildfires blazed across parts of Canada and southern Europe, while deadly flooding swept areas of South Africa, China and Pakistan. The Copernicus dataset, drawing on billions of measurements from satellites, ships, aircraft and weather stations, has recorded relentlessly rising temperatures as the planet warms as a result of humanity's emissions of greenhouse gases. Globally, last month was the third warmest June on record. The hottest June was in 2024 and the second hottest was in 2023, Copernicus said. While the recent blistering heat streak was partly stoked by warmer El Nino conditions, temperatures have remained at record or near-record levels even after that faded last year.

Palestinian family in Gaza ask UK court for help to join relative

LONDON (Reuters): A Palestinian family of six who are stuck in Gaza despite having permission to join a relative in Britain asked London's High Court on Wednesday to make officials reconsider their refusal to ask Israel for help to leave the enclave. Lawyers representing a Palestinian couple and their four children said the family were given leave to enter the United Kingdom to join the family member, who is a British citizen. A London tribunal ruled earlier this year that the family should be permitted to enter the UK, in a decision which was publicly criticised by Prime Minister Keir Starmer and opposition leader Kemi Badenoch in February. But the family's lawyers say Britain's foreign ministry is refusing to provide assistance because it will not ask Israel whether the family can

leave Gaza to provide the biometric data needed to travel to Britain, as there is no operating visa centre in Gaza. Tim Owen, a lawyer representing the family, said they were asking the High Court to order the foreign office to reconsider its decision. Owen said in court filings that three of the family's four children had recently been fired upon when attempting to access aid, with one of the children also having been struck in the wrist by shrapnel from a tank shell. He told the court that there was a "consular-level process which has been established by Israel" in order to evacuate people from Gaza, but that the foreign office "have not even made the request". The foreign office, however, says evacuating citizens from Gaza is incredibly complex and that Britain can only offer support in exceptional circumstances. The

department's lawyer Julian Milford told the court that the foreign office was aware of 10 people in Gaza with unconditional leave to enter Britain and a further 28 with permission, subject to biometric checks. Milford cited evidence from a department official urging caution over the "expenditure of political and diplomatic capital with Israel and others" in relation to such cases. The family's lawyers say they were, like nearly all of Gaza's 2.3 million population, displaced by the conflict which began with a Hamas-led attack on southern Israel in October 2023, killing around 1,200 people and taking more than 250 hostages, according to Israeli figures. Israel's retaliatory war has killed over 57,000 Palestinians, Gaza's health ministry says, and reduced much of Gaza to rubble.

Spain PM announces anti-graft plan

MADRID (AFP): Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez on Wednesday announced an anti-corruption plan designed with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development in a bid to salvage confidence in his scandal-hit government. The implication of two former Socialist heavyweights and close Sanchez allies in a graft scandal has rocked the minority leftist coalition and thrown its viability into doubt. The crisis is particularly sensitive for a leader who came to power in 2018 vowing to clean up Spanish politics after the rival conservative Popular Party (PP) was convicted in its own graft affair. Sanchez announced a 15-point plan drawn up with the Paris-based OECD's division for anti-corruption and integrity in government during an address to parliament. They include the creation of an independent public integrity agency to prevent, supervise and prosecute corruption, with Sanchez saying existing mechanisms have "generated inefficiencies and vacuums of coordination".

Enhanced data analysis aided by artificial intelligence will scan for "vulnerabilities" in public tenders, said Sanchez, after his former right-hand men were suspected of receiving kickbacks in the improper awarding of such contracts. Top officials would also undergo "random and annual wealth checks" during their time in the job, while parties and foundations receiving public funds above 50,000 euros (\$58,500) would be obliged to face external audits. Whistleblowers would receive greater protection, specialised sections in courts would be created and the criminal code reformed to harshen punishments for offences against the public administration, added Sanchez. A bombshell police report into the scandal released last month implicated ex-transport minister Jose Luis Abalos and former top Socialist official Santos Cerdan, both key figures in Sanchez's rise to power. Sanchez revealed he had considered resigning over the affair, apologising but defying the opposition by vowing not to "throw in the

towel" and call early elections. Since the police report, Cerdan has relinquished his powerful post as Socialist organisation secretary and as an MP, while the party definitively expelled Abalos. The array of far-left and regional separatist parties propping up the government had demanded firm anti-corruption measures as the price for their continued support. Sanchez described the plan as "the biggest boost" to the fight against corruption in Spain "in recent decades". But PP leader Alberto Nunez Feijoo dismissed Sanchez's explanations and reform efforts, saying the Socialists had "operated like a criminal organisation" for years. "We don't know where your direct responsibility begins and where it ends... How will you get us out of this nightmare if you got us into it?" he replied to Sanchez, demanding elections. Separate investigations are underway against Sanchez's wife, brother and Socialist-appointed top public prosecutor, ratcheting up the pressure on one of Europe's longest-serving leftist leaders.

EU lawmakers reject attempt to curb far right's sway on climate talks

BRUSSELS (Reuters): The European Parliament on Wednesday rejected a proposal to fast-track talks on the EU's new climate target, scuttling a move by liberal, socialist and green lawmakers to try to limit the influence of climate sceptic lawmakers on the goal. The far-right Patriots of Europe group, which rejects EU policies to curb climate change, took on the role of lead negotiators for the 2040 climate target, seeking to steer talks on the goal, which the group said it firmly opposed. Lawmakers rebuffed a proposal on Wednesday to fast-track the negotiations, which would have skipped stages where the Patriots could exert most influence, and limited their ability to set the timings for negotiations.

A total of 379 lawmakers rejected the plan to accelerate the talks, versus 300 in favour and eight abstentions. The vote puts the Patriots firmly in the lead for the parliament as it negotiates the final 2040 climate target with EU member countries. The Patriots will now draft an initial negotiating proposal for the parliament. A Patriots spokesperson said the group would not prioritise trying to meet a September deadline for countries to submit new climate targets to the United Nations. "What truly matters is achieving a deal that delivers real benefits for our citizens. Patriots have never negotiated under pressure like traders in a marketplace," the spokesperson said. The Patriots are the third-biggest lawmaker

group in the EU Parliament and the group includes the political parties of France's far-right leader Marine Le Pen and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban. The Patriots secured the lead negotiating role in a closed-door meeting by outbidding the parliament's biggest group, the centre-right European People's Party, EU officials told Reuters. Green lawmakers said they feared the target would now be watered down or face long delays. "There is an acute danger that the European Union's climate target will be buried," said German EU lawmaker Michael Bloss. The attempt to fast-track the talks failed because it was not supported by the EPP - the party of European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

EU aims to stockpile critical medical supplies for future crises

BRUSSELS (Reuters): The European Union aims to stockpile critical medical equipment and vaccines in case of future health crises and to set up a network to ease coordination among EU countries, European crisis chief Hadja Lahbib said on Wednesday. The 27-country bloc is scarred by the memory of the COVID-19 pandemic when it faced a shortage of vaccines and protective masks. "We need a long-term strategy to make sure that essential supplies that keep society running are

always available," European Commissioner Lahbib told a news conference. Under the EU Stockpiling and Medical Countermeasures Strategies, the EU will draw up a priority list of medical equipment to be stockpiled in Europe, including vaccines, therapeutics, diagnostics, and personal protective equipment. The EU will double investments in the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response, known as HERA for short, to 200 million euros (\$234 mil-

lion) by 2027, Lahbib said. The scheme funds research and development projects. She said the European Commission will also launch a Medical Countermeasures Accelerator to serve as a one-stop shop to help companies access financing to develop health technologies. A European and Global Wastewater Sentinel System will be set up to collect samples from European airports to detect disease hotspots and monitor in real time the evolution of outbreaks. But "at this point in the inquiry, the data available to investigators does not indicate a mechanical or design issue" with the 787 plane, or its engines. The site said its sources "indicated that post-accident analysis showed no sign of fuel contamination or improper retraction of the aircraft's flaps", over which there had been speculation. Health officials in the Indian state of Gujarat initially said at least 279 people were killed, but forensic scientists reduced the figure after multiple scattered and badly burnt remains were identified.

Toll of Air India disaster rests at 260

NEW DELHI (AFP): Indian forensic investigators have identified all 260 people killed in last month's crash of a London-bound passenger plane, health authorities said Wednesday, ahead of a hugely anticipated preliminary report into what went wrong. India's Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau is leading the probe into one of the deadliest air disasters in decades - with an initial report expected on Friday. All but one of the 242 people aboard the Air India Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner were killed when it crashed on June 12. It ploughed into housing just after takeoff in the western city of Ahmedabad, and authorities have also identified 19 people killed on the ground. No details have been released about the probe, in which British and US air accident investigation agencies have also taken part. But specialist website The Air Current, citing multiple sources familiar with the investigation, reported it had "narrowed its focus to the movement of the engine fuel switches", while noting that full analysis will "take months - if not longer". It added that "the focus of the investigators could change during that time".

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Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

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Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

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

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

USA and Canada Toll Free Number 1-800-5905747

Children in England face almost-Dickensian levels of poverty

THE Children's Commissioner has warned some young people in England are living in an "almost-Dickensian level of poverty" as a new report reveals the "real hardship" facing some families. Black mould in a bedroom and rats in a kitchen were among some of the examples given by young people for the commissioner's review, as the government prepares to publish a child poverty strategy in autumn.

The latest official estimates, for the year to March 2024, suggest there were a record 4.45 million children living in poverty in the UK, according to The Independent. While some feel a sense of shame over their situation, Dame Rachel de Souza said it is "society at large and decision-makers that should be ashamed of the fact that children don't have enough money". A multitude of campaign groups have said the government's new strategy must contain a commitment to do away with the two-child benefit limit.

The limit, which came into effect under the Conservatives in April 2017, restricts child tax credit and universal credit (UC) to the first two children in most households. Organisations working in the sector argue that 109 children across the UK are pulled into poverty by the policy every day and that an estimated 350,000 children would be lifted out of poverty immediately if it was scrapped. But comments by Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson at the weekend have raised concerns the policy might not be done away with, amid financial pressures following the U-turn on welfare reforms.

Ms Phillipson said spending decisions have been made "harder" after the watering down of the welfare reforms.

Pressed on whether the chances of the benefit cap going are now slimmer, Ms Phillipson told BBC's Sunday With Laura Kuenssberg: "The decisions that have been taken in the last week do make decisions, future decisions harder. "But all of that said, we will look at this collectively in terms of all of the ways that we can lift children out of poverty." Estimates for the cost of scrapping the policy vary, from around £2.6 billion to £3.5 billion by the end of this Parliament (202930).

Dame Rachel — whose office was commissioned to carry out its report to feed into the Government's work in the area — said while there is "no quick fix to ending child poverty", she feels it is "very clear that any child poverty strategy must be built on the foundation of scrapping the two-child limit". She added that a new approach is needed which "stops sidelining children's voices", saying that "only by listening to children, and acting in response, will we get close to solving those problems". The commissioner said in recent years she has seen a change in children's comments, noting that issues traditionally seen as "adult" concerns "are now keenly felt by children, who see their parents' worries and the struggles they face: the hours they work, the homes they live in and the ability to put food on the table". She added: "Children shared harrowing accounts of hardship, with some in almost-Dickensian levels of poverty.

"They don't talk about 'poverty' as an abstract concept but about not having the things that most people would consider basic: a safe home that isn't mouldy or full of rats, with a bed big enough to stretch out in, 'luxury' food like bacon, a place to do homework, heating, privacy in the bathroom and being able to wash, having their friends over, and not having to travel hours to school." While commending "some positive steps by the Government to get more money into families' pockets", she urged "bold, practical measures that break the link between a child's background and their opportunities". The commissioner's report, based on the experiences of 128 children across the country between January and March this year, noted a range of concerns including lack of access to quality, healthy food and living in cramped and poor conditions.

As well as calling for the two-child benefit limit to be scrapped, Dame Rachel urged a commitment to a so-called "triple-lock" for uprating all child-related benefits, reforms to ensure families are not being housed in temporary bed and breakfast accommodation for longer than the legal six-week limit, free bus travel for all school-aged children in England and better safety measures in areas with children in low-income families including increased street lighting, and more neighbourhood watch-style initiatives.

Important Notice

The Frontier Post will not be responsible for the comments in the articles and letters. The Frontier Post requests the writers of articles and letters to please make sure that they write their email addresses and mention the names of the cities, towns, districts or tehsil of their residences at the bottom of their articles and letters.



What will the world look like in November 2026?

Eyad Abu Shakra

LISTENING to the speeches of US President Donald Trump leaves one with the impression that the man is convinced he can change realities he does not like.

Theoretically, this conviction could be well-founded. He is the absolute ruler of the most powerful country in the world. I use the word "absolute" deliberately; over the past few months, since assuming office on Jan. 20, Trump has managed to seize control of institutions through executive orders, marginalized the opposition and personalized the national interest. He has diminished international relations in ways that remind us of the famous phrase "L'Etat, c'est moi" ("I am the state"), widely attributed to France's Louis XIV, who ruled from 1643 to 1715.

Since he came to shape the course of events, everyone (rivals before allies) has acquiesced to playing the role of mere spectator.

Among them are the major competing powers: China and Russia, NATO and other countries that have long convinced themselves they are "friends" of Washington.

So far, everyone has engaged with Trump's beliefs, actions and statements depending on their priorities, but the outcome is always the same. To this day, people rightly have the sense that confronting a US president who enjoys a clear and fresh popular mandate is futile. Thanks to that mandate, he has monopolized all the levers of governance:

An absolutely loyal

inner circle has been appointed to run all the agencies and departments of the executive branch.

His party has a majority in Congress that is bolstered by a populist wave.

An ideologically conservative judiciary that shares the administration's views and interests.

A tamed media, either by owners or outside pressure. Even digital and "smart" media alternatives and those who are "too clever for their own good" have been brought to heel. A billionaire elite that find themselves completely unshackled. Indeed, they have been empowered to do whatever serves their interests and to crush any challenge to those interests.

Accordingly, unless something wholly unforeseen occurs, this "adaptation" to Trump will continue, at least until the midterm elections. His trial-and-error approach to both domestic and international issues will persist. And this brings us back to the question of Trump's ability to change the realities that bug him.

Are the states' considerations not shifting? Are there not lessons to be learned from a gamble here, a misadventure there and a disappointment somewhere in between? Are there not unforeseen circumstances that have not been accounted for, such as natural disasters?

Moreover, the global reach of the Trumpian experiment might well be a double-edged sword. While Washington's policies may be bolstered by the experiences of certain governments (whether in

Europe or Latin America), the emergence of "Make America Great Again" clones and the posturing of those who pretend to belong to the MAGA camp could aggravate contradictions in countries whose societies are less resilient or flexible than the US — societies that might not accept what the US public has been accepting.

Whether Trump succeeds or fails between now and the midterm elections scheduled for Nov. 3, 2026, the implications will be global. Raising the stakes (especially in global hot zones like Ukraine, the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent and Taiwan), the American president is a "dealmaker" who relies more on instinct and public relations than on long-term strategic planning.

That is why absolute loyalty, personal friendships and financial partnerships have largely determined his appointments of aides, advisers and Cabinet members. That is a break with the approach of most of his Republican and Democratic predecessors.

This has meant that many critical responsibilities have been handed over to figures who are widely seen as controversial or underqualified. In fact, some of them are now beginning to lose the trust of even the hardcore ideological MAGA base, including media figures and activists like Steve Bannon, Tucker Carlson and Nick Fuentes.

As for the Middle East, particularly the question of Palestine, Trump's handling of both Iran and

Israel has begun to impose itself on political discourse, at least in the media and online.

Strikingly, the white Christian right in America has publicly criticized Benjamin Netanyahu's policies. Chief among their complaints is the accusation that both Netanyahu and the American Jewish right are pushing Washington into war with Iran to serve the Likud and Israel's agenda.

While they may differ on the details, several European countries, especially the UK, may be entering a phase of reassessment in their party politics.

In Britain, where the current Labour government stands unapologetically with Israel, the political left has begun to shake things up. It was last week announced that a new left-wing party is in the pipeline, led by former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and MP Zarah Sultana, both of whom are vocal supporters of the Palestinian cause.

This was followed by early signs of a reconfiguration on the political right, with a new far-right party, Restore Britain, emerging. It is even more right-wing than the hard-line, anti-immigrant Reform UK.

For this reason, I believe that between now and November 2026, Washington could, given the lack of real solutions to international crises, lay the groundwork for significant transformations outside the US. I believe that the fodder for these shifts will largely be: religious extremism, racial hatred and socioeconomic hardship.

Who better than Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize?

Belén Fernández

IN the latest installment of the "can't-make-this-sh*t-up" contest in global politics and diplomacy, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has nominated United States President Donald Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize.

In other words, the person currently presiding over the genocide of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip has proposed that the world's top peace-making prize be awarded to the primary enabler of that genocide — the man who in March announced that he was "sending Israel everything it needs to finish the job" in Gaza. That "everything" has entailed billions of dollars in lethal weaponry and other assistance.

From October 2023 to the present, nearly 60,000 Palestinians have officially been slaughtered in the diminutive territory, although the true death toll is no doubt far higher considering the surplus of bodies lost under the pervasive rubble. More than 700 Palestinians have been killed in recent weeks while seeking food at aid distribution sites run by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, an organisation backed by both the US and Israel.

Since resuming office in January, Trump has also managed plenty of do-it-yourself activity of a decidedly unpeaceful nature, such as wantonly bombing civilians in Yemen and illegally attacking Iran.

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Other esteemed recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize have included Colombia's right-wing former President Juan Manuel Santos, who, as the Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported in 2013, was "proud" to have his country called "the Israel of Latin America". As defence minister during the blood-drenched reign of his predecessor Alvaro Uribe, Santos was embroiled in the so-called "false positives" scandal that saw Colombian soldiers murder an estimated more than 10,000 civilians and pass the corpses off as "terrorists".

Given Israel's flair for massacring civilians in the name of fighting "terrorism", the country comparison was particularly apt. And what do you know: the roster of Nobel Peace Prize laureates also comprises the late Israeli politician Shimon Peres, who was co-awarded the prize in 1994 — two years before he supervised the slaughter of 106 refugees sheltering at a United Nations compound in Qana, Lebanon.

In 2021, Trump's own son-in-law Jared Kushner was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize by ex-Harvard Law School professor Alan Dershowitz, who has devoted much of his legal career to justifying Israel's killing of Arab civilians. In this case, Kushner's nomination was based on his starring role in producing the Abraham Accords that normalised relations between Israel and various Arab states.

Now that genocide has effectively been normalised, too, Trump has proposed that the US take over the Gaza Strip, forcibly expel the native Palestinian population, and remodel the devastated territory into a brand-new "Riviera of the Middle East". Anyway, it's all in a day's work for a Nobel Peace Prize nominee.

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Of course, it should go without saying that anyone who positively invokes the nuking of hundreds of thousands of civilians should be categorically ineligible for any sort of serious peace prize. But in a world in which the supposed pursuit of peace is so often utilised as an excuse for more war, Trump's nomination might very well be meaningful, indeed.

Why the future of AI may be open

Yik Wai Chee

THE release of DeepSeek's R1 — China's powerful new open-source AI model — has sent shockwaves through the global tech industry. Offered for free and royalty-free, it has disrupted financial markets, challenged the United States' dominance in artificial intelligence, and prompted fears that Silicon Valley's tightly guarded business model may no longer hold.

DeepSeek's open-source launch is widely seen as a key trigger behind a trillion-dollar tech sell-off in the US, signalling deep investor anxiety over the commodification of AI and China's growing competitiveness. Dubbed "China's answer" to OpenAI's GPT-4, R1 has unsettled investors and shifted global AI geopolitics.

Reports suggest R1's compute costs were less than \$6m, using Nvidia's H800 chips. While full development expenses remain undisclosed, this points to a markedly more cost-effective model than proprietary counterparts. It suggests R1 may have been built for a fraction of OpenAI's GPT-4 expenses — rumoured at hundreds of millions. This cost efficiency, paired with open access, makes DeepSeek's model uniquely disruptive.

Chinese firms like Alibaba, releasing the Qwen3 Embedding series freely, and France's Mistral AI (with Europe's first reasoning LLM) are following suit. The US

risks losing ground unless it embraces open-source strategies. After all, early internet giants such as Google and Facebook leveraged free, user-centric services (like Gmail and Maps) to drive adoption before monetising.

In a field where secrecy is standard and models are often locked tight, giving away valuable tools seems counterintuitive. Yet OpenAI, once a trailblazer with GPT-4, now appears cautious. CEO Sam Altman has defended the \$500bn Stargate Project, designed to lock in AI leadership. However, practical expansion beyond ChatGPT has been slow, with only a nascent shopping feature launched. US competitors (Google Gemini, Meta Llama, Anthropic Claude) have yet to drive faster or cheaper innovation.

Initial US dominance grew on incremental gains, supported by export curbs on Nvidia chips and other tech that slowed Chinese progress. Yet Nvidia's Jensen Huang warned these restrictions could backfire, catalysing China's chip industry and ultimately weakening US control. Open-sourcing has become China's strategic workaround: Legal, scalable, and globally collaborative. It mirrors how Android thrives via external developers. AI improves through iteration, and Chinese firms now leverage open-source ecosystems to refine and

scale models without shouldering all costs, just like the Google Play model.

Meta's chief AI scientist, Yann LeCun, described DeepSeek's rise as an open-source triumph, not merely China overtaking the US. Still, geopolitical stakes are clear: Free access debases proprietary models' monetisation path. If open-source achieves parity, commercial models lose leverage.

China's industrial strength lies in speed and scale. By saturating the market with low-cost, capable models, it pressures competitors until only the dominant, widely adopted model remains valuable — monetised via advertising, data, or premium add-ons, a route well-trodden by Google and Facebook.

US investors are acutely aware. The reported \$1 trillion dip following DeepSeek's release reflects systemic concern. For China, open-sourcing is another facet of a national industrial strategy: Subsidise, dominate, and claim benevolent intent via "AI for good".

Open-sourcing isn't risk-free: If US tech is freely available, global rivals — including Chinese firms — can repurpose and surpass it. The reverse could also be true.

China, too, faces limitations. Its strict internet censorship regime raises questions about how open-source models trained in

that environment can adapt to global content demands. This has already surfaced on RedNote (Xiaohongshu), a Chinese social media app that recently attracted many American users fleeing a potential TikTok ban.

While the cross-cultural exchange has been largely positive, tensions have emerged — particularly around content moderation and censorship of politically sensitive topics like Taiwan and Xinjiang.

These constraints could disadvantage Chinese AI models when competing for trust and relevance in international markets.

Nonetheless, open-source AI has allowed China to compete without access to cutting-edge US chips, recalibrating the global AI landscape. Even in the US, leaders — from Elon Musk's Grok-1 to OpenAI's evolving stance — have begun to recognise that long-term AI dominance depends not just on proprietary control, but on adoption, accessibility, and innovation at scale.

In the end, the path to US AI supremacy may not lie in guarding models behind closed doors, but in embracing the very principles of openness and decentralisation that China is now leveraging to reshape the global playing field.

The great irony is that the next leap in US tech dominance may come as an (un)intended consequence of China's so-called "socialist AI" approach.

Trump seems to really be losing patience with Putin. But why now?

FIVE months ago, President Donald Trump turned heads when he claimed Russian President Vladimir Putin – the man who had invaded Ukraine – wanted peace in Ukraine.

“I believe he wants peace,” Trump said, adding: “I mean, I know him very well. Yeah, I think he wants peace. I think he would tell me if he didn’t. ... I trust him on this subject.”

Trump has sung a very different tune in recent days, and especially on Tuesday.

After days of expressing displeasure with his latest phone call with Putin, Trump went even further at a Cabinet meeting. He suggested the man he had vouched for and spent years curiously avoiding criticizing might not be a reliable interlocutor.

“We get a lot of bullsh*t thrown at us by Putin, if you want to know the truth,” Trump said. “He’s very nice all of the time, but it turns out to be meaningless.”

It’s not the only suggestion that Trump is evolving in his stance – or at least his rhetoric – on the war in Ukraine.

This week he has reversed a brief pause in defensive weapons shipments to Ukraine (while suggesting this was undertaken by others in his administration). He

has, for now, largely abandoned blaming both sides for the war, after almost always pairing any critique of Russia with a critique of Ukraine – as if they were equal partners in prolonging Russia’s war of aggression. And on Tuesday he without prompting praised the “courage” of Ukraine’s fighters, suggesting the huge investment the United States has made in Ukraine’s defense hasn’t been the boondoggle that many in the MAGA base believe.

“And I will say this, the Ukrainians, whether you think it’s unfair that we gave all that money or not, they were very brave because somebody had to operate that stuff,” Trump said. “And a lot of people I know wouldn’t be operating it.”

So what’s happening here?

Far be it from anyone to suggest that Trump has truly turned on Putin and landed firmly in Ukraine’s corner. Trump has signaled over and over again in the last 10 years that he’s happy to look unpredictable on the world stage – whether you call it the “madman theory” or anything else. And even after his past strong words for Putin, his readouts of their subsequent calls – including a birthday call from the Russian leader – haven’t suggested that Trump is applying direct pressure

Aaron Blake

on him to agree to a ceasefire or to calibrate reprisals for Ukrainian attacks.

Now, it’s quite possible Trump’s latest public comments are an attempt to apply pressure on Putin rather than signal a firm shift in administration policy. Quite notably, the American president on Tuesday declined to commit to a package of new sanctions on Russia that has the support of more than two-thirds of senators of both parties. To the extent Trump was truly done with Putin, that option is at the ready, and he’s not going there yet.

He could just as easily try this strategy and revert to a gentler approach.

But sharply criticizing Putin is also a card that Trump has been extremely reluctant to play.

About the only other time he’s gone this far was shortly after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. Trump briefly called Russia’s invasion “appalling.”

But that appeared to be a politically oriented course correction as much as anything. Trump, who was cueing up another campaign for president, had been sharply criticized for praising Putin’s “genius” and “savvy” in invading Ukraine – at a time when virtually all of the Western world was condemning it. Those

comments were shocking, even compared to Trump’s years of cozing up to Putin. So he briefly rebuked the invasion and then moved on, resuming his kid-gloves treatment of the Russian leader.

The question before us is whether Trump’s shift today will prove as fleeting as that was. Perhaps. But there are signs that it might not be.

For one, it seems the president might be coming to the realization that his goals in Ukraine are irreconcilable with Putin’s.

For Trump, it’s always about getting a “win” – in this case, the peace deal he promised and failed to obtain on Day One of his presidency. He hasn’t seemed to care too much about what that peace deal actually looks like and has floated huge concessions from Ukraine. But Putin has given almost no indication he’s truly interested in cutting a deal that involves anything except obtaining all of Ukraine.

And Trump’s comments Tuesday weren’t just tough on Putin; they seemed to reflect deeper frustration that his Russian counterpart is stringing him along. (Trump in April also suggested Putin might be “just tapping me along.”) Perhaps Trump genuinely believed in his deal-making prowess, and he feels Putin has made a fool of

him.

State Department spokeswoman Tammy Bruce was asked Tuesday to square Trump’s February comments about Putin with his latest remarks, and she suggested Trump was indeed responding to new inputs. “He’s an open-minded man, but he’s not naive,” Bruce said. “He is principled and clear in what he wants to achieve. That’s what we’re seeing.”

You could certainly understand Trump coming to that conclusion – however belatedly – after the events of last week. Shortly after his call with Putin, Russia launched its largest-ever drone attack on Ukraine.

And nobody should underestimate the role of pride and domestic politics in all of this. Trump has given Putin more of the benefit of the doubt than virtually any other Western leader, as evidenced by his February comments. Just as he has in other foreign areas, he’s steadfastly declined to make moral judgments about a strongman leader whose tactics and consolidation of power he genuinely seems to admire.

But picking sides in the war in Ukraine isn’t just about morals; it’s also about realpolitik. And perhaps that latter calculation, which is much more important to Trump, is changing.

Only time will tell.

Stop telling Palestinians what they should be doing

James Zogby

FROM early, piecemeal reports, the White House meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and US President Donald Trump didn’t live up to expectations. From what we can gather from public comments, it featured some excessive displays of flattery. Mr Netanyahu announced that he was nominating Mr Trump for a Nobel Peace Prize and when asked about a two-state solution, after Mr Trump deferred to the “great man” from Israel to answer the question. Both say they want a ceasefire in Gaza, but what they want and what average Palestinians need are quite far apart.

There’s nothing new in this sad state of affairs. As the situation in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem worsens, the response of most nations to the Palestinians’ plight has been feckless. Instead of

was severed from the rest of the Palestinian population and economically strangled by Israel, with Hamas being both punished and then rewarded by the Israeli government which sought to foster a division in Palestinian ranks. This was accomplished, enabling Hamas to grow in strength.

Israel’s war on Gaza has had devastating consequences for Palestinians. Our findings were able to quantify the magnitude of their losses. Almost two thirds report having been forced to evacuate their families four or more times in the first 18 months. Most have lost family members. Seventy per cent say that their homes have been totally destroyed, with majorities reporting extreme scarcity of food, water, medical services and adequate shelter.

The three-decades-long enforced closure of East

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To better understand where we are and what must be done, my polling company has been contracted by the Tony Blair Institute to conduct annual surveys in the occupied lands in order to assess Palestinian attitudes towards their current situation and their hopes for the future. What comes through quite clearly in these surveys is that the Palestinians in all three areas are in deep distress. As a result of the unique burdensome conditions Israel has imposed on them, there are distinct differences in the opinions of respondents in each area – towards their governance, the threats they face and their hopes for the future. These cannot be ignored. For two decades, Gaza was severed from the rest of the Palestinian population and economically strangled by Israel, with Hamas being both punished and then rewarded by the Israeli government which sought to foster a division in Palestinian ranks. This was accomplished, enabling Hamas to grow in strength. Israel’s war on Gaza has had devastating consequences for Palestinians. Our findings were able to quantify the magnitude of their losses. Almost two thirds report having been forced to evacuate their families four or more times in the first 18 months. Most have lost family members. Seventy per cent say that their homes have been totally destroyed, with majorities reporting extreme scarcity of food, water, medical services and adequate shelter.
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definitively condemning the killing and the occupation, the best they can muster are hollow and sometimes banal pronouncements urging the parties to negotiate (as if there were something about which to negotiate) or professions of their support for a two-state solution (as if that were even possible under the current circumstances).

This hasn’t stopped some from proposing “peace plans”, calling for international peacekeepers, a “reformed Palestinian Authority” and a disarming of Hamas. But these proposals also ignore two important realities: Israel’s rejection of every element of every plan put forward to date, and the fact that the Israeli occupation is so entrenched and has so distorted the realities on the ground in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem that the way forward to Palestinian independence has become far more complicated than it was at the time of the Oslo Accords.

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For two decades, Gaza

Jerusalem has severed the city’s Palestinians from their compatriots in the rest of the occupied territories. Before the closure, Palestinians from the West Bank came to Jerusalem for employment and services. After it, Palestinians in East Jerusalem lost their customers, clients and income, and were forced to become incorporated into the Israeli economy. Since the October 7 attacks, our polls show majorities reporting heightened levels of economic and political distress.

There is also increased economic insecurity in the West Bank. Because Israeli policies drastically slowed independent economic development, the two largest sources of employment for Palestinians in the West Bank became the public sector – the Palestinian Authority (PA) – and jobs as day labourers in Israel or Israeli settlements. After the war, Israel suspended work permits and restricted the transfer of Palestinian tax revenues to the PA, forcing the PA to reduce salaries. As a result, there has been a tripling of unemployment in the West Bank and an increased impoverishment of the population.

What has also grown are the severity of threats experienced by Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, emanating from settler violence, home demolitions, land seizures, forced expulsions and raids from Israeli security forces. As a result, Palestinians report feeling increasingly threatened and insecure.

Our findings also demonstrate a Palestinian crisis of confidence in their own leadership. Palestinians in Gaza want little to do with Hamas, while those in the West Bank have diminished

regard for the role of the PA. Gazans increasingly blame both Hamas and Israel for the war, and three quarters of West Bank Palestinians are dissatisfied with the PA’s overall performance in response to the conflict. The PA, which once conveyed the promise of a Palestinian future, has increasingly come to be seen as humiliated by Israel, or even as an agent of the occupation.

These factors combined define the crisis confronting Palestinians today. They know what they want – independence, security, an improved economy and improved services – but don’t see a clear path forward.

Flowing from this, our poll findings point to some disturbing signs of despair. When asked for their preferred strategies moving forward, the plurality of respondents in the West Bank and Gaza say they just want the situation to revert to pre-October 7 but

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with better paying jobs, and improved services and quality of life. And despite the finding that a majority of Gazans and a plurality of West Bank Palestinians still favour a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders, almost two-thirds of respondents in all three areas say that, given current political conditions and facts on the ground, they believe the situation is now close to a one-state reality in which Israel controls Palestinians throughout Israel, the West Bank and Gaza.

The bottom line from our three years of polling is that the unique circumstances that Israel has imposed on Palestinians have created greater complexity in finding a path forward. Current efforts of the international community focus on what Palestinians must do. But the real threat to peace and stability is the Israeli government which has rejected any and all proposals that call for an end to their assault on Gaza, withdrawal of their forces, a role for the PA in Gaza and any suggestion that Palestinian independence or sovereignty be on the agenda.

It is this intransigence that must be addressed. Instead of placing the burden of reform solely on the Palestinians, the US, Western Europe and the Arab states should take concrete measures to force Israel to end its occupation, impose an international trusteeship with a peace-keeping force in the occupied territories and make a long-term commitment to assisting Palestinians in establishing representative governance in an independent sovereign state – all of which majorities or pluralities of Palestinians support.

UAE-Latin America ties present a model for a new type of alliance

AS part of its economic diversification and diplomacy strategies, the UAE is exploring uncharted terrains and increasingly focusing on Latin America. It has made strategic investments to enhance collaboration in a wide array of sectors – logistics, port development, food security, renewable energy, defence, technology and critical minerals, among others.

Over the past decade, the UAE has made a majority of the Arab Gulf’s investments in that region.

The UAE’s business promotion organisations have representative offices in Argentina, Brazil, Mexico and Panama to support companies in finding business opportunities in Latin America. It is also focusing on promoting tourism and trade, especially in countries such as Colombia. In other examples, Peru and the Dominican Republic have been targets of port development.

With a foundation of mutual interest in sustainable development and economic growth, this strategy is set to enrich both regions with enhanced trade, innovation and collaborative efforts. Given the UAE’s capital base and focus on tech-driven industries,

Latin

Nickolay Mladenov & Sultan Al Nuaimi

America’s rich deposits of critical minerals also make a strong combination for creating robust supply chains.

As part of its connectivity agenda, the UAE is bolstering Latin American ports’ capacity and efficiency. For example, significant investments have been in port terminals in Peru and Ecuador. Providing a green twist, the expansion also includes state-of-the-art electric-powered equipment and electric charging station for lorries, thus promoting sustainable logistics solutions.

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Beyond trade and investment, non-traditional strategic sectors are becoming a key focus of the partnership, such as the establishment of joint platforms for knowledge production, as well as co-operation in the fields of defence technologies, space, digitisation and scientific innovation.

and

strengthens a crossroad for ancient trade and cultural interaction in the Bronze Age, regional platforms will henceforth rotate through various continents of the world.

Despite all these factors – plus the absence of conflicts or tensions between the UAE and Latin American countries, which provide the ideal platform for a synergistic future – the relations at present are far from optimal.

There is an urgent need to address the challenges that are impeding the robust growth of this relationship.

To facilitate this, the Abu Dhabi-based Emirates Centre for Strategic Studies and Research and Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy, in co-operation with Fundacao Getulio Vargas in Brazil, are convening a workshop of scholars, diplomats and policymakers on Tuesday in Rio de Janeiro.

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The Track 1.5 dialogue will explore their relations from a comprehensive economic-sustainability-technology policy lens and facilitate evolving innovative strategies to develop the multifaceted opportunities and mitigate the pitfalls.

Under the umbrella of the annual Hili Forum in

While the average growth in gross domestic product for the region is 2 per cent, countries such as Nicaragua, Honduras and Costa Rica are tipped to grow between 3 per cent and 4 per cent. With the desire to increase its GDP to \$800 billion in less than a decade, the UAE is pursuing an active economic diplomacy agenda, including exploring the potential for opening new missions in Latin America.

The UAE also signed comprehensive economic partnerships agreements – or Cepas – with Chile, Costa Rica and Colombia last year. These agreements reduce tariffs, streamline customs procedures and foster investments in key sectors. More Cepas are being explored with other Latin American countries, including the Mercosur bloc comprising Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, among others.

Another overlap between the UAE and Latin America is the Brics grouping, which includes Brazil as a core member. The UAE officially became a full member of Brics last year. This membership aligns with the Emirates’ vision to strengthen its role as a global trade hub

of sync with reality.” These are harsh words for a country whose ties with the Middle East go back at least five millennia — ties that have remained uninterrupted and been nourished over the centuries with fresh inputs so that they meet the changing needs and interests of both sides.

So, why these criticisms? India’s diplomatic approach to the Middle East has been bilateral and transactional. It has built very substantial relations with all the regional states, but only on a bilateral basis; it has largely avoided taking a collective view of the region and has avoided engagements through regional cooperation platforms. And it has assiduously avoided any active involvement with issues relating to Middle Eastern security and stability.

Talmiz Ahmad

This approach, ideal in peacetime, has been found inadequate amid the horrendous killings that have defined Israel’s response to the Hamas attacks of Oct. 7, 2023, and the wanton spread of its attacks to the West Bank, Lebanon and Syria, and to Iran itself, in which it was joined by the US. No wonder Gandhi said that “we cannot remain silent in the face of such destruction.”

But recent developments have also raised new challenges for India’s core interests. India’s hands-off approach as far as security issues are concerned has provided opportunities for other nations to play a leading role in addressing matters of regional security by facilitating engagements between hostile neigh-

bors and encouraging rival Palestinian factions to interact with each other. There is more. Last month, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations organized a joint conclave with the Gulf Cooperation Council states and China as part of their effort to expand and diversify economic links with other major partners in the face of challenges posed by the US administration. The tripartite joint declaration contained strong ASEAN criticisms of Israel and backing for the peace efforts of the GCC states. Former Indian diplomat Gurjit Singh noted that the declaration affirmed that the ASEAN has matured and is “no longer content to remain a bystander in global affairs.” Gandhi wrote in her

article that there was still time for India to “course-correct” and act “clearly, responsibly and decisively.” The first step in the proposed course correction would be for India to affirm the core principle that will guide Indian diplomacy: a commitment to strategic autonomy and the realization of a multipolar world order in which India will be a robust voice of the Global South, recalling its role in the Non-Aligned Movement during the Cold War.

To end the sense of strategic drift that some commentators have noted, India’s diplomacy will also need to exhibit a fresh focus on engagement with its immediate and extended neighborhoods — South, West, Central, Southeast and Northeast Asia, and the Indian Ocean. This will call for the replacement

of the outdated bilateral approach to important relationships with the shaping of collective regional approaches, with regular interactions on matters of geopolitics and geo-economics at specially designed regional platforms.

India’s substantial abiding links with the Middle East, founded on energy, trade, investments, joint ventures, connectivity projects and technology partnerships — all brought together by the presence of India’s 9 million-strong resident community — will ensure that this region will command its principal attention. But India’s new approach will also include an important place for dialogue on issues of security and stability with a view to shaping a regional comprehensive security arrangement.

THE last 21 months of military conflicts in large parts of the Middle East have presented complex challenges to the interests of several regional and extraregional states. Not surprisingly, given its historic links with the region and its substantial political and economic ties with regional states, India’s responses to various aspects of the conflicts have been closely scrutinized by commentators. It has been noted that, on four occasions, India abstained on UN General Assembly resolutions calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza that were backed by most members of the Global South.

Sonia Gandhi, the president of the opposition Congress Party, last month wrote an article criticizing the country’s

“muted stance” on the conflicts in Gaza and Iran, describing this as a “surrender of moral values.” She attacked the free hand enjoyed by Israel in “an atmosphere of impunity” and insisted on the reaffirmation of India’s support for the two-state solution to fulfill Palestinian aspirations.

Another writer said that India’s diplomatic balancing act now appeared to be “unraveling (and) revealing inconsistencies” under strong geopolitical challenges. Even India’s former National Security Adviser M.K. Narayanan felt that Indian foreign policy was facing an “existential crisis” amid serious diplomatic challenges, such as those posed by the new US administration and the wars in the Middle East, where India seemed “out

Indian diplomacy and the Gaza crisis

‘Govt determined for combating inflation’

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for National Food Security & Research, Rana Tanveer Hussain on Wednesday said that government is committed to combating inflation and ensuring the availability of essential commodities at reasonable prices in order to facilitate the common man in the country.

The minister chaired the meeting of the Steering Committee on sugar import, which thoroughly reviewed the availability, quality, import mechanism, and price control of sugar in the country.

It was unanimously decided to take immediate measures to avoid any potential shortage or unnecessary price hikes and to ensure timely relief to the public while maintaining

market balance, said a press release.

The meeting decided that the import of sugar will be carried out through the Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) to ensure transparency, quality control and efficient government oversight. To facilitate this process, the government has exempted all duties and taxes on sugar imports so that sugar can be made available to the general public at affordable prices and inflationary pressures can be eased.

Initially, sugar will be imported in two phases. In the first phase, a tender for 200,000 metric tons of sugar will be issued, followed by another tender for 150,000 metric tons after one week. These quantities have been determined in

line with immediate market requirements and anticipated demand in the coming weeks.

The imported sugar will be of premium quality, meeting standard market expectations—specifically, the coarse-grain variety commonly used by consumers. Additionally, post-shipment inspection will be strictly enforced to ensure that quality standards are upheld.

Speaking on the occasion, Rana Tanveer Hussain emphasized that the decision is part of the broader vision to provide direct relief to the public. A streamlined and active system will be deployed to guarantee the timely distribution of imported sugar across the country, leaving no room for hoarding or profiteering.

The minister further stressed that the government is not only focused on availability but also on maintaining a balance between quality, accessibility, and affordability. He expressed hope that this strategic intervention will help stabilize sugar prices in the local market and significantly ease the financial burden on consumers.

He reaffirmed that the Ministry of National Food Security & Research remains in constant coordination with all relevant departments to prevent any future shortages or price shocks. He reiterated the government’s commitment to public welfare, emphasizing that all decisions are being taken with utmost transparency and in the best interest of the people.

Pakistan Stock Exchange witnesses bearish trend, loses 826 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Stock Exchange’s (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 Index witnessed bearish trend on Wednesday, losing 826.20 points, a negative change of 0.62 percent, closing at 132,576.99 points against 133,403.19 points last trading day.

A total of 905,743,882 shares were traded during the day as compared to 1,206,524,901 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 30.530 billion against Rs 42.028 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 478 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 200 of them recorded gains and 254 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 24 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were TPL Properties with 65,908,965 shares at Rs 10.68 per

share, Kohinoor Spinning with 62,445,020 shares at Rs6.65 per share and PIA Holding Company with 39,774,070 shares at Rs 23.23 per share.

PIA Holding Company LimitedB witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 1,964.91 per share price, closing at Rs 21,614.00, whereas the runner-up was Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited with Rs 249.85 rise in its per share price to Rs 23,488.49.

Hoechst Pakistan LimitedB witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs96.45 per share closing at Rs 3,350.63 followed by Pakistan Services Limited with Rs44.28 decline in its share price to close at Rs833.57.

Rupee loses 10 paisa against US Dollar

The Rupee on Wednesday depreciated by 10 paisa against the US Dollar in the interbank trad-

ing and closed at Rs 284.46 against the previous day’s closing of Rs 284.36.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 286 and Rs 287 respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by Rs 1.18 to close at Rs 333.11 against the last day’s closing of Rs 334.29, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese yen depreciated by 01 paisa and was traded at Rs1.93 against Rs.1.94, whereas a decrease of Rs 1.10 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 386.61 as compared to the last day’s closing of Rs 387.71.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 03 paisa and 02 paisa to close at Rs 77.44 and Rs

75.84 respectively.

Gold prices dip by Rs3,000 to Rs351,500 per tola

The price of 24 karat per tola gold decreased by Rs.3,000 and was traded at Rs.351,500 on Wednesday as compared to its sale at Rs.354,500 on the last trading day. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported.

The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also decreased by Rs2,572 to Rs.301,354 from Rs. 303,926 and for 10 grams of 22 Karat it went down by Rs.2,357 to Rs.276,251 from Rs. 278,608. The rates of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs.3,841 and Rs.3,293 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$33 to \$3,292 from \$3,325, whereas that of silver remained stagnant at \$36.57, the Association reported.

PCJCCI think-tank discusses food processing sector’s potential

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan-China Joint Chamber of Commerce & Industry (PCJCCI) underscored the vast potential of Punjab’s food processing sector as a cornerstone for bilateral economic collaboration and export growth under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) during a think-tank session held at PCJCCI Secretariat on Wednesday.

PCJCCI President Nazir Hussain stressed Punjab’s unmatched agricultural capacity, inviting deeper Chinese investment and

technology transfer to strengthen value-addition and foreign exchange earnings. He added that Punjab cultivates 57 per cent of Pakistan’s total cropland — over 17 million hectares — which supports 80 per cent of the nation’s wheat and 95 per cent of citrus, 82 per cent of guava, and 66 per cent of mangoes.

Joint chamber’s Senior Vice President Brig (ret’d) Mansoor Saeed Sheikh said that the province contributes nearly 19 per cent to national GDP, making its economy the largest of any

Pakistani region. He highlighted that Punjab’s food processing industry stands on the cusp of a transformative expansion — leveraging its massive raw agricultural output, strategic location, CPEC’s infrastructural momentum, and access to Chinese technology and capital. With targeted policy support and international certification standards, the sector is poised to drive job creation, rural prosperity, and export diversification.

Zafar Iqbal, PCJCCI Vice President, stressed that more than 2,300

Chinese firms are operating across CPEC-linked sectors in Pakistan, signaling strong investor confidence. He said that CPEC Phase-II includes robust cooperation in food processing, post-harvest handling, cold storage, and mechanisation. He disclosed that a Chinese agri-tech group, Sichuan Litong Food Co., plans a 1,000-acre pepper pilot in Multan with local processing plants in Lahore and Multan, targeting a \$3 billion annual trade in processed food by 2026.

Salahuddin Hanif, Secretary General, reaffirmed China’s strong interest in food-sector JV’s (joint ventures), emphasizing technology transfer to reduce post-harvest losses and boost exports.

He also highlighted opportunities in fruit pulp, frozen concentrates, potato products, vegetable canning, olive and corn oil, IQF — and called for leveraging SEZs like Sheikh-upura’s Quid-i-Azam Business Park. Promoting modern technologies like IQF freezing, cold chain infrastructure, precision agri-machinery, and seed development can boost the food sector.

Pakistan, Rwanda economic relations to grow stronger

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Nasir Mansoor Qureshi participated in celebration of Rwanda National Day, held to commemorate the country’s independence and progress.

On this occasion, President ICCI extended his heartfelt congratulations to the Ambassador of Rwanda and the Defence

Attaché, Lt. Col. Shyaka Kajugiro Ismail, said a press release.

He highlighted the deep-rooted and cordial relations between Pakistan and Rwanda, reaffirming his commitment to enhancing existing trade and business collaboration between the two nations.

Nasir Qureshi also took the opportunity to engage in discussions with

Ambassadors and High Commissioners of other friendly countries, focusing on strengthening economic cooperation and exploring avenues for bilateral and multilateral trade.

ICCI Executive Member Waseem Chaudhry was also present at the event who also highlighted the Chamber efforts to expand Pakistan’s global economic outreach.

Pak-Indonesia posses huge potential in bilateral economic, trade ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Chargé D’Affaires (CDA) of the Indonesian embassy in Islamabad, Rahmat Hindiarta Kasuma, on Wednesday said that Pakistan and Indonesia have huge potential in bilateral economic and trade ties, and both countries can work on different avenues of the economy.

My conclusion is indeed, Pakistan has huge potentials, immense people, amazing landscapes, magnificent hospitality, talented youth, and finally appetizing foods, the Chargé D’Affaires (CDA), of Indonesian embassy in Islamabad Rahmat Hindiarta Kasuma said this while addressing the ‘Pre-CEO Summit Corporate Dinner’ here along with Minister and President and Founder CEO Club

Pakistan, Ijaz Nisar.

The Chargé D’Affaires (CDA), of Indonesia said that doing economic diplomacy in Pakistan is not only about discussing business, investment, trade, and tourism, but it should be accompanied by speaking on a positive image.

Meanwhile appreciating the efforts of President and Founder CEO Club Pakistan, Ijaz Nisar, he said that for this reason, why the Indonesian embassy has strong partnership with the CEO Club, beside becoming exclusive club for the great CEOs, this Club also emphasizes a lot on the importance of very positive image of Pakistan in the world.

Rehmat said that this Club maintains optimistic spirits amid challenges. He

let us strengthen our “Look East” Vision by further engagement with the Indonesian economy and the Association of SouthEast Asian Nations (ASEAN) economy.

During 1.5 years of my term as the Indonesian Charge d’Affaires, my team and I have set up the very high target of priority areas of diplomacy in economic relations and People-to-People contact.”

“We double even triple the Indonesian Embassy’s engagement with the broader business community in various cities in Pakistan, from Islamabad and Rawalpindi, to Lahore, Gujrat, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Faisalabad, Karachi and Multan, and then furthermore to Peshawar, Quetta and “we do not forget other

regions like Skardu, and Hunza.”

Based on our experience, selling in Indonesia in Pakistan is challenging. Vice versa, selling Pakistan in Indonesia is also not easy, he said.

The great stories of the relations between President Sukarno and Quid Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, mutual support during the 1960s, he said.

According to the President, CEO, Club, Mr Ijaz Nisar, there is an opportunity in any crisis and difficulty and our partnership has showcased huge success in the recent Trade Expo Indonesia in Jakarta and the first CEO Summit in Bali, he said.

Indonesia CDA said that for the first time in the history of “Trade Expo Indonesia,” Pakistan



HYDERABAD: A vendor displaying fresh dates to attract customers on hand cart at Latifabad.

Workers’ remittances increased F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The workers’ remittances increased by 26.6 percent during the fiscal year 2025 as compared to the corresponding period of last year, said the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on Wednesday.

The remittances reached to US\$ 38.3 billion during July-June 2024-25 as against the remittances of US\$ 30.3 billion received during July-June 2023-24.

Similarly, on a year-on-year basis, the worker’s remittance went up by 7.9 per cent in June 2025 to \$3,406 billion from \$3,158 billion during the same month last year.

Remittances inflows during June 2025 were mainly sourced from Saudi Arabia (\$823.2 million), United Arab Emirates (\$717.2 million), United Kingdom (\$537.6 million) and United States of America (\$281.2 million).

Rs21b robust revenue collected

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The Islamabad Excise and Taxation Department has achieved an unprecedented Rs 21.34 billion in revenue collection for the fiscal year 2024-25, eclipsing all previous records. Director Excise Islamabad, Bilal Azam, announced the landmark achievement to the media on Wednesday, noting a substantial Rs 4.11 billion increase compared to the Rs 17.23 billion collected in the previous fiscal year.

Azam attributed this remarkable accomplishment to the guidance of Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Randhawa, and the ongoing backing of DC Irfan Nawaz.

“The Excise Department has experienced dramatic revenue growth over the past five years,” Azam stated. “This year’s record was achieved through citizen-fueled reforms and the implementation of modern, convenient services.”

Programs such as doorstep vehicle registration, online token tax payments, and other digital platforms were instrumental in boosting revenue figures. The broadened reach of Excise services into Islamabad’s thoroughfares, recreational areas, and commercial hubs has considerably improved access and public convenience, leading to higher taxpayer compliance and record-breaking revenue.

Minister reaffirms govt’s commitment

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, here on Wednesday reaffirmed the government’s commitment to maintaining an inclusive and ongoing consultative process with key stakeholders in the business community.

During a meeting with Pakistan Business Council (PBC) delegation, led by its outgoing CEO Ehsan Malik and the incoming CEO Javed Kureish, the minister appreciated the council’s constructive, particularly acknowledging the value of its policy input, research, and the extensive sectoral

data regularly shared with the government.

According to press release issued by finance division, the minister welcomed transition in leadership at the PBC and extended his full support to the incoming team.

He underscored the importance of evidence-based policymaking and informed the delegation that the Tax Policy Office had been relocated from the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to the Finance Division, with a view to institutionalizing tax policy formulation and strengthening engagement with forums such as the

PBC.

Senator Aurangzeb emphasized that the government places high value on the perspectives and feedback of the business and industrial community, and in keeping with this approach, the consultative process for the federal budget 2025–26 was initiated earlier than usual this year.

This step was taken to allow greater time for dialogue, reflection, and integration of a wide range of recommendations received from chambers, trade bodies, and business forums into the budget-making process, he added.

Pakistan sees economic surge with SIFC initiatives

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Pakistan has witnessed significant advancements in key economic sectors over the past two years under the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). Landmark projects in manufacturing, tourism, and privatization are driving this economic expansion.

The launch of a refrigerated container service by the National Logistics Cell (NLC) signifies a major improvement in cold chain logistics. The council’s support in establishing a semiconductor sector has successfully positioned

Pakistan within the global tech market.

A notable stride in environmentally friendly transportation has also been achieved through the introduction of electric vehicle solutions.

This initiative is a joint effort with BYD and large corporations. Foreign direct investment has seen a substantial rise of 41% annually, reaching \$1.6 billion in minerals, production, and power sectors.

The development of special economic zones, aimed at increasing exports, is projected to create 500,000

employment positions by 2028.

Tourism is expected to flourish with visa-on-arrival facilities extended to 126 nations and visa-free access granted to Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

The refurbishment of 44 guesthouses in Gilgit-Baltistan has generated over 4,000 job opportunities. The government, with backing from international bodies, is also proceeding with the privatization of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) and distribution companies (DISCOs).

Cotton crisis threatens Pakistan’s economy

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Renowned financial analyst and former Islamabad Chamber of Commerce President, Shahid Rasheed Butt, cautioned on Wednesday that Pakistan’s declining cotton output poses a grave danger to the nation’s financial stability. While lauding Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif’s recent focus on farmer and textile industry concerns, Butt emphasized that pronouncements are insufficient. He insisted that the cotton industry’s revival hinges on prompt, unified, and tangible measures.

In a statement, Butt acknowledged the government’s positive steps, including setting the cotton support price at Rs 8,500

per 40 kg and establishing a high-level committee. However, he stressed the need for immediate implementation for these initiatives to be effective.

Butt disclosed that Pakistan’s cotton output has plummeted by over 60 percent in the last ten years, falling from 14 million bales to a mere 5.5 million.

This drastic reduction has increased Pakistan’s reliance on imported cotton, depleting valuable foreign reserves and impacting export competitiveness. Estimates suggest Pakistan will import 5.4 million bales in the 2024-25 fiscal year at a cost of roughly \$1.9 billion, further burdening the current account and foreign exchange reserves,

and applying pressure on the local currency.

The business leader highlighted that cotton and textiles contribute nearly 60 percent of Pakistan’s total exports and about 11 percent of its GDP. A crisis in this sector not only harms the wider financial system but also affects millions of farmers, workers, and manufacturers. Declining yields have led to the closure of over 60 percent of the nation’s ginning factories, escalating unemployment.

Butt attributed the cotton sector’s decline to factors like substandard seed quality, climate shifts, elevated production expenses, sugarcane cultivation expansion, and inconsistent policies.



In brief

PSB to hold National Bodybuilding C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Bodybuilding Federation (PBBF) in collaboration with Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) will organize the First National Bodybuilding & Physique Sports Championship 2025 on Thursday at Liaquat Gymnasium, Pakistan Sports Complex, Islamabad. Athletes from across the country will participate in various competitive categories including Senior, Junior, Masters, Athletic Physique, and Sports Physique, said a press release. The championship is poised to serve as a selection platform for the upcoming 57th Asian Bodybuilding & Physique Sports Championship 2025, scheduled to be held in Bangkok, Thailand from August 18 to 25. According to organizers, Class 1 winners in each category will be considered for national team selection to represent Pakistan at the prestigious international event. The Asian Championship is officially registered with the Ministry of Sports, Thailand and recognized by the country's Olympic Committee, lending it significant international importance. Alongside the championship, the PSB will also conduct an Anti-Doping Awareness Seminar aimed at educating athletes, coaches and officials about the importance of clean and fair competition. All participants of the seminar will receive participation certificates.

Pakistan secure four medals

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's Junior Poomsae National Taekwondo Team delivered a stellar performance at the Daegu 2025 World University Taekwondo Festival in South Korea, clinching four medals in various Poomsae events. According to Pakistan Taekwondo Federation, the national contingent earned two gold, one silver and one bronze medal in the prestigious event. In the Recognized Poomsae – Under 30 Female Individual category, Zena Sheraz claimed the gold medal, while Syed Muhammad Zohaib Qadri stood atop the podium in the Recognized Poomsae – Junior Male Individual event with a gold medal to his name. In the Recognized Poomsae – Junior Female Individual category, Kaneez Zainab secured a silver medal, followed by Zymal Naqvi who earned a bronze medal for Pakistan.

Tottenham agree £55m fee for West Ham's Kudus

LONDON (Agencies): Tottenham have agreed a £55m fee with West Ham to sign midfielder Mohammed Kudus. The Ghana international is now set to have a medical before signing a long-term contract. BBC Sport reported on Saturday that the Hammers had rejected an initial £50m but a deal has now been clinched. Kudus, who has an £85m release clause, joined West Ham in a £38m deal from Ajax in 2023. He has made 65 Premier League appearances for the club, scoring 13 goals and providing nine assists. At least six top clubs have enquired about Kudus in recent weeks but well-placed sources told BBC Sport the 24-year-old had prioritised a move to Spurs. Meanwhile, Tottenham are also exploring a move for Brentford forward Yoane Wissa.



LONDON: Belinda Bencic of Switzerland in action against Mirra Andreeva of Russia during the Women's Singles Quarterfinal match on day ten of The Championships Wimbledon 2025.

Pakistan storm into U-18 Asia Cup 2025 semi-finals

DAZHOU (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan's rising stars have stormed into the Under-18 Asia Cup semi-finals after beating China 2-1 at the Dazhou National Hockey Training Centre. Competing in China, the young Pakistani squad has flown the green flag high, dominating their group with an unblemished record. They registered their fourth consecutive win in an impressive display of talent and determination. The green shirts got off to a flying start to the high-stakes clash as Hassan Shahbaz netted the opener in just the 11th minute through a field goal. The scoreline remained intact at 1-0 until halftime despite four penalties shared between the two teams in an eventful second quarter. The goal drought eventually culminated late in the third quarter when Ali Hanzala doubled Pakistan's

lead through another well-executed field goal. China, however, were quick to pull one back as Jiaying Lin converted a penalty corner in the same minute. The hosts then made several efforts to net the equaliser but Pakistan goalkeeper Ghulam Mustafa denied them any chance of forcing their way back into the game, ensuring the scoreline remained intact at 2-1. The victory extended Pakistan's unbeaten run to four matches as they topped Group A standings with 12 points and a goal difference of 21, scoring 25, while conceding only four. Pakistan started their Men's U18 Asia Cup 2025 campaign with a ruthless 8-0 victory over Hong Kong before routing Sri Lanka 9-0. They then faced Bangladesh in their third match and prevailed 6-3, which had put them within

touching distance of semi-final qualification. The national team will now face Malaysia in the semi-final on July 11. The other semi-final will feature Japan taking on Bangladesh, setting the stage for an exciting conclusion to the championship. **Squad:** Mohammad Usman, Atif Ali, Asam Junaid, Mohammad Abdullah Farooq, Abdullah Awan, Zubair Lateef, Mohammad Yaseen, Mohammad Ali Taj, Ghulam Mustafa, Ali Hamza, Ali Hanzala, Aamir Sohail, Adeel Afzal, Mohammad Zaman, Mohammad Hussain, Mohammad Shaheer, Hasan Shahbaz, Yaseen Jamshaid. **Team Management:** Shafqat Malik (Manager), Mukhtar Ahmed, Touseeq Ahmed, Masood-ur-Rahman (Coaches).

CM Balochistan Football Gold Cup to kick off on July 15

QUETTA (APP): Secretary for Sports and Youth Affairs Balochistan, Durra Baloch, has announced that the highly anticipated All Pakistan Chief Minister Balochistan Football Gold Cup will kick off on July 15, with the opening match scheduled for 6:30 PM at the Ayub Sports Complex Football Ground in Quetta. The inaugural game will feature a thrilling contest between Baloch Club Nushki and Afghan Club Chaman. Speaking at a meeting convened to review preparations for the tournament, Durra Baloch emphasized that the event will provide young people

with an opportunity to witness high-quality football games among the players across the country. He said that the Balochistan government, under the direction of Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti and Advisor for Sports Meena Majeed, is fully committed to promoting sports in the province and is utilizing all available resources to ensure the success of such events. The Gold Cup will feature participation from more than 50 football teams from across the country. Durra Baloch highlighted that all matches during the tournament will be held

day and night, ensuring a continuous display of football talent and enthusiasm throughout the competition. He further assured that the Department of Sports Balochistan will provide complete facilities for both players and spectators, stressing that no negligence or lapses in arrangements will be tolerated. The initiative aims not only to promote football but also to create a healthy and engaging environment for the youth of Balochistan. The All Pakistan CM Balochistan Football Gold Cup is expected to be one of the largest football events in the region this year.

Red Bull sacks Christian Horner after 20 years as F1 team boss

LONDON (AFP): Christian Horner was sacked on Wednesday by Red Bull after 20 years as team principal of the Formula One outfit. The 51-year-old has been in charge since the team was formed in 2005 and has led them to eight drivers' titles and six constructors' crowns. Dutchman Max Verstappen has won the past four drivers' titles for Red Bull, matching the achievement of Sebastian Vettel, who dominated for the team from 2010 to 2013. Horner's dismissal as CEO and team principal comes 17 months after he was accused by a female colleague of "inappropriate behaviour". The Englishman was twice cleared over the claims by the Formula One team's parent company, Red Bull GmbH, and his wife, former Spice Girl Geri Halliwell, stood by him. But there have been rumblings of discontent within the team, with several high-profile departures, while form on the track has nose-dived. "Red Bull has released Christian Horner from his operational duties with



effect from today (Wednesday) and has appointed Laurent Mekies as CEO of Red Bull Racing," said a statement from Red Bull GmbH. Oliver Mintzlaff, CEO of corporate projects and investments, paid tribute to Horner, thanking him for his "exceptional work". "With his tireless commitment, experience, expertise and innovative thinking, he has been instrumental in establishing Red Bull Racing as one of the most successful and attractive teams in Formula 1," he said. "Thank you for everything, Christian, and you will forever remain an important part of our team history." "Difficult to drive" Horner's departure comes amid speculation that Verstappen may be tempted to jump ship to Mercedes. Although the 27-year-old

Dutchman won the title last year, he only topped the podium twice in the final 14 races of the season. Red Bull has won only two races this season, with McLaren taking their place as the team to beat. Verstappen is languishing 69 points behind championship leader Oscar Piastri at the halfway point of the campaign and finished a disappointing fifth at Sunday's British Grand Prix, having started on pole. He showed frustration with his Red Bull during the race, saying: "This car is just so difficult to drive." Other key figures responsible for the team's previous dominance have left since last year, including design guru Adrian Newey, who signed for Aston Martin, and sporting director Jonathan Wheatley, who joined Sauber. Max Verstappen's father, Jos, a former F1 driver, had expressed his dissatisfaction with Horner even after he was cleared of the charges of inappropriate behaviour. He warned the team was in danger of being "torn apart" if Horner remained.

Karachi secures spot in Quaid-e-Azam trophy 2025-26

KARACHI (APP): The Regional Cricket Association (RCA) Karachi has expressed strong appreciation for Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi's recent assurance that Karachi's team will participate in the Quaid-e-Azam Trophy 2025-26 and that no new system is being introduced. The announcement came shortly after a high-level meeting of RCA Karachi's zonal officials held at the association's secretariat under the chairmanship of President Nadeem Omar, said a news release on Wednesday. The session focused on concerns raised over PCB's earlier decision to include only eight teams in the upcoming domestic season, which sparked unease among Karachi's cricket community. Attendees included Joint Secretary Tauseef Siddiqui, Chairman Tournament Committee Khalid Nafees, Coordinator Azam Khan, and presidents, secretaries, and officials representing all seven zones of the association. The participants unanimously urged President Nadeem Omar to take up the matter with the PCB chairman and request the restoration of the previous tournament format, highlighting Karachi's historical contributions to Pakistan cricket. Officials emphasized that Karachi has won the Quaid-e-Azam Trophy 21 times and has produced a long list of legendary cricketers who have brought pride to the nation. Their concerns were soon addressed when PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi, while speaking to the media, clarified, "No new system is being introduced. Karachi's team will definitely be part of the 2025-26 Quaid-e-Azam Trophy.

Bencic stuns Andreeva to set up Swiatek semi-final

LONDON (Agencies): Switzerland's Belinda Bencic stunned teenager Mirra Andreeva in a tense match to reach a maiden semi-final at Wimbledon, where she will face eighth seed Iga Swiatek. Russian seventh seed Andreeva frequently looked out of sorts while Bencic was a picture of calm in a 7-6 (7-3) 7-6 (7-2) win on Centre Court. World number 35 and former Olympic champion Bencic served for the match at 5-4 and was two points away from the last four. But a match that had gone blow for blow throughout was only heading one way and Bencic secured victory in a second-set tie-break. After an emotional reaction when she booked her place in the last eight, the 28-year-old simply raised her arms in the air and smiled as she advanced again. By contrast, 18-year-old Andreeva was in tears as she left the court having missed the chance to play in a second major semi-final. Earlier, Poland's Swiatek had booked a maiden semi-final at the All England Club with a 6-2 7-5 victory over Russian Liudmila Samsonova. World number one Aryna Sabalenka and American 13th seed Amanda Anisimova will contest the other semi-final. It has been a remarkable year for Bencic, who won the Abu Dhabi Open in

February just 10 months after giving birth to her daughter Bella. But in Andreeva she faced one of the favourites for the title at the All England Club. Having won two WTA 1,000 titles - the tier of tournaments below the majors - she has climbed to a career-high ranking of sixth in the world this year. In a match of long, intense rallies the pair could barely be separated. Bencic saved break points at 5-5 in the first set but was the more composed in the tie-break while Andreeva lost her way and, despite producing some rapid serves, she could not match Bencic's level. That was the first set Andreeva had dropped at the tournament having previously cruised through her matches. But nerves and frustration were evident from the teenager while Bencic quietly went under the radar with an assured performance. Andreeva saved break points at 2-1 in the second set and Bencic did the same at 4-4 before finding the crucial break of serve to give herself an opportunity to serve out the match. Andreeva immediately responded to force what felt like an inevitable tie-break as her coach Conchita Martinez - a former Wimbledon champion herself - watched on with an anxious look on her face in the coaching box.

But Andreeva's nerves seemed to get the better of her and a double fault handed Bencic four match points and she took her chance at the second opportunity. **Swiatek's pursuit of sixth Grand Slam title continues** Former world number one Swiatek showed her battling qualities to come out on top of a tricky second set and beat Liudmila Samsonova 6-2 7-5 to reach her first Wimbledon semi-final. "It feels great. I got goosebumps after this win," Swiatek, 24, said. "I really worked hard to progress on this surface. This year I will just work with it and myself." After sealing the win, Swiatek was spotted stuffing some Wimbledon branded towels in her bag, before doing a 'shushing' motion to the camera. The Pole has previously revealed she has been smuggling them out of SW19 at the request of friends and family. Swiatek is enjoying her best form on grass with this victory her eighth on the surface in 2025 - the most she has managed in a season. She appears to be peaking at just the right time as she chases a first Wimbledon title, although some erratic serving at times in the second set will remind her she cannot let her guard slip as she bids for a sixth Grand Slam title.

Ancelotti gets year's jail for tax fraud

MADRID (AFP): A Spanish court on Wednesday sentenced former Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti to a year in jail for tax fraud committed in 2014, a punishment that will not oblige the Brazil coach to serve prison time. Prosecutors alleged the Italian created a system of shell companies to hide extra earnings during his first spell as Real Madrid manager in 2014 and 2015, notably through image rights. They said the 66-year-old, one of the most successful managers in football history, failed to pay more than one million euros due to undeclared earnings in those years, seeking four years and nine months' jail against him. Ancelotti denied having intentionally committed fraud at his highly publicised trial in April, saying he never realised a scheme allowing him to collect some of his salary in image rights would see him pay less tax. A Madrid court announced it had convicted Ancelotti for "an offence against the treasury... to the punish-



ment of one year in prison" and a fine of 386,361 euros (\$452,821). Ancelotti showed a "conscious desire to evade the payment of taxes on the income obtained from the exploitation of his image rights, through artificial mechanisms", the court wrote in a ruling. "The actions are blatantly fraudulent and the structures used do not conform to a real economic logic. The deliberate concealment of income through opaque structures and entities in tax havens proves a fraudulent intent," it added. But the former Chelsea, Bayern Munich and Paris Saint-Germain boss, who no longer lives in Spain,

will not serve jail time because the sentence is less than two years and he has no criminal record. The court cleared Ancelotti of the fraud allegation for the 2015 tax year, saying it could not conclude "beyond reasonable doubt" that his fiscal residence for that year was in Spain. He joins a list of football greats who have fallen afoul of Spain's crackdown on stars who have not paid their due. Former Real Madrid boss Jose Mourinho received a one-year suspended sentence after pleading guilty to tax fraud in 2019. Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo were both found guilty of tax evasion and received prison sentences that were waived for being first-time offenders. Ancelotti's glittering career has seen him win a record five Champions League titles as a manager and lift the European Cup twice with AC Milan as a player. The former Italy midfielder left Real Madrid to become Brazil boss at the end of last season after a rare trophyless campaign.

Evenepoel wins stage five as Pogacar claims yellow jersey

CAEN (Agencies): Remco Evenepoel won the individual time trial on stage five of the Tour de France as Tadej Pogacar took the yellow jersey from Mathieu van der Poel. Belgium's Evenepoel, who is the world and Olympic champion in the discipline, lived up to his billing as favourite on the 33km route around Caen with a stunning performance. The Soudal Quick-Step rider finished 16 seconds quicker than Slovenia's Pogacar, with Italy's Edoardo Affini, third, 33 seconds back. "I gained positions at every checkpoint. The pacing was perfect and everything was on point, I'm super happy," said Evenepoel. "I did what I had to do to take as much time as possible and step up in GC [General Classification]. It's kind of the same situation as last year, so I'm happy with that. It's a big step towards the podium, but there's still a long way to go. "Everybody knows what's coming next week and the week after. One year, I will come to win the Tour but it's a bit too early this year." Pogacar was the big ben-



eficiary of the day after an excellent ride of his own as his main GC rival, Jonas Vingegaard, toiled. The Dane, who has won the Tour twice, ended the race against the clock in 13th to ship over a minute to three-time champion Pogacar, with Evenepoel moving up to second in the GC standings 42 seconds behind. Vingegaard is fourth overall, with promising French rider Kevin Vauquelin 14 seconds ahead of him. Dutch rider Van der Poel came home in 18th and drops to sixth. The result also means that Pogacar becomes the first rider to wear the yellow, green and polka-dot jerseys at this stage in the

Tour since Belgium's Eddy Merckx in 1970. **Stage five results** 1. Remco Evenepoel (Bel/Soudal Quick-Step) 36mins 42secs 2. Tadej Pogacar (Slo/UAE Team Emirates-XRG) +16secs 3. Edoardo Affini (Ita/Visma-Lease a Bike) +33secs 4. Bruno Armirail (Fra/Decathlon-AG2R La Mondiale) +35secs 5. Kevin Vauquelin (Fra/Arkea-B&B Hotels) +49secs 6. Florian Lipowitz (Ger/Red Bull - BORA - hansgrohe) +58secs 7. Ivan Romeo (Spa/Movistar) +1mins 02secs

8. Joao Almeida (Por/UAE Team Emirates - XRG) +1min 14secs 9. Lucas Plapp (Aut/Jayco AlUla) +1min 17secs 10. Pablo Castriello (Spa/Movistar) +1min 18secs **General classification after stage five** 1. Tadej Pogacar (Slo/UAE Team Emirates-XRG) 17hrs 22mins 58secs 2. Remco Evenepoel (Bel/Soudal Quick-Step) +42secs 3. Kevin Vauquelin (Fra/Arkea-B&B Hotels) +59secs 4. Jonas Vingegaard (Den/Visma - Lease a Bike) +1min 13secs 5. Matteo Jorgenson (US/Visma-Lease a Bike) +1min 22secs 6. Mathieu van der Poel (Ned/Alpecin - Deceuninck) +1min 28secs 7. Joao Almeida (Por/UAE Team Emirates - XRG) +1min 53secs 8. Primož Roglič (Slo/Red Bull - BORA - hansgrohe) +2mins 30secs 9. Florian Lipowitz (Ger/Red Bull - BORA - hansgrohe) +2mins 31secs 10. Mattias Skjelmose (Den/Lidl-Trek) +2mins 32secs.



In brief

Over 9.5kg drugs seized

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Police carried out successful anti-drug operations and arrested six drug dealers, recovering more than 9.5 kilograms of drugs from their possession. According to a spokesman, Waris Khan Police held drug supplier and seized 5.2 kg drugs from his possession. The dealer has a criminal record and is also wanted in cases of attempted murder, kidnapping, possession of illegal weapons, and hurling death threats. Similarly, Sadiqabad Police apprehended 04 drug dealers and recovered 3.9 kg drugs from their custody. While, Dharmyal Police arrested another drug dealer and seized 560 grams of drugs from him. Police have registered separate cases and further investigation was in progress. Police said the accused will be presented in court with valid evidence. City Police Officer CPO Syed Khalid Mehmood Hamdani stated that all available resources were being used to eliminate drugs from society.

IRSA releases 414,366 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 414,366 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 457,432 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1522.06 feet which was 120.06 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 305,700 cusecs and 279,400 cusecs, respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1181.50 feet, which was 131.50 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 24,766 cusecs and 8,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 320,180, 333,700, 139,571 and 74,280 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 50,600 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 49,343 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

IESCO advises to adopt precautionary measures

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Electric Supply Company has (IESCO) asked the general public to adopt precautionary measures due to rainy spell as a little carelessness or negligence can lead to fatal accident. The spokesman advised the general public to follow precautionary measures for the sake of saving life and important belongings. Do not touch naked wire and get repair defective wiring, use three pin plug along with proper earthing while using iron, washing machine, refrigerator etc, put wooden piece, flapper or dori under your feet and also use rubber sole shoes, it further said. Use rope while drying clothes instead of electrical wires and do not use water pipe for it. Instruct children's to avoid going near electricity installations while playing. Do not keep hold the rope of cattle with poles or stay wire and remain at least hundred feet away from high tension wires. It further advised that electrocuted person must be separated from wire with piece of wooden or dry cloth. Do not allow any person or animal to go near the broken electricity wires till the arrival of concerned IESCO staff. Meanwhile, Chief Executive IESCO Muhammad Naef Jan also directed the staff to remain alert at complaint offices and to make sure the timely redressal of consumer complaints.

Gwadar & Lyari highways be completed soon: Aleem Khan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan has endorsed a stern directive to officers of the National Highway Authority (NHA), urging them to accelerate work on all ongoing projects and ensure their completion without further delays. Emphasizing that no more relaxation and time will be given, he declared this as the final notice for the officers, asking that severe disciplinary action will be taken in cases of negligence, inefficiency or unwarranted delays. Chairing a high-level meeting at the NHA Headquarters, Aleem Khan stressed the need to swiftly complete construction, repair and expansion projects related to Highways and Motorways. He directed that the main highway connecting Gwadar Port must be completed by March 2026 while also calling for expedited work on the strategic Hoshab-Awaran-Nall Highway in

Balochistan, said a press release issued here on Wednesday.

In Karachi, the minister instructed for the early completion of the Lyari Expressway, ensuring high construction standards, development of green areas and tree plantation along the vacant land of NHA. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, he ordered faster progress on the Mansehra-Naran-Jalkhad Expressway.

Abdul Aleem Khan further directed NHA to initiate indiscriminate operations to eliminate encroachments along Highways and present him an implementation report in this regard. He emphasized that the prime minister himself will inaugurate the major projects of NHA therefore they must be fully completed in all respects.

Based on his recent field visits, Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan instructed the development of well-equipped rest areas along the Islamabad Murree dual

carriage Expressway to cater to tourist needs including family wash-rooms and refreshment facilities. He also called for a nationwide survey of existing roadside spaces along NHA Highways and ordered their reallocation through new contracts, aligned with regional requirements.

During the meeting, Aleem Khan was briefed on NHA's revenue streams and other key matters. He directed that all NHA projects like toll plazas should be offered through open bidding, ensuring transparent participation for all citizens. He also instructed to launch a public awareness campaign to promote this initiative.

The meeting was attended by the Federal Secretary for Communications, CEO of NHA and senior officers from Lahore, Karachi, Quetta and Peshawar via video link who briefed the minister on the current status of projects within their respective zones.

Minister orders probe into illegal deer hunting

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr. Musadik Malik has ordered a thorough inquiry into the illegal hunting of a deer in the Margalla Hills National Park, calling the act a serious violation of wildlife protection laws.

The Ministry confirmed APP on Wednesday that a First Information Report (FIR) has been lodged, and that the investigation is proceeding in accordance with legal protocols. The individuals accused in the case have applied for pre-arrest bail — a constitutional right — while authorities continue to gather evidence.

“This Ministry is fully committed to a transparent and impartial investi-

gation,” said Dr. Malik. “All those found responsible for harming wildlife and violating conservation laws will be held accountable under the law.”

The incident has sparked concern among environmentalists and wildlife advocates, given the ecological importance of Margalla Hills National Park — a protected area known for its rich biodiversity and critical role in Islamabad's natural heritage.

Dr. Malik reaffirmed the government's firm stance on enforcing wildlife protection measures, adding that the Ministry will not tolerate cruelty against animals or breaches of conservation regulations. “The protection of our wildlife and ecosystems is not just a legal obligation, but a

moral one,” he stated.

The Ministry emphasized that such acts of illegal hunting undermine years of efforts aimed at preserving endangered species and protecting ecological balance.

Margalla Hills National Park, part of the Himalayan foothills, is home to several protected animal species, including leopards, barking deer, and a wide variety of birds. Poaching and unauthorized hunting have long been challenges in the area, prompting calls for more stringent surveillance and enforcement.

The Ministry has urged the public to report any suspicious activities within protected zones and reiterated its resolve to safeguard Pakistan's natural heritage for future generations.



ISLAMABAD: Former Federal Minister Maulana Asad Mehmood called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. —APP Photo

ANF arrests 3 suspects

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), conducting 4 operations across the country, recovered as many as 240,915 kilograms of drugs worth more than Rs 18.6 million and arrested 3 suspects, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Wednesday.

He informed that 365 grams of Ice were recovered from tennis balls, concealed in a parcel destined for Portugal via a courier office in Gulberg, Lahore.

As many as 2 kgs of Ice and 150 grams of weed were recovered from a vehicle near Data Darbar, Lahore and 2 suspects were arrested. In another operation, 3.6 kgs of hashish were recovered from the possession of a suspect at Wazirabad Road near Samrial, Sialkot.

Similarly, 234.8 kgs of hashish, concealed for smuggling drives, were recovered from Mir Jatt, a remote region in Gwadar. Cases have been registered against the arrested suspects under the Narcotics Control Act, and further investigations are underway.

Father kills daughter

RAWALPINDI (APP): A father on Tuesday killed his daughter for not deleting a TikTok account from her mobile phone in the limits of Rawat Police Station, a Rawalpindi Police spokesman said on Wednesday.

The Rawat Police received information that the accused had asked his 16-year-old daughter to delete her TikTok account and shot her dead for refusing to do so. The spokesman said the victim's family termed the incident a suicide. However, the police after investigation found that it was a murder in the name of “honour”.

The accused, who went into the hiding after the incident, was nabbed by the police on Wednesday, he added. City Police Officer Syed Khalid Hamdani, taking notice of the incident, had ordered the registration of a case and the immediate arrest of the accused.

CPO Hamdani said that violence and crimes against women and children were intolerable. He directed the Rawat Police to prepare the challan against the accused with solid evidence to get him convicted from court. The Rawat Police registered the case and managed to arrest the alleged “killer” in a short time, the spokesman said.

He expressed these views during his visit to the under-construction 1530 MW- Tarbela 5th Extension Hydropower

RWMC set up anti-dengue awareness camp

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) organised a camp on Wednesday in the Dhoke Khabba area, Union Council 43, to raise awareness among the masses about the importance of cleanliness and the prevention of dengue.

According to a RWMC spokesman, the RWMC's communication and social mobilisation team distributed pamphlets emphasizing the importance and effectiveness of cleanliness, as well as the hazards of dengue. The spokesman called upon the residents to leave no place wet or with stagnant water, as the present spell of rains had increased the threat of dengue larvae breeding.

Furthermore, he appealed to the citizens to cooperate with the sanitation staff to keep the city clean and throw garbage in waste containers and avoid dumping it on roads, drains and open plots.

Rawalpindi hospitals banned mobile phone uses by the staff

RAWALPINDI (APP): Following the orders by the Punjab Government to ban the use of mobile phones in the public sector hospitals across the province, Rawalpindi hospitals have started strict compliance by directing the staff to refrain from cell phone use during duty hours. The allied hospitals have also initiated monitoring of the compliance in different premises including operation theaters, ICUs, ITCs etc.

The three day deadline to implement the orders is ending on Thursday after which strict actions will be taken against the violations. Rawalpindi hospitals are in full swing to come up with the compliance of the decision.

“Holy Family Hospital has already been practicing this, however strong monitoring has been placed to further eliminate any disruption in medical services particularly in OTs, ITCs, ICUs and other intensive care areas”, said Dr. Ejaz Butt, Medical Supertendent HFH in a brief interaction with APP

here on Wednesday. Dr. Ejaz further informed that copies of the directives have been displayed on the key areas of the hospital.

“No negligence will be tolerated in this regard”, he said when asked about the possible actions on violations of the decision. The Punjab government sought a compliance report to be submitted to the department within three days. Dr. Ejaz informed that himself was directly supervising the cell phone ban-drive.

Similarly DHQ Teaching Hospital and Benazir Bhutto Hospital have also taken steps to follow the government's orders.

To enhance patient care and maintain professionalism in public sector hospitals, the Specialized Healthcare & Medical Education Department of Punjab government has banned the use of mobile phones by hospital staff during duty hours. The decision addressed the staff below BPS-18 in critical areas such as Emergencies, ICUs, NICUs, and Operation Theaters, with exceptions

made for those in administrative roles.

A spokesman of DHQ Teaching Hospital told APP that all measures were being taken by the hospital management in this regard.

“We have communicated with the staff directly and by displaying the notification on the main doors of all required premises”, he said. To facilitate communication, the government has ordered the use of pager systems for critical alerts, such as Code Blue and Code Red, to ensure swift and uninterrupted responses.

Violations of the ban may lead to disciplinary action under the Punjab Employees Efficiency, Discipline, and Accountability (PEEDA) Act, including potential termination. Dr Yousaf Khan, a classified Neuro Surgeon at DHQ Hospital said that excessive use of mobile by hospital staff is dangerous during the duty hours, particularly at sensitive areas. He informed that the hospital was completely observing the Punjab government directives.

Tarbela 5th Extension on track for electricity output in 2026

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Water Resources Mian Muhammad Mueen

Wattoo has said that government is committed to adding clean, green and environment-friendly electricity to the national grid on priority for providing relief to the consumers and stabilising the national economy.

Under-construction mega hydropower projects by WAPDA, including Tarbela 5th Extension, are the priority projects of the government's least-cost energy generation plan, and the Ministry of Water Resources is providing full support to WAPDA for completion of these vital projects as per their timelines.

He expressed these views during his visit to the under-construction 1530 MW- Tarbela 5th Extension Hydropower

Project, said a press release issued here on Wednesday.

Chairman WAPDA Naveed Asghar Chaudhry also accompanied him. Member Power, Member Water, GM Tarbela Dam, GM Power Tarbela, GM/PD Tarbela 5th Extension and Project Managers of the Consultants and the Contractors were also present on the occasion.

During the visit, the Minister reviewed progress on key components of the Project, which included power intake, penstock, powerhouse and connecting tunnel. The Minister was briefed about site-wise progress as well as timelines for completion of critical activities.

He was informed that construction work on all seven key work fronts are progressing at a good pace, while electricity genera-

tion from the Project is expected to begin in 2026.

Expressing satisfaction over the progress, the Minister urged upon the Management to complete the Project in accordance with the timelines.

It is pertinent to mention that WAPDA is constructing Tarbela 5th Extension Hydropower Project on Tunnel No. 5 of Tarbela Dam. World Bank and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank are providing US\$ 390 million and US\$ 300 million respectively for construction of the Project. With installed power generation capacity of 1530 MW, the Project will provide 1,347 billion units hydel electricity to the National Grid on the average every year. Installed capacity at Tarbela Dam will rise to 6418 MW from 4888 MW after completion of Tarbela 5th Extension Project.

ICT admin conducts crackdown on encroachments

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration continued its ongoing operations against illegal encroachments and professional begging in the federal capital and arrested 13 violators.

Assistant Commissioner (City) led a series of operations in different sectors of Islamabad to remove encroachments and control street begging.

In separate actions, 13 individuals were detained for setting up unauthorized stalls and occupying public spaces in F-7 and G-7. These operations were carried out as part of efforts to ensure public areas remain accessible and organized.

During another inspection in Sector F-6, two beggars were apprehended and shifted to the local police station. The action was part of the administration's regular monitoring in commercial and residential zones to

discourage panhandling.

Officials said that repeated warnings had been issued to violators regarding illegal occupation of footpaths, green belts, and roadside spaces, but many continued to ignore the notices. Enforcement teams then moved in to dismantle the structures and temporarily detain those found in violation. The Assistant Commissioner stated that such encroachments not only disrupt pedestrian movement but also affect the overall environment of the city's marketplaces and streets.

Meanwhile, the crackdown on beggars is aimed at curbing organized begging groups that often operate under networks across the capital. Authorities have been instructed to identify such elements and take appropriate legal steps.

All those detained were shifted to the relevant

police stations for further processing under applicable municipal and legal provisions. The ICT administration confirmed that similar operations will continue in other parts of the city, and that no tolerance will be shown to those violating public space rules. The enforcement teams are also working in coordination with police and other departments to ensure smooth and lawful urban management.

The public has been urged to cooperate with the administration and avoid supporting unauthorized vendors or street beggars, as it encourages illegal activity and disturbs civic order. Authorities said the purpose of these operations is to maintain a clean and orderly environment in the capital, ensuring that public facilities remain available to everyone without obstruction.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination Syed Mustafa Kamal addressing the launching ceremony of Yellow Vehicles for Infectious Medical Waste Management. —APP Photo

Kamal stresses for safe disposal of hospital waste

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, Syed Mustafa Kamal on Wednesday emphasized that the safe disposal of hospital waste is a crucial and effective step in protecting the public from various diseases.

He made these remarks while addressing a ceremony organized by the Indus Hospital and Health Network on the occasion of the provision of Yellow Vehicles for Infectious Medical Waste for medical waste disposal.

Speaking at the event, the Federal Minister said, “Prevention is better than cure, if we don't take precautionary measures, diseases will overtake us.”

He highlighted that, with the support of the Global Fund, Indus Hospital has provided specialized medical waste disposal vans in 15 districts across Pakistan, including the federal capi-

tal, Islamabad, where one van will be handed over to the District Health Officer (DHO), Islamabad.

Minister Kamal warned that hospital waste is extremely hazardous and, if not properly managed, it becomes a source of disease spread. “Protecting people from disease is our topmost priority,” he stated.

He noted that, according to health experts, preventive healthcare is far more effective than curative approaches. “The first step in healthcare is to ensure people do not fall sick in the first place. Unfortunately, preventive measures have not been prioritized historically.”

Highlighting environmental and public health challenges, the minister pointed out that 68% of diseases in the country are caused by the consumption of contaminated water.

He stressed that access to clean drinking water, population control, and safe disposal of toxic hospital waste are critical

components of any disease prevention strategy.

“In addition to building hospitals and ensuring the availability of medicines, we must focus significantly on disease prevention. Rapid population growth is complicating healthcare delivery and increasing the patient load in hospitals,” the minister added.

Dr. Abdul Bari Khan, President of Indus Hospital, said that progress in the health sector is not solely dependent on constructing new hospitals or supplying modern equipment rather developing systems that protect communities from falling ill in the first place.

“These vehicles reflect our commitment to infection control, environmental safety, and sustainable healthcare,” Dr. Bari stated.

“We are grateful for the support of the federal government and hopeful that this model will be replicated across the country.”

16 telecom sites to be set up

PUL-I-ALAM (Pajhwok): Sixteen new telecom sites are being established in remote areas of six districts and the capital of central Logar province based on recommendations from the Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology, an official said on Wednesday. Sediq Ahmad Sediqi, the governor's spokesman, told Pajhwok Afghan News that the sites were being set up in areas currently deprived of telecommunication and internet services.

Drugs seized, five held

FEROZKOH (Pajhwok): More than 11 kilograms of narcotics have been seized and five individuals arrested on charges of drug smuggling, robbery and harassment of people in western Ghor and Badghis provinces, officials said on Wednesday. Ghor police spokesman Maulvi Abdul Rahman Badri told Pajhwok Afghan News: "Security forces detained two drug smugglers during an operation in Akhta Khana village of Ferozkoh city".

Ambassador pledges support for Afghanis

KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Gul Hasan, the Ambassador of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, reassured the Afghan community during a recent meeting in Moscow that the embassy is committed to providing effective services to Afghans residing in the Russian Federation.

In a statement released by the Afghan embassy, Ambassador Hasan expressed gratitude for the positive actions taken by the Russian Federation and

underscored the importance of strengthening bilateral relations through Russia's recognition of the Islamic Emirate. He emphasized his determination, alongside his colleagues, to address the challenges faced by Afghans in Russia promptly.

The meeting also featured contributions from tribal elders and student representatives, who expressed their appreciation for Russia's recent supportive stance towards

Afghanistan.

They conveyed optimism that this development would not only enhance bilateral relations but also aid in resolving the issues faced by the Afghan diaspora in the host country.

Ambassador Hasan's commitment and the community's enthusiasm highlight a hopeful chapter in Afghanistan-Russia relations, focusing on collaboration and support for Afghans abroad.

Samangan launches 11 development projects

SAMANGAN (BNA): The Samangan Rural Rehabilitation and Development Department has announced the launch of eleven key development projects aimed at enhancing the region's infrastructure and improving living conditions for local residents.

The projects encompass a wide range of improvements, including the construction of roads and culverts, building dams, developing water canals, erecting retaining walls, and establishing water reservoirs. Additionally, the projects will repair existing water supply networks and install new water taps.

Yama Faramarz, head of construction engineering at the department, shared with Bakhhtar News Agency that the total investment for these projects amounts to 11,245,000 Afghanis, funded by Norway.

The implementation will be carried out by the ACTED organization in collaboration with various local departments, including Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Agriculture and Livestock, and Energy and Water, specifically in the Hazrat Sultan district of Samangan province.

These projects will benefit 18 villages within the district and are expected to improve transportation, access to drinking water, and irrigation for farmlands, impacting over 30,500 residents. Moreover, the initiatives are projected to create numerous job opportunities for local people.

Islamic Emirate rejects ICC arrest warrants

KABUL (BNA): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has firmly dismissed recent announcements from the International Criminal Court (ICC) regarding the arrest and prosecution of its senior officials.

Mawlawi Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesman for the Islamic Emirate, declared that such actions are inconsequential to their resolve and stance.

Mujahid reiterated the Islamic Emirate's non-recognition of the ICC, stating, "We do not recognize any organization

called the International Criminal Court, nor do we have any commitment to it." He criticized the ICC for its perceived inaction regarding ongoing violence, particularly the situation in Gaza, where he claimed that the genocide of women and children is occurring daily.

He emphasized that the leadership of the Islamic Emirate has established a unique form of justice in Afghanistan, grounded in Islamic Sharia law. Mujahid condemned the ICC's actions as a sign of



hostility towards Islam and Sharia, asserting that accusations against the princi-

ples of Islamic law are disrespectful to the beliefs of Muslims worldwide.

Returning refugees in Kandahar province seek shelter and jobs

KANDAHAR CITY (Pajhwok): A number of Afghan refugees who have recently returned from Pakistan to southern Kandahar province are urging the government to provide shelter and employment opportunities as they work to rebuild their lives.

Local officials say efforts are underway to

address the challenges facing the returnees.

According to UN data, nearly three million Afghan refugees have returned to the country since September 2023—many of them forcibly deported.

Afghan families continue to arrive daily from both Iran and Pakistan.

Abdul Razzaq, who recently returned with his family from Karachi to Kandahar, said they were forced to leave behind most of their belongings.

"We longed to return home, but now that we are here, there is no work and no shelter. Starting any business requires money—and we simply don't have the means. I don't even know where to begin; we have no money and no contacts here who could support us," he said.

Mohammad Akram, another returnee living in a rented house with his four children, said he has only one brother in Kandahar, who is also struggling financially.

"In Pakistan, at least I could earn a little through

Labour and meet our daily needs. But here, there's no work. I don't have money to start even a small business. My brother is poorer than me—he can't even afford an evening meal," he said.

Akram urged officials to provide returnees with basic housing and employment opportunities to help them transition out of hardship.

Abdul Rashid, another returnee, shared similar concerns: "If we are just given a place to stay and a job to support our families, we would be content. Right now, we live in a rented house with no job—without work, how can we pay rent or meet other needs?"

In response, Sardar Mohammad, an official at the Department of Labour and Social Affairs, said vocational training programs are available to help returnees acquire skills and generate income.

He added that efforts are ongoing in coordination with several organizations to expand vocational education and job opportunities

for returnees.

Ishaq Idris, head of returnee registration at the Department of Refugees and Repatriation, reported that around 15,000 families—comprising an estimated 78,000 individuals—have returned to Afghanistan via the Spin Boldak crossing since April.

He noted that humanitarian agencies have provided these families with essential assistance.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) announced that a working committee, chaired by Deputy Minister Maulvi Mohammad Zahid Ahmadzai, met on Wednesday to discuss employment initiatives for returnees.

The ministry said special lists containing the names of nearly 2,000 returnees had been shared with relevant institutions for potential job placements. Additionally, plans are underway to expand technical and vocational training programmes for returnees across the country.

2,000 returnees referred to IEA organs for jobs



KABUL (Pajhwok): A list of nearly 2,000 returning migrants was submitted to relevant institutions at a meeting of the Committee to Provide Job Opportunities, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) said on Wednesday.

A statement from the ministry said the meeting was chaired by Deputy

Minister Maulvi Mohammad Zahid Ahmadzai, and was attended by representatives of the Ministries of Refugees and Repatriations, Industry and Commerce, Economy and Agriculture.

The meeting emphasized MoLSA should launch vocational training programs for returning Afghans across the country so they could be absorbed

into labour market more quickly.

It said during this meeting, a list of names and profiles of nearly 2,000 returning migrants was shared with relevant institutions in order to provide them with jobs.

Recently, a large number of Afghan refugees are returning from Iran to the country on a daily basis.

Russia's move to encourage other countries to recognize IEA



KABUL (Pajhwok): The Center for Strategic Studies of the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs held a scientific discussion on Russia's recognition of the Islamic Emirate, hoping the move would encourage other countries to follow suit.

Last week, Russia recognized the Islamic Emirate, becoming the first country to do so, saying that the official recognition of the Afghan government would further enhance bilateral cooperation

between the two countries in diverse fields.

In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the Center for Strategic Studies held a detailed discussion at an academic meeting on the background, factors and future opportunities of Moscow's decision and its importance in Afghanistan's foreign policy.

Dr. Abdul Hai Qanet, Director of the Third Political Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs, told the meeting that although the Islamic Emirate enjoyed positive relations and interactions with many countries in light of its balanced foreign policy, Russia's move would create many opportunities not only in bilateral relations with the country, but also in relations and interactions with other countries.

He said Russia had various concerns after the Islamic Emirate's takeover, but those concerns were gradually

addressed in the past four years.

According to him, security, positive policies, the decisive fight against drugs, the political will of the Islamic Emirate for constructive interaction, and some other issues led Russia to recognize the government in Kabul.

Qanet added existing obstacles to economic and political cooperation were completely done away with following Russia's recognition of the Islamic Emirate, paving the way for many opportunities.

He said the move will also encourage other countries to recognize the Islamic Emirate because currently "very positive relations" have been established with many countries in the region beyond media statements and with focus on important working issues.

The ministry noted the head of the Center for Strategic Studies and many other colleagues of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also shared their views on the issue, and called Russia's move an important development for the foreign policy of the Islamic Emirate.

Charity transports returnees to provinces free of charge

HERAT CITY (Pajhwok): The Bayat Foundation has launched a 10-day campaign transferring refugees to their native provinces as the number of Afghan returnees from Islam Qala border increases.

Head of Afghan Wireless Telecommunications Company and Bayat Foundation Ehsanullah Bayad announced during his visit to Islam Qala port of western Herat province that they had provided the returnees with facilities like basic services, transfer to their provinces and distribution of food.

Bayad told journalists in addition to distributing food and basic necessities, the foundation would evacuate returnees to their provinces for free for up to 10 days.

"The time has come to help and we must all work together to solve the problems of returnees".

Recently, several passenger companies, in cooperation with the private sector and under the guidance of the Islamic Emirate, have been transporting returnees from the Islam Qala border crossing point to central, northern, and eastern provinces of the country free of charge.

Maulvi Hamidullah Akhundzada, the acting Minister of Transport and Aviation, who led a delegation to the Islam Qala port, said the returning refugees would be transferred to their provinces without any delay or negligence.

Process to assist returnees proceeding continued

KABUL (Pajhwok): Acting Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation Maulvi Hamdiullah Akhundzada says Afghan returnees from Iran would be transferred to their respective provinces without any delay or shortcomings.

He travelled to Islam Qala crossing this morning in western Herat province to assess the situation of returnees arriving from Iran.

Expressing satisfaction with the coordination between government agencies, he said the process to assist the returnees was proceeding with proper order and discipline, with no disruptions observed in the service delivery.

Akhundzada also praised the role of the local population and charitable organizations, saying that public support alongside institu-



tional efforts had played a vital role in the returnees' transportation process.

The Islamic Emirate official stressed that the Ministry of Transport was fully prepared to expand its services in case of an increased number of returnees, and would spare no effort in facilitating their transfer.

He added that the Islamic Emirate's support

to returnees—from transportation to food provisions—was ongoing in close cooperation with the public and relevant institutions, with efforts made to avoid any shortages in the process.

In recent days, the number of Afghan migrants returning from Iran has surged significantly, marking an unprecedented trend.

Drought impacts farms, threatens livelihoods in Ghor

FEROZKOH (Pajhwok): Climate change and consecutive droughts have led to drying of agricultural lands in some parts of western Ghor province, rendering them barren and leaving many farmers in the region struggling to provide for their families.

Agricultural and environmental experts, as well as local farmers, describe the situation as concerning and call for the promotion of modern irrigation techniques to revive agriculture.

Farmers: drought destroy most crops

Hot, scorching winds pass through the dusty hills of Dawlina District and settle on the cracked earth—land that once thrived with greenery and life.

In the midst of this dryness stands 42-year-old Abdul Qasim, his sunburnt face and weary frame beside his field, which used to be fertile and green.

He says that this year, he planted over 200 seers (about 1400 kg) of wheat, barley, and chickpeas, but

due to the drought and lack of water, all his rain-fed crops were destroyed.

He adds: "This year we suffered a great loss. We planted a lot of wheat, barley, and chickpeas on rain-fed land, but it didn't rain at all, and our land remained dry. Even the little wheat that grew burned from the heat, and now our land is barren."

For Abdul Qasim, farming is not just a profession—it's how he sustains his family. But climate change and the absence of rainfall have turned his farmland into dry waste and with no hope of harvesting anything, he no longer knows how he will support his family.

He says: "Our rainfed land always yielded crops thanks to rain. But now there's neither rain nor water for irrigation. How can I get any harvest? I am left bewildered about how to continue my life."

He calls on the Islamic Emirate and agricultural organizations to support

farmers and help them gain access to water resources and modern agricultural tools so they can recover from the damage in the future.

Abdul Qasim is not alone. Many other farmers in this province also complain about ongoing droughts and are worried about their future.

In the dry, silent plains of Dawlatyar district, where the smell of warm dust and burning sun fills the air, 38-year-old farmer Rawzuddin walks with heavy steps toward his withered field—each step a blow to the hopes he buried in that same soil this year.

He gazes into the distance—a place where just a few years ago, wheat swayed in the spring breeze, and good harvests were common. But this year, that landscape is gone.

He says: "This year I planted 150 seers of wheat. I paid for the tractor, bought seed wheat, but it didn't rain, and the crops

didn't sprout. We don't know what to do."

He, too, calls on the caretaker government for help.

Experts: Climate change a triple threat to nature, agriculture, economy in Ghor

Abdul Zahir Tawanah, an agricultural expert in Ghor province, says that rainfall has significantly decreased in recent years, and this ongoing situation has had adverse effects on the environment, agricultural products, and people's livelihoods.

He said: "Unfortunately, drought and water scarcity have had severe negative impacts on people's farming and the environment. All the rainfed lands of our farmers have been destroyed, pastures have disappeared, and people are getting no yield from their lands. Continued drought has worsened people's living conditions in this province."

Tawanah also stresses that farmers can counter

climate change by using advanced agricultural methods and systems, which could improve their production levels.

He added: "I advise all our farmers to use advanced agricultural systems to improve their crops. They should grow plants that mature quickly and are drought-resistant. They should build small dams to collect rainwater and use drip irrigation systems for their crops."

In his view, the Directorate of Agriculture and organizations active in the agriculture sector should launch educational programs for farmers about drip irrigation.

Meanwhile, Abdul Qudus Hedayat, an environmental expert in Ghor, says that ongoing droughts have not only destroyed natural resources but have also caused soil erosion and reduced the fertility of agricultural lands, putting farmers' futures at serious risk.

He stated: "Rainfall this

year was very irregular, which led to a reduction in water resources. Heat and overgrazing caused the vegetation cover to disappear, leading to soil erosion."

He added: "The excessive and deep digging of wells has also led to a drop in groundwater levels."

According to him, the impacts of climate change are not limited to agriculture and the environment—they also affect the local economy.

Economic experts: Agriculture key to market stability

At the same time, Mohammad Nader Sarwari, an economic expert, says that to reduce the negative effects of climate change, there is an urgent need for careful planning, investment in agricultural infrastructure, promotion of modern farming methods, and strengthening the technical and financial capabilities of farmers.

He said: "When the agricultural system collapses,

market prices inevitably rise, and market value declines. Therefore, relevant institutions need to make proper plans and provide better facilities to farmers so they can store their produce and sell it when needed—this will also help boost the economy."

According to him, the Ministry of Agriculture can play a key role in agricultural and economic growth by utilizing advanced agricultural systems.

He emphasized that the government should not only implement drip irrigation systems but also take serious action to preserve and expand natural resources and forests to prevent soil erosion and ensure environmental sustainability.

Officials

Zia-ul-Haq Joya, media officer at the Department of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock in Ghor, acknowledges the concerning impact of climate change but says that the department has taken effective

steps to support farmers and introduce modern agricultural systems.

He stated: "Supporting and guiding farmers, promoting agriculture, and preserving natural resources are among the top priorities of the Directorate. Fortunately, in recent years, with help from the Ministry of Agriculture and some organizations, we provided many educational programs to farmers for agricultural development. We also plan to continue supporting farmers and tackling drought more effectively in the future."

He also emphasized that particular attention is being paid to restoring vegetation and protecting grazing lands to prevent soil erosion.

In his view in cooperation with both government and non-governmental organizations and active community participation, it is possible to improve agricultural conditions and create sustainable agriculture while preserving natural resources.



GAZA CITY: A Palestinian woman sweeps the floor at the site of an overnight Israeli strike on a house, at Shati (Beach) refugee camp.

Turkish Minister lauds PAF's role

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A high-level delegation led by Minister of Defence of the Republic of Türkiye Mr Yasar Güler called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force (PAF) during here Wednesday a Air Headquarters.

The meeting encompassed discussions on evolving regional security dynamics, progress of ongoing defence cooperation and prospects for future collaboration in emerging domains of warfare, said a news release by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR). During the meeting, Chief of the Air Staff highlighted the enduring brotherly ties between Pakistan and Türkiye, emphasizing the common aspirations and strategic convergence that bind the two nations.

He reaffirmed PAF's steadfast resolve to further strengthen bilateral cooperation in the domains of advanced training and aerospace technologies. Both dignitaries also agreed on the establishment of dedicated joint working groups to streamline and accelerate



progress across various sectors of mutual interest. The Turkish Minister of Defence expressed sincere gratitude to the Air Chief for the warm reception and gracious hospitality extended by Pakistan Air Force.

He lauded PAF's exceptional performance under the insightful leadership of Air Chief in the recent conflict with India, commending its operational preparedness and resolute defence of national sovereignty. Highlighting the longstanding fraternal ties between Türkiye and Pakistan, Mr. Yasar Güler conveyed Türkiye's earnest desire to bolster bilateral defence relations through deeper industry-to-industry collaboration.

He particularly emphasized the need to explore joint ventures in cutting-edge domains, including niche disruptive technologies, advanced avionics and

unmanned aerial systems. The Turkish Defence Minister also expressed his appreciation for PAF's continued support in the pilot exchange programme, which he termed as a vital initiative for fostering professional growth and operational understanding between the two Air Forces.

Both dignitaries concurred on finalizing the modalities for enhanced training collaboration and reaffirmed their strong commitment to expanding the scale and scope of joint bilateral and multilateral air exercises. The visit of Turkish Minister of Defence to Air Headquarters, Islamabad reflects the shared commitment of both the brotherly nations to enhance strategic cooperation, solidify defence ties and promote lasting institutional linkages between the Armed Forces of Pakistan and Türkiye.

IHC disposes of petition regarding missing person

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday disposed of a petition regarding the recovery of a citizen Muhammad Ashraf.

Justice Inaam Ameen Minhas heard the case filed by a citizen Sharafat seeking recovery of his brother. During hearing, DSP Legal Islamabad police presented the police report according to which Muhammad Ashraf is arrested in a robbery case registered by Secretariat Police Station. The concerned court sent the accused to jail on May 23, in the same case and later he was also granted post arrest bail. The court disposed of the missing person's case after the police report was produced.

Court orders citizen to take his daughter Poland for meeting with mother: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) ordered a citizen to take his daughter to Poland for meeting with her mother there in a case regarding the custody dispute of the young girl.

The court also sought record on next hearing regarding the online meeting of the girl with her mother. Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani heard the case filed by girl's Polish mother Anna Monica for the extradition of her daughter.

The petitioner's lawyer said that the concerned party is using excuses but is not cooperating, the girl's mother tried to meet her on WhatsApp or other online sites, the father did not arrange a meeting. The girl's father's lawyer, while giving arguments, said that the trial court had dismissed the petitioner's application for custody of the girl.

The court directed that the girl should meet her mother, so arrange a meeting. Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani remarked that we want to keep this case balanced. The lawyer said that due to the court order, my client cannot go anywhere, my client's name is included in the no-fly list. Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani remarked that if the girl stays with her mother for some time, she will adjust something.

Greece to halt migrant asylum processing

ATHENS: Greece will suspend the processing of asylum applications from individuals arriving from North Africa for three months. Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis announced the decision in parliament on Wednesday amid an uptick of arrivals – an estimated 2,000 migrants and refugees have landed on Crete since the weekend, leading to anger among local authorities and tourism operators.

“With legislation that will be submitted to the parliament tomorrow, Greece will suspend the examination of asylum applications, initially for three months, for those arriving in Greece from North Africa by sea,” Mitsotakis told parliament. “Migrants who enter the country illegally will be arrested and detained,” Mitsotakis added. The conservative leader said legislation would be put to a vote in the chamber on Thursday, and that Athens was keeping the European Union informed on the issue. Mitsotakis said Greece's navy and coastguard were willing to cooperate with Libyan authorities to keep migrant boats from leaving the country's territorial waters, or to turn them back before entering Greek waters. — Aljazeera

Highway Authority (NHA) to complete all repair work on the Hazara Motorway within three months and submit a report, on Wednesday. The court's decision came during the hearing of a petition filed by Advocate Amjad Hassan Tanoli, who highlighted the poor condition of the motorway and the increasing number of accidents. The petition stated that the Hazara Motorway is in a dilapidated condition, with potholes and cracks on various stretches, leading to frequent accidents and loss of lives.

The petitioner's lawyer argued that despite repeated requests, the NHA authorities have failed to take notice of the situation and repair the motorway. PHC directed the NHA to complete the repair work within three months and submit a report to the court.

KP CM performs ground breaking of northern section of Ring Road

— reviews law, order situation in merged districts

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur on Wednesday formally performed the ground breaking of the multi billions project of northern section of ring road to address traffic congestion and facilitate urban mobility in the provincial capital.

A total of 8.5-kilometer-long, dual carriageway road with three lanes on each side, extending from Warsak Road to Nasir Bagh would be constructed at an estimated cost of Rs 9.5 billion. Moreover, the project would be executed in four separate packages and include the construction of three bridges and three underpasses. To enhance connectivity, the road would link to University Road at two different points, offering a vital alternate route to ease existing traffic flow.

Addressing the ground breaking ceremony, the Chief Minister said that once completed, the project is expected to reduce traffic pressure on University Road by up to 50%, significantly improving daily commute for citizens. He lamented that despite



the critical need for this missing link of the Ring Road, it was not initiated in time by previous governments. However, he reaffirmed that work has now begun with a firm commitment to completing the project within one year. Additionally, he said that underpasses are also planned on both the Ring Road and University Road to further alleviate traffic congestion in the city.

CM underscored the incumbent government's commitment to reviving the city's glory, stating that a special development package for Peshawar has been included in the current year budget to transform it into a truly “City of Flowers.” He announced that Rs 130 billion has

been earmarked in the current fiscal year specifically for the completion of ongoing development projects and an additional Rs 50 billion will be allocated under the ADP Plus initiative.

Meanwhile, a high-level meeting chaired by Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, was held at the Chief Minister's House in Peshawar to review the law and order situation in the merged districts with special focus on North and South Waziristan. The meeting decided to formulate a joint and consensus-based strategy involving all schools of thought and segments of the population to eliminate terrorism.

It was also decided to convene an All Parties Conference (APC) of political parties in this regard. Parliamentary leaders of all political parties in the provincial assembly and other political figures will be invited to attend the conference. The meeting further decided to constitute a government delegation, which will visit various areas to accelerate the process of public consultation to this end.

Rising terror threats Tribal district officers sans bulletproof vehicles

Syed Adnan

PESHAWAR: Deputy Commissioners and Assistant Commissioners deployed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's tribal and sensitive southern districts are still performing their duties without access to bulletproof vehicles, raising serious concerns over their safety.

According to sources, officers serving in Mohmand, Bajaur, Orakzai, Kurram, North Waziristan, and South Waziristan (Upper and Lower) lack basic security arrangements. Most notably, they are not equipped with bul-

letproof vehicles - a vital safeguard against potential terror attacks.

Recently, an Assistant Commissioner was targeted in a bomb attack in Bajaur, further escalating fears among officers posted in high-risk areas. Following the attack, many officers have voiced serious concerns about their safety, saying they no longer feel secure while on duty.

Meanwhile, terrorism incidents have also surged in districts like Hangu, Lakki Marwat, Tank, and Dera Ismail Khan. Despite the increasing threats, officers in these areas have not

been provided with any bulletproof vehicles either.

Administrative officials believe that the threat of terrorism is growing and that civil administration must receive the same level of protection as the police force to ensure secure operations.

Experts urge the government to take immediate action and provide bulletproof vehicles to all officers posted in tribal and sensitive areas so that they can perform their duties without fear. Grade 20 Officer claim that reports are being compiled regarding the issue.

Russia launches drone strike of war with Kyiv

KYIV (Reuters): Russia targeted Ukraine with a record 728 drones overnight, shortly after US President Donald Trump pledged to send more defensive weapons to Kyiv and aimed unusually direct criticism at Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Ukrainian air defence units destroyed almost all the drones, including through electronic jamming systems, Ukraine's air force said on the Telegram messaging app. The attack, which follows a series of escalating air assaults on Ukraine in recent weeks, showed the need for “biting” sanctions on the sources of income Russia uses to finance the war, including on those who buy Russian oil, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Telegram.

Trump said on Tuesday he was considering supporting a bill in the Senate that would impose steep sanctions on Russia, including 500 per cent tariffs on nations that buy Russian oil, gas, uranium and other exports. “We get a lot of ‘*****’ thrown at us by Putin ... He's very nice all the time, but it turns out to be meaningless,” Trump said at a cabinet meeting.

When asked by a reporter what action he would take against Putin, Trump said: “I wouldn't tell you. We want to have a lit-

tle surprise.” Separately, Europe is working on a new sanctions package against Moscow. Trump, who returned to power this year promising a swift end to the war in Ukraine, has shifted US rhetoric away from staunch support for Kyiv towards accepting some of Moscow's justifications for its full-scale invasion.

But initial rounds of talks between Russia and Ukraine have so far borne little fruit, with Moscow yet to accept an unconditional ceasefire proposed by Trump and accepted by Kyiv. The US president's promise to supply more defensive weapons reversed a Pentagon decision days earlier to stall some critical munitions supplies to Ukraine, despite rising Russian attacks that spread fear in Kyiv.

Following Trump's new promise, Zelensky said on Tuesday he had ordered an expansion of contacts with the United States to ensure critical deliveries of military supplies, primarily air defence. Trump's Ukraine envoy, Keith Kellogg, is due in Rome later on Wednesday to attend a July 10-11 international aid conference on Ukraine, attended by Zelensky and Kyiv's European allies.

The ECHR ruled that Russia had failed to conduct an adequate investigation into the incident, to

cooperate with requests for information or provide legal remedies for survivors. Its lack of cooperation and continued denial of any involvement has caused additional suffering for the victims' relatives, the court said.

Responding to the ruling, Dutch Foreign Minister Caspar Veldkamp said: “Nothing can take away this suffering and grief, but I hope the verdict offers a sense of justice and recognition.” A majority of those on the airliner were Dutch. The other three cases covered by Wednesday's ruling were brought by Ukraine, over pro-Russian separatists accused of abducting groups of Ukrainian children and transferring them to Russia, and over alleged patterns of human rights violations during Russia's war in Ukraine, now in its fourth year.

Ukraine's Justice Ministry, in a statement on the Telegram messaging app, hailed the ECHR ruling as “one of the most important in the practice of interstate cases”. The court is expected to rule in due course on possible damages and compensation but it has no way of enforcing its rulings, especially on a country that no longer recognises its jurisdiction, meaning Wednesday's verdict is mainly symbolic.

Four dead after Houthis sink latest Greek ship

ATHENS (Reuters): Rescuers pulled six crew members alive from the Red Sea on Wednesday and 15 were still missing from the second of two ships sunk in recent days in attacks claimed by Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthis militia after months of calm.

Four of the 25 people aboard the Eternity C cargo ship were killed before the rest of the crew abandoned the vessel, which sank on Wednesday morning after being attacked on Monday and Tuesday, sources at security companies involved in a rescue operation said. The six seafarers who were rescued had

spent more than 24 hours in the water, they said. The Houthis said on Wednesday they had sunk the Eternity C.

“The Yemeni Navy responded to rescue a number of the ship's crew, provide them with medical care, and transport them to a safe location,” the group's military spokesperson said in a televised address. The Houthis claimed responsibility for a similar attack on Sunday targeting another ship, the Magic Seas. All crew from the Magic Seas were rescued before it sank.

The attacks on the two ships revive a campaign by the Iran-aligned fighters,

who had attacked more than 100 ships from November 2023 to December 2024 in what they said was solidarity with the Palestinians, before a lull in their campaign earlier this year. “These vessels have been attacked with callous disregard for the lives of innocent civilian seafarers and as an inevitable but terrible consequence, seafarers have been killed,” leading shipping industry associations said in a joint statement on Wednesday. “This tragedy illuminates the need for nations to maintain robust support in protecting shipping and vital sea lanes.”

31 dead, 532 arrested in Kenya's protests

NAIROBI: The death toll from antigovernment protests in Kenya has surged to at least 31 people, the country's human rights commission said, with at least 107 others wounded during the nationwide marches. In a statement, the National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) also reported two forced disappearances in the wake of Monday's marches, which commemorated a 1990 uprising against undemocratic governance in the East African nation.

The commission, which initially gave a toll of 10 dead and 29 wounded, said it has also counted at least 532 arrests. The marches saw clashes erupt between protesters and police in the capital, Nairobi, as well as the city of Eldoret, with the KNCHR accusing the police of cooperating with armed gangs, who were armed with machetes and spears, in the wake of the violence.

There was widespread destruction of property, too, including supermarkets. The KNCHR said it “strongly condemns all human rights violations and urges accountability from all responsible parties, including police, civilians and all other stakeholders”. Marches marked Saba Saba Day, meaning Seven Seven, which celebrates the date when Kenyans rose up to demand a return to multiparty democracy on July 7, 1990, after years of rule by then-President Daniel arap Moi.

They came amid more than a year of mostly youth-led protests that have swept across Kenya since June 2024, when proposed tax rises triggered anger about wider issues, including the state of the economy, corruption and police brutality. Protesters have also been calling on President William Ruto to resign.

Their actions have been met with harsh repression from the police. The Law Society of Kenya and Police Reforms Working Group said “heavily armed police with military grade weapons were deployed in violation of court orders, using masks and unmarked vehicles to conceal their identities”.

Overall, the Police Reforms Working Group said the protests on Monday took place in 20 of Kenya's 47 counties on Monday, including Nairobi, Kajiado, Nyeri, Mombasa, Kisii, Embu, Kisumu, Kiambu, Meru, Nakuru, Nyandarua, Vihiga, Narok, Kirinyaga, Uasin Gishu, Tharaka Nithi, Makueni, Laikipia and Kakamega. Tuesday's toll takes the number of people dead in the protests since they began last year to more than 100.

This includes at least 16 people killed in nationwide rallies against police brutality and government corruption in Kenya two weeks ago, on June 25. Kenya's President William Ruto said on Wednesday that police should shoot protesters who vandalise businesses in the leg to incapacitate them. — Aljazeera

Visa, TAD policy halts Pak-Afghan trade at Torkham

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Pak-Afghan trade temporarily suspended the last day when entry and exit of transporters were denied without visa and Temporary Admission Document (TAD) here at Torkham border, custom official said.

According to the custom official in Torkham, on the direction of their hiphup, they imposed the law with immediate effect, aimed to regularize the Pak-Afghan mutual trade at the border. He maintained that the transport community had been warned months back and a deadline had been set for them to get their proper travelling documents but they declined to take it seriously.

Hundreds of trucks loaded with export and import merchandise goods stuck at both sides of the crossing, transporters said. Local businessman and leader of Jamiat Ullema-e-

Islam, Fazalrehman (JUI-F), Qari Nazem Gul said that the introduction of new regulations each day had affected the bilateral business between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

He maintained that because of the anti-trade policy, the Afghan market had been completely held by Iran. The Pak authorities enforced visa and TAD conditions for both Afghan and Pakistani transporters and in reaction the Afghan government refused to renew TAD of Pakistani drivers that brought trade to halt, he remarked.

He emphasized the Pak and Afghan governments to grant temporary relaxation to the transporters and set up special desks at the crossing to provide visa and other necessary travelling documents to drivers on the spot.

An Afghan transport union representative across the border Muhammad Nazar Utmanzai expressed their deep concern over the

fresh rule i.e. to make visa and TAD compulsory for drivers to cross-in or out the border and said it would further affect the business activities between the two neighboring countries.

How is it possible for transporters to wait for months to get a visa, he questioned. He added that hundreds of stranded trucks at the border, loaded with fresh fruits and vegetables were being decayed that would inflict financial loss on the traders therefore he asked for provisional relaxation in the visa policy.

Mujib Shinwari All Torkham Clearing Agents Association head said that TAD of majority vehicles had expired therefore entry and exit of the trucks had been restricted. He further said that they met with transport and other concerned high officials to resolve the issue. More than 90% of Pak-Afghan trade had suffered the visa and TAD policy, he added.

Swat tourists tragedy: PHC seeks inquiry

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court has issued a 22-page written order in a petition filed against the drowning of 17 tourists in the Swat River. The court's bench, comprising Chief Justice SM Atique Shah and Justice Fahim Wali, heard the petition and directed the inquiry committee to complete its investigation and submit it within 14 days to the court, on Wednesday.

The court directed the inquiry committee to conduct a transparent and impartial investigation into the incident and submit its report to the court within 14 days. The committee's chairman informed the court that the investigation would be completed within seven days, and the report would be submitted to the government.

PHC directed the Advocate General to submit

a report on the measures taken to ensure tourist safety after the incident. The court also sought information on the steps taken by the administration, police, and Rescue 1122 to prevent similar incidents in the future.

The petitioner's lawyer alleged that despite the availability of two helicopters, no effort was made to rescue the tourists. The court directed the Additional Attorney General to obtain a report from the Civil Aviation Authority and inform the court about the use of helicopters in the rescue efforts.

Court directs NHA to complete repair works on Hazara Motorway within 3 months: two-member bench comprising of Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice SM Atique Shah and Justice Fahim Wali, has directed the National