

Police thwart terror attack
F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police foiled a terror attack on the Gambila police station in Lakki Marwat. According to police spokesperson, 10 to 12 terrorists, taking fortified positions, attempted to launch an assault on the station. However, the police personnel detected suspicious movements and responded swiftly with decisive action.

PTI workers arrested
F.P. Report

LAHORE: Punjab police have taken several of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) workers into custody on Saturday as KP CM Ali Amin Gandapur led convoy reached Lahore to express solidarity with suspended Punjab Assembly MPAs. A group of PTI workers, led by party ticket-holder Yasir Gillani, had gathered at Shadhara Chowk to welcome CM Gandapur's convoy.



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Pakistan's nuclear programme for self-defence: PM

— says govt committed to comprehensive reforms, structural changes for economic prosperity

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday said that the government was committed to complete economic turnaround by carrying out long overdue reforms, structural changes and prioritizing meritocracy.

Addressing a group of Pakistani students who are getting education in the world leading educational institutes and selected for government's internship summer scholars programme of Uraan Pakistan, the prime minister said that when they took charge of the government during 2023, Pakistan was facing a serious threat of default and their fate was hanging in balance.

"The majority viewed that Pakistan would go into default while the minority thought that we will escape this disaster," he said, adding that he held marathon discussions with the IMF managing director and assured that Pakistan would not run into default and achieve the IMF programme.

The prime minister said that at that period, the economy was in bad shape, with galloping inflation touching 38 percent while the policy rate was hovering at 22.5 percent. The business atmosphere in the country was very skeptical.

The prime minister, in his remarks, telecast on national TV channels, further said that they had the huge burden and onus to march in unison and work with sincerity of purpose to change the situation. The joint work paid dividends as now the policy rate was capped under 11 percent. The Uraan Pakistan programme had taken off, he added.

"The road is very challenging as there were long overdue reforms, and the structural changes had not taken place in the last many decades," he observed, and stressed that Pakistan

had to undertake these overdue long structural changes, through untiring and long efforts. He also referred to reforms and digitization of Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and said that they had shown doors to the corrupt people without being influenced.

To weed out corruption in FBR, he was very clear in his mind and took decisions which had never taken without heeding to a culture of any 'Sifarish', he added. The prime minister said that previously, the digitization process in FBR was only confined to papers as no practical step was taken and blamed the corrupt and shrewd elements for hoodwinking the system.

He said that it did not mean that there was a dearth of hardworking and honest bureaucrats who were not given the chance, adding that they had brought forth the best people in FBR, including its chairman, and hired expert consultants. Now, he said digitization was the hallmark of FBR, where working had been converted from papers to multiple initiatives, including AI, and faceless interaction.

Through enforcement of these measures, the revenue collection had risen from Rs12 billion to more than 50 billion rupees in one year, showing massive tax evasion in one sector alone, he maintained. The prime minister further emphasized, "We have a long and thorny journey and facing mountain like impediments, but I assure that we will not shy away from discharging our duties in the service of the nation." He said that he believed in teamwork and never took credit for any achievement, adding that he saluted those who performed and sent those home who did not show well as "delivery is the name of the game; performance is the name of the game."

Termining the economic challenges as difficult, he resolved that they

would have to achieve the targets and if they did not, they would have to face the music. Underscoring the significance of country's youth, he said key of success of this country was in their hands and any expenditure on youth was akin to a future investment on the country.

Later, responding to students' queries, he recollected that during his tenure as chief minister Punjab, his government had initiated scholarship programmes on merit to facilitate the deprived and poor students in the backward areas of the province. To another question, the prime minister said that due to climate change, Pakistan suffered a lot during 2022 floods, with economy faced \$30 billion dollars losses, despite the fact that the country did not contribute a friction of percent in the global greenhouse effects.

The prime minister, responding to a question, said that during the month of May, Pakistan faced India's uncalled aggression in the backdrop of Pahalgam incident. He said that he had offered a straight proposal to India to let this matter be investigated by the international bodies but India never commented on this proposal.

As result of Indian aggression, 55 Pakistanis were martyred and they responded in self-defence by downing six Indian planes, he said, adding while on May 9 and 10, after India's attack, Pakistan responded with full might and taught the enemy a lesson. The prime minister praised the armed forces for showing their professional capabilities and courage, saying Pakistan won the conventional war.

He maintained that Pakistan's nuclear programme was only meant for the peaceful purposes and for the self-defence. The prime minister expressed the hope that students would benefit from the Uraan Pakistan initiative and extended his best wishes for their future.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of overseas Pakistani students selected for Uraan Pakistan Summer Scholars Internship met with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Pak, Bahrain pledge to deepen security ties

MANAMA: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi arrived in Manama, Bahrain, on Saturday on a one-day official visit where he met with his Bahraini counterpart, General Sheikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, to strengthen bilateral security cooperation.

Minister Naqvi received a warm welcome at Bahrain International Airport and was given a guard of honor at the Ministry of Interior Headquarters in Manama Fort. During the high-level meeting, both sides discussed areas of mutual interest with a focus on enhancing security collaboration. Key topics included counter-terrorism, anti-human trafficking, and narcotics control.

The ministers also exchanged views on addressing regional and global security challenges and agreed on revitalizing the Pakistan-Bahrain Joint Security Committee. The Bahraini Interior Minister appreciated Pakistan's support and emphasized that Minister Naqvi's visit would further solidify the strong security relationship between the two countries.

Mohsin Naqvi highlighted the importance of deepening cooperation between the two Interior Ministries, particularly in combating drug trafficking and human smuggling. He extended an invitation to his Bahraini counterpart to visit Pakistan. The meeting was also attended by Bahrain's Deputy Interior Minister Major General Adel bin Khalifa bin Hamad, Chief of Public Security, senior military officials, Pakistan's Ambassador to Bahrain Saqib Rauf, and other high-level diplomatic representatives. — Agencies

Saif blasts Punjab govt

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Barrister Dr. Saif, Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, has criticized the Punjab government over severe urban flooding in Lahore, calling it proof of decades of failed development claims by the Sharif family.

In a statement issued from his office, Barrister Saif said that a few hours of rainfall turned the city's roads into ponds, exposing the hollow narrative of turning Lahore into "Paris." He remarked that Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, once vocal in her development claims, has remained silent in the face of the crisis.

He added that had taxpayers' money been invested in real infrastructure instead of being transferred abroad, the city's condition would not have deteriorated so easily. "Social media optics cannot cover up the reality of public suffering," he stated.

According to Barrister Saif, the flooding has laid bare the gap between rhetoric and performance. Despite being the Sharif family's political base and home city, Lahore lacks the basic infrastructure expected from decades of rule. He concluded by saying that the family's priorities have never included genuine public service.

SJC dismisses 19 complaints against judges

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the Supreme Judicial Council was held, Saturday, under the chairmanship of Justice Yahya Afridi, Chief Justice of Pakistan/ Chairman Supreme Judicial Council at Supreme Court Islamabad.

The meeting was attended by Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah (through video link), Justice Munib Akhtar, Justice Aalia Neelum, Chief Justice Lahore High Court and Mr. Justice Muhammad Junaid Ghaffar, Chief Justice Sindh High Court.

The Council discussed all the agenda items one by one. The proposed draft of Supreme Judicial Council secretariat service Rules, 2025 was approved by the council, while it was resolved that procedure of enquiry and amendments in the Code of Conduct needed to be examined from legal and drafting point of view and required further deliberation.

The Council also examined 24 complaints under Article 209 of the Constitution filed by different individuals. 19 complaints were unanimously decided to be filed while 5 others were deferred for the time being.

The National Judicial (Policy Making) Committee (NJPMC) established a dedicated committee to address enforced disappearances through an institutional framework. The decision was announced during the NJPMC's 53rd meeting, chaired by Chief Justice of Pakistan Yahya Afridi, at the Supreme Court.

The meeting, attended by chief justices of all high courts and the Additional Attorney General for Pakistan, reaffirmed the judiciary's unwavering commitment to safeguarding constitutional rights. The newly formed committee on enforced dis-

appearances will evaluate concerns raised by the executive, as conveyed through the Attorney General.

The NJPMC also took measures to shield judicial officers from external pressures, directing high courts to create formal mechanisms for reporting and resolving such issues within a set timeframe. Significant judicial reforms were approved, including the establishment of a Commercial Litigation Corridor with dedicated courts and benches, and a pilot Double-Docket Court Regime in selected districts. Other initiatives include court-annexed mediation, Model Criminal Trial Courts, and the introduction of district-level mediation and family court facilities.

To enhance judicial consistency, a committee led by Justice (ret'd) Rehmat Hussain Jafferri was formed to develop performance indicators, standardise training, and address service disparities. Additionally, the NJPMC approved the creation of a Professional Excellence Index for lawyers induction, with high courts tasked to submit their proposals within 30 days.

The ethical integration of generative AI in judicial processes was discussed, with the National Judicial Automation Committee assigned to draft a guiding charter. The NJPMC also endorsed standard operating procedures (SOPs) for virtual attendance of undertrial prisoners and police witness statements, and supported judicial training for police officers through academics, as highlighted in a presentation by IGP Punjab. Following a request from the Additional Attorney General, the committee decided that constitutional petitions related to tax and finance will now be heard by division benches instead of single benches in high courts.

KP CM, Afghan envoy discuss relationship

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur held an important meeting with Afghan Ambassador Sardar Ahmed Shakib in Islamabad.

In the meeting, bilateral relations, mutual cooperation and regional stability were discussed in detail. Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur offered to provide support in establishing a cancer hospital in Afghanistan, while also assuring full support in the agriculture sector.

He expressed his determination that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is ready to play every possible role in the welfare of the people of Afghanistan.

In the meeting, both leaders agreed that Pakistan and Afghanistan have a long border, common language, ethnic, tribal and religious ties, which should be further strengthened with peace, brotherhood and mutual respect.

Both sides stressed that they must work together against the nefarious intentions of external powers to provide a secure, stable and peaceful future for the coming generations. Afghan Ambassador Sardar Ahmad Shakib thanked the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government for taking special care of Afghan refugees and reiterated his commitment to further relations

between the two countries.

On this occasion, CM Gandapur announced that he wanted to send a special delegation to Afghanistan, which would play a role of a bridge in promoting trust and harmony between the people of Pakistan and Afghanistan. The meeting was also attended by Chief Minister's Advisor on Information Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif. He was entrusted by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government with the responsibility of liaising with the relevant authorities in Afghanistan to make practical contacts between the two countries more effective and fruitful.

Trump intensifies trade war with 30% tariffs on EU, Mexico

WASHINGTON (Reuters): President Donald Trump on Saturday imposed a 30% tariff on imports from Mexico and the European Union starting on August 1 after weeks of negotiations with the key trading allies failed to reach a more comprehensive trade deal. The fresh tariffs were announced in separate letters posted on Truth Social on Saturday.

Earlier this week, Trump issued new tariff announcements for a number of countries, including Japan, South Korea, Canada and Brazil, as well as a 50% tariff on copper. Mexico slammed US President Donald Trump's latest threat of 30% tariffs Saturday as an "unfair deal," according to a government statement. Mexico was informed of the new duties — which Trump said would come into effect by August 1 — during talks in the United States on Friday.

"We mentioned at the table that it was an unfair deal and that we did not agree," the Mexican economy and foreign ministries said in a joint statement. In response to the US move, European Council President Antonio Costa said that the EU remains in full support of efforts to reach fair agreements with US. "EU will continue to build strong trade partnerships worldwide," said President Costa, adding that free and fair trade drives prosperity, creates jobs and strengthens supply chains. The EU had hoped to reach a comprehensive trade agreement with the US for the 27-country bloc. The European Union had been bracing for the letter from Trump outlining his planned duties on the United States' largest trade and investment partner after a broadening of his tariff war in recent days. The EU initially hoped

to strike a comprehensive trade agreement, including zero-for-zero tariffs on industrial goods, but months of difficult talks have led to the realisation it will probably have to settle for an interim agreement and hope something better can still be negotiated. The 27-country bloc is under conflicting pressures as powerhouse Germany urged a quick deal to safeguard its industry, while other EU members, such as France, have said EU negotiators should not cave into a one-sided deal on US terms.

Trump's cascade of tariff orders since returning to the White House has begun generating tens of billions of dollars a month in new revenue for the US government. US customs duties revenue shrank last \$100 billion in the federal fiscal year through to June, according to US Treasury data on Friday.

Fazl expresses desire for change in KP govt

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman has expressed a desire for change in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).

Addressing a press conference in Peshawar, he stated that terrorism has become a norm in Balochistan, law and order situations are not satisfactory, and Sindh is plagued by theft.

He questioned how terrorism could be eradicated from the country, emphasising that this is a matter to ponder over now. He suggested that change should come to the province, specifically from within the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in KP.

He claimed that during JUI-F's government, there was complete peace and order in the province; and any decision regarding change in KP would be made after consultation within the party. The JUI-F chief remarked that the KP government's majority is "fake" and that the province cannot afford political turmoil. He criticised the merger of the FATA as a wrong decision made without consultation, calling for the reversal of this constitutional amendment in the national interest.

He urged political parties to acknowledge that the FATA merger was a mistake. Fazlur Rehman further stated that differences among political parties are common, but they should not turn into personal enmities. He said that JUI-F would not recognise armed groups, suggesting that PTI could hold talks if it changes its attitude. He shared that young PTI workers visit him, sit with him, and ask him questions.

To a question, he said he could not comment on seat adjustments regarding the Senate. Fazl added that if any issues arise with the PPP, they would sit together to resolve them, and an APC should be convened to address law and order concerns.

Focus on to promote Pakistani films: Tarar

BEIJING (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Attaullah Tarar, reaffirmed the government's commitment to supporting the creative sector, including expanding avenues for film funding and international promotion.

Talking to filmmaker Umair Nasir Ali, director of the internationally acclaimed film "Nayab" who called on him during his official visit to Beijing, he acknowledged the potential of cinema as a tool of soft power and national storytelling. During the meeting, the two sides discussed the growing global recognition

of Pakistani cinema and the role of cultural diplomacy in shaping Pakistan's international narrative, Umair Nasir Ali told APP.

Nayab recently won the Special Jury Award at the SCO Film Festival in Chongqing, China, adding to its impressive list of accolades from film festivals in Europe, North America, and South Asia. The minister congratulated Umair Nasir Ali on the film's success, calling it "A proud representation of Pakistan's creative voice on the world stage."

The two sides also spoke about the film's central

themes - resilience, national identity, and a quiet but profound sense of patriotism. Umair Nasir Ali expressed his gratitude to the Ministry of Information and the Directorate of Electronic Media and Publications (DEMP) for their continued support in promoting cinema that is both meaningful and globally relevant.

The meeting marked a moment of pride and encouragement for Pakistan's creative community as the country continues to make its mark through art, film, and narrative storytelling across borders.

52 Palestinians killed in Gaza from Israeli airstrikes

GAZA STRIP (AP): Israeli airstrikes killed at least 28 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip including four children, while 24 others were fatally shot on their way to aid distribution sites, Palestinian hospital officials and witnesses said on Saturday.

The children and two women were among at least 13 people who were killed in Deir al-Balah, in central Gaza, after Israeli airstrikes pounded the area starting late Friday, officials in Al-Aqsa Martyr's Hospital said. Fifteen others died in Israeli airstrikes in Khan Younis, in southern Gaza, according to Nasser Hospital.

The military did not immediately respond to The Associated Press' request for comment on the civilian deaths. At least 24 people were killed on their way to a food distribution site near Rafah run by an Israeli-backed American organization, said hospital officials and witnesses, including those wounded. The Israeli military said it had fired warning shots toward people it said were behaving suspiciously to prevent them from approaching. It added it was not aware of any casualties

from the incident.

The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation said no incident occurred near its sites. Israel's offensive, sparked by Hamas' attack on October 7, 2023, has killed over 57,800 Palestinians, more than half of them women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. The ministry, which is under Gaza's Hamas-run government, doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants in its count. The UN and other international organizations see its figures as the most reliable statistics on war casualties.

US President Donald Trump has said that he is closing in on another ceasefire agreement that would see more hostages released and potentially wind down the war. But after two days of talks this week with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu there were no signs of a breakthrough. Hamas continues to hold some 50 hostages, at least 20 of whom are believed to still be alive.

Meanwhile, talks aimed at securing a ceasefire in Gaza are stalling over the extent of Israeli forces' withdrawal from the Palestinian enclave,

Palestinian and Israeli sources familiar with the negotiations in Doha said on Saturday. The indirect talks over a US proposal for a 60-day ceasefire are nonetheless expected to continue, the sources said, despite the latest obstacles in clinching a deal.

A Palestinian source said that Hamas has rejected the withdrawal maps which Israel has proposed, as they would leave around 40 percent of the territory under Israeli control, including all of the southern area of Rafah and further territories in northern and eastern Gaza. Two Israeli sources said Hamas wants Israel to retreat to lines it held in a previous ceasefire before it renewed its offensive in March.

The Palestinian source said matters regarding aid and guarantees for ending the war were also presenting a challenge, and added that the crisis may be resolved with more US intervention. The White House said on Monday that Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff, who played a major role in crafting the latest ceasefire proposal, will travel to Doha this week to join discussions there.



CM Punjab launches riot management police force

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has established Pakistan's first-ever dedicated Riot Management Police Force, marking a major milestone in law enforcement and crowd control in the province. The new force has been created within the Punjab Police framework to protect the life, property, and safety of citizens as well as government infrastructure.

The CM said the protection of public life and property is my foremost priority. The cabinet officially approved the establishment of the Riot Management Police, which consists of physically active, capable, and agile officers, trained specifically to respond to volatile situations with professionalism. As per her directive, a comprehensive eight-week professional training programme was conducted for the first batch of personnel at the Police Training Center Farooqabad.

The training followed manuals from the United States, Türkiye, Europe, and other developed countries, and was delivered by experts trained in Türkiye. During the passing-out ceremony, officers demonstrated exceptional crowd-control

drills designed to safely manage violent protest scenarios.

The first phase of the Riot Management Police Force includes 5,000 personnel, out of which 3,000 have successfully completed training. These personnel will be deployed across Punjab's regional headquarters, with 250 officers assigned to each region to ensure swift and organized response to unrest.

Each Riot Management Police team of 250 personnel is supported by 15 specialized sub-units, including First Aid Unit, Drone Surveillance Team, Crowd Engagement Team, Negotiation Team, Crowd Control Unit, Arrest Unit, Evacuation Team, K9 (dog handler) Unit, Sniper and Tactical Response Team. The force has been equipped with advanced crowd-control equipment, safety gear, and riot protection tools, and personnel will receive special allowances based on their professional roles.

CM Maryam Nawaz was briefed that the Riot Management Police has been specially trained to manage all types of crowds, including organized violent groups. The aim is to not only neutralize threats, but also engage with protesters proactively to prevent

damage to public and private property. She stated, "The establishment of this force brings a new dimension to modern governance. By safely controlling angry crowds, it becomes possible to de-escalate tension and prevent chaos." The passing-out parade at Farooqabad was attended by Additional IG Khurram Shakoor, DIG Riot Management Asad Sarfraz, and senior police officers. Outstanding trainees including Inspector Hafiz Khurram Shahzad, Sub-Inspector Shan Ali, ASI Sajjad Riaz, Shahzad Hussain, and Head Constable Naeem Niazi were awarded for their exceptional performance during training.

The CM said that the Riot Management Police will respond to mobs attempting to create fear and unrest in a professional and strategic manner, minimizing both physical damage and reputational harm to Pakistan. "Attacks by violent protesters not only damage property but also tarnish Pakistan's image globally," she observed. She added, "This force is not only a protective shield for the people but also a symbol of our resolve to ensure law and order through discipline, readiness, and advanced training."

Punjab decides to restore 8th grade board exams

LAHORE (INP): Punjab government has decided to restore eighth grade board examinations across the province.

In this regard, Punjab Education Minister Rana Sikandar Hayat said that Punjab Education Curriculum Training and Assessment Authority (Pecta) will conduct grade 8 exams and action plan should be made in the next 30 days.

The Education Minister Rana Sikandar Hayat chaired a meeting of Pecta Board of Governors in this connection. Many important issues related to educational reforms were considered in the meeting. Education Minister directed to make internal examination system from fifth to

seventh grade effective.

Education Minister further directed that fifth, sixth and seventh class exams should be conducted as assessment tests. Education Minister said that internal assessment test procedure should be formulated within a month.

Assessment tests will be used to assess the performance of teachers and students, Education Minister said. "I am restoring the board exams for eighth class," Rana Sikandar Hayat said.

He said a transparent system should be implemented for assessment tests from fifth to seventh.

The Minister said we are considering converting 9th and 11th grade books of Matric Tech into video for-

mat as well.

Academic Committee for Online Tech Education working on the quality of videos. Do it, Minister of Education directed.

He directed that trainers for the training of Matriculation Tech teachers should be selected keeping in mind the previous performance and results. Minister of Education further directed that work should be started now for the timely printing and delivery of books next year.

Delays in printing and delivery of books from next year will be intolerable, Minister of Education warned. Various suggestions were also exchanged in the meeting to reduce the dropout ratio in middle.

Govt takes notice of girl's murder

KARACHI (PPI): The Sindh Human Rights Department has launched an immediate investigation into the murder of 16-year-old Ariba in Karachi's Khokhrapar area. On the directives of the Advisor to the Chief Minister for Human Rights, Veerji Kolhi, Director Agha Fakhar Hussain and a legal team visited the site of the incident.

Agha Fakhar Hussain confirmed that the department reviewed the post-mortem at Jinnah Hospital, which included collecting forensic and DNA evidence. The victim's family was provided full assistance in filing an FIR and initiating legal proceedings. Steps were also taken to facilitate communication between the bereaved family and law enforcement agencies. The Director of Human Rights assured Ariba's family that the department will ensure the pursuit of justice and full accountability in the case.

Bell of Hope a platform for solution to public problems

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori while giving a special message on the occasion of International Day of Hope, has said that Hope Day reminds us that after every darkness, light definitely comes.

The Sindh Governor said that the Bell of Hope installed at the Governor House is a platform that is working on a daily basis for immediate solutions to public problems. He described it as a practical example of hope in the hearts of the people. He described this day as a means of promoting philanthropy, compassion and mutual solidarity and said we should not just talk about hope, but keep hope alive with practical steps.

The Governor clarified that the main objective of the Hope Bell is to provide direct access to the people and provide immediate relief. He said that social harmony and mutual sympathy are the real path to hope.

LLB degree programme reduced to four years

LAHORE (APP): The Higher Education Commission has announced to reduce the duration of the LLB degree programme to four years.

The Punjab Higher Education Commission (PHEC) local chapter sources told APP that a letter had been issued on Saturday to all universities to implement the new four-year LLB degree of HEC, the HEC issued a notification in light of the Supreme Court decision. It is worth mentioning here that earlier, the LLB degree Programme across the country was of five years, the higher education sent a letter to the vice chancellors of all universities across the country. A new syllabus has also been released for the four-year degree programme, universities in this connection have been instructed to update the new syllabus for the degree programme.



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal, addresses the closing ceremony of the Seerah Workshop at Seerah Centre. —APP Photo

Ahsan: National revival lies in Seerah-modern education link

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal, has emphasized that the life and teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) serve as a beacon of guidance for all and must be integrated with modern education to shape the future of the younger generation.

He expressed these views while addressing the concluding session of a two-day training workshop at the Seerat Center in Lahore on Saturday, where he was the chief guest.

He stated that the decline of the Muslim world is largely due to its detachment from education and research, and urged a return to the golden principles of the Prophet's Seerah to regain lost ground.

Calling his participation in the sacred event an honor, Ahsan Iqbal said the greatest treasure of Muslims is the Seerah of the Prophet (PBUH), who lit the torch of knowledge in an age of ignorance and established a just and exemplary system of governance, economics, society, and spirituality. He said that Muslims, who were once pioneers in education and research, are now far behind because of their deviation from the teachings of the Prophet. He regretted that while many make claims of following religion, very few translate those claims into action, which has led to decline and humiliation.

The minister described the youth as the nation's most valuable asset, stressing the need to equip them with both modern education and the moral and ethical foundation derived from the Seerah. He noted that around 2.5 million children are still out of school and highlighted the government's efforts to bring them into the education system through the use of all available resources.

Commenting on the current state of the world, Ahsan Iqbal said that while material progress continues rapidly, moral and spiritual crises are also deepening. In this scenario, the Seerah of the Prophet provides a complete and timeless model that can guide not just individuals but also entire societies. He reiterated that to establish a transparent, just, and welfare-oriented society like the State of Madinah, it is essential to practically implement the teachings of the Prophet (PBUH).

He praised the role of institutions like the Seerat Center, saying they are key to fostering intellectual, moral, and spiritual development. He also shared that the government had established the Seerat Center in a previous term with the aim of promoting research and education focused on the Prophet's life, with particular emphasis on the education and rights of women.

As part of this vision, nine thematic areas have been identified for

focused research and education. Academic chairs will be established in public universities to address topics such as religious harmony, leadership and governance, human rights and justice, ethical business practices, education for sustainable development, social welfare, gender rights, and global peace. Ahsan Iqbal said that the objective is to protect the youth from harmful cultural influences while strengthening their connection with Islamic teachings, noting that peace in the world can only be achieved by adopting the Seerah as a system of life.

He commended the efforts of the Seerat Center's organizers for playing an important role in promoting religious awareness and positive thinking among the youth. The event concluded with the distribution of certificates to workshop participants and the presentation of a commemorative shield to the federal minister.

The workshop was organized by the Higher Education Commission in collaboration with the Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University Islamabad, the National Center for Seerat Studies at Jamia Muhammadiyah Sharif, Chiniot, and the International Center for Seerat Studies. The workshop was attended by a large number of university teachers, students, religious scholars, civil society members, and media representatives.

Entire city dug up in the name of gas pipelines: Pasban

KARACHI (PPI): Pasban Democratic Party Vice Chairman Azam Munhas criticized the incomplete gas pipeline projects across Karachi, questioning when gas supply to homes will be ensured.

He condemned the expenditure on billions of rupees worth of ineffective infrastructure, highlighting the unrepaired roads ravaged by pipeline work, especially during the ongoing monsoon season.

He expressed concerns about gas leaks from the incomplete pipelines, increasing fire hazards, particularly considering the administration's questionable emergency response capabilities. He stated that a mere one percent gas leak causes a loss of 1.5 billion rupees in Sui gas profits, while the current leakage exceeds ten percent, posing a significant financial and safety risk.

He attributed the city's

dilapidation to incompetent governance and lack of inter-institutional harmony, hinting at a potential case study on administrative malpractice for Harvard.

He further criticized the Sindh government's project management and concluded his statement with an accusation against the PPP for systematically destroying Karachi amidst public apathy, despite pressure from donor organizations.



LAHORE: A vendor arranging and displaying the children plastic toys to attract the customers on the footpath at Shera wala. —APP Photo



TransPeshawar

(The Urban Mobility Company)

www.transpeshawar.pk | TransPeshawar | TransPeshawar

Corrigendum

PROVISION OF HELPLINE SERVICES FOR ZU PESHAWAR OPERATION

Date: July 12, 2025

IFB No. TPC/OPS/OCB/Helpline/2025-25/013

- Reference to TransPeshawar (The Urban Mobility Company) advertisement regarding "Provision of Helpline Services for Zu Peshawar Operation" published in The Frontier Post, Dawn and Daily Express dated 27th June, 2025.
- The deadline for submission of bid is extended and rescheduled as **July 22, 2025, 11:30 PM (PST)**. Bids will be opened on same day, **July 22, 2025, 11:45 PM (PST)**, in the presence of the bidders or their authorized representatives, who choose to attend.
- Revisions in bid solicitation documents including evaluation criteria have been made. The service providers are requested to submit bids accordingly. The corrigendum to the effect may be inspected at the websites of TransPeshawar (<http://transpeshawar.pk/>) and KPRA (<http://www.kpra.gov.pk/>).
- Other terms and conditions shall remain the same.

Chief Executive Officer, TransPeshawar (The Urban Mobility Company)
TransPeshawar Head Office First (1st) Floor, Main BRT Depot,
Opposite NHA Complex, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
Contact Number: 091-2621393-5.



Shaukat Khanum
Memorial Cancer Hospital
and Research Centre

A JCI Enterprise Accredited Organisation

Career Opportunities in SKMCH&RC Peshawar

Medical:

Appointment Criteria for Initial Full-Time Consultant Positions at SKMCH&RC Candidates must meet one of the following criteria:

1. For candidates trained in Pakistan:

- Successful completion of a formal postgraduate medical education program.
- Award of the Fellowship of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Pakistan (FCPS).
- Completion of a relevant sub-specialty Fellowship.

2. For candidates trained internationally:

- Successful completion of MRCP (UK), FRCS, or another equivalent international fellowship.
- Alternatively, American Board certification(s), including the relevant sub-specialty boards, where applicable.
- In addition, candidates must have at least three years of experience in a Western institution.

Visiting Consultants:

- Consultant Anaesthetist
- Consultant Breast Surgeon
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Kundi, Chan discuss political situations

PESHAWAR (APP): The Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi met with Pakistan Peoples’ Party Central Information Secretary Nadeem Afzal Chan at the Governor House on Saturday.

The meeting was also attended by PPP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Secretary Amjad Afridi and other senior party leaders. Discussions focused on the

overall political situation in the country, with a particular emphasis on the province.

During the meeting, the leaders reaffirmed PPP’s commitment to strengthening democracy and upholding the supremacy of the Constitution and rule of law in Pakistan. They emphasized that the party would continue its struggle for democratic values and

institutional integrity.

The participants also lauded PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari for effectively presenting Pakistan’s case at the international level, especially following the successful conclusion of Operation Bunyan al-Marsoos. His diplomatic efforts on global forums were commended as a significant contribution to Pakistan’s foreign policy.

Pakistan on the World Population Day



Dr. Luay Shabaneh

Last week, I participated in a meeting convened by the Minister of Planning to initiate a national dialogue on population management. The meeting was attended by the Ministers of Health and Information along with numerous key stakeholders in Pakistan. Population growth - and the resulting anxiety surrounding it - has become more pressing issues in Pakistan than ever before. Key concerns include a high fertility rate, rapid population increase, rising unemployment, inadequate education, skills development, stunting, and climate change. However, according to Dr. Natalia Kanem, the Executive Director of UNFPA, the real fertility crisis lies in the lack of a reproductive agency. It is often assumed or implied that fertility rates reflect free choices. However, in reality it is rarely the case. Poor health services, lack of education, lack of awareness and backlash against women’s rights are the primary drivers of fertility rates in Pakistan.

Misguided beliefs and misperceptions around national narratives on population growth have led many countries to adopt policies that often worsen the problems they aim to solve. In Pakistan, for example, the taxation of contraceptives, the lack of progressive measures against child marriage, barriers to girls’ education, limited access to reproductive health services and supplies, and the limitation of women’s reproductive rights have all contributed to a rise in unintended pregnancies amplify the challenges associated with population growth. Viewing population growth narrowly - as solely a matter of family planning - while overlooking its broader complex aspects, has resulted in inadequate and ineffective progress on critical population indicators including maternal mortality, unmet family planning needs,

contraceptive prevalence, and, most importantly, development of human capital.

World Population Day, commemorated every year on July 11, is an important occasion to reassess the approach to population management. It is a moment to genuinely listen to what women and young generations want and need to create conditions that empower them to exercise their rights, make informed choices and enjoy a hopeful future. This is the only path that can make transformative change in the population and development architecture and normalize fertility behavior that support balanced development agenda. Family-friendly policies - such as affordable, accessible maternal and childcare services, and the active engagement of men in promoting sexual and reproductive health - can help prospective parents balance their career and family goals. Equally important is investment in comprehensive sexuality education equips young people with the knowledge they need to make informed choices. As Dr. Natalia Kanem aptly stated that ‘only shared solutions, grounded in human rights, will meet the demands of a demographically diverse world’. Ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights remains a cornerstone of sustainable and inclusive societies.

Pakistan’s population agenda faces structural and multi-dimensional challenges - requiring equally comprehensive solutions. At the policy level, it is crucial for Pakistan to secure sustained political commitment and leadership for the population agenda by activating the population federal task force chaired by the Prime Minister and including Chief Ministers and other relevant leaders. This body can serve as a high-level mechanism to align national and provincial efforts.

Revising the National Finance Commission (NFC) formula - from a burden-driven model to a target-focused approach - is essential to garner political commitment at the provincial level. To meet its financial obligations, the government must also increase public expenditure on contraceptives from the current 1 USD to 3.5 USD per capita, as recommended by Council of Common Interests (CCI).

An immediate allocation of 10 billion PKR to the Population Fund is necessary to mobilize matching funds from international donors and accelerate progress on the population management agenda. Providing tax exemptions on family planning commodities would further enhance affordability and access. Moreover, it is vital to improve and diversify the allocation and utilization of domestic resources for reproductive health and family planning services and commodities.

At the institutional level, Pakistan needs to strengthen governance and address structural deficiencies to guarantee the effective delivery of sexual and reproductive health services. It is recommended to integrate population concerns into sectoral plans and approach the population agenda from a multi-sectoral viewpoint, ideally led by a cross-sectoral coordination ministry. Enhancing data collection and analysis systems is vital for efficient monitoring and tracking progress. In terms of delivery service, community levels should be enhanced through targeted outreach initiatives. Bridging gaps in family planning programmes and expanding coverage requires increasing both the number and geographical distribution of Lady Health Workers. The government should also prioritize the efficiency of reproductive health commodity security and supply chain management, while encouraging public-private partnerships. Improved coordination is another crucial element. Stronger collaboration among development partners and stakeholders is essential to ensure a unified approach to the population agenda. Additionally, aligning efforts of provincial and federal governments on a common platform is critical to realizing the shared vision of Pakistan’s development agenda.

PML-N castigates PTI’ boycott

PESHAWAR (APP): Leader of Opposition in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Dr Ibadullah Khan has said that the rejection of the committee constituted about merged districts and its boycott speaks of the level of non-seriousness of the PTI.

In a statement issued here on Monday, he said that this act of the PTI is not merely tantamount to ignoring the long-standing problems of the merged districts, rather it will also further increase the deprivations of the tribesmen.

He further said that whenever the welfare of the people of the merged districts and their constitutional and legal rights are discussed at the national and provincial levels, PTI always takes the path of escape.

He said that they believe that on this important issue, all parties should rise above politics and unite so that the deprivations of these areas could be addressed.

Hematology symposium held at PMC

PESHAWAR (APP): Participants of a one-day symposium here Saturday emphasized the importance of early diagnosis, preventive measures and adopting an interdisciplinary approach to effectively combat blood-borne diseases.

These insights were shared during a national one-day symposium on hematology titled “Essentials of Hematology.” The event was jointly organized by Riphah International University and Pakistan Bone Marrow Transplantation (PBMt) Society at Peshawar Medical College (PMC).

The event brought together leading experts from across Pakistan to discuss key hematological conditions and best practices in patient care.

Symposium included presentations on Thalassemia Prevention by Dr. Mehreen Ali Khan from the Armed Forces Bone Marrow Transplant Centre (AFBMTc), Rawalpindi followed by a discussion on Thrombocytopenia in Pregnancy by Dr. Munira Borhani of Ziauddin Hospital, Karachi.

A comprehensive discussion session was moderated by Dr. Shahtaj Khan of Rehman Medical College with panelists including Dr. Mehreen, Dr. Munira, Dr. Ayesha Iftikhar of Shifa International Hospital and Dr. Maryam Khan of AFBMTc.

The final session covered the management of acute leukemia in low- and middle-income countries. Dr. Maryam Khan shared insights into supportive care pathways for bone marrow failure, followed by Maj. Gen. (R) Parvez Ahmed, who presented outcomes of bone marrow transplants in Pakistan.

Women list for Senate election from KP issued

PESHAWAR (APP): The list of candidates for the vacant women’s seat from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the Senate by-elections was released by Election Commission of Pakistan. The list of nine candidates for the vacant women’s seat from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the Senate by-elections 2025 was issued on Saturday by the Provincial Election Commissioner in Peshawar.

The candidates include Raheela Bibi, Mishal Azam, Sajida Begum, Momina Basit, Samaira Shams, Sobia Shahid, Mehtab Zafar, Saima Khalid, and Shazia.



PESHAWAR: Afghan Ambassador Sardar Ahmad Shakeeb meeting with Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur. Advisor on Information Barrister Dr. Saif also present on occasion.

Online NOC system for foreign tourists launched

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tourism Department has introduced the Online NOC through digital App to facilitate foreign tourists visiting areas in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

Dr. Abdul Samad, Secretary KP Tourism, Culture and Archaeology & Museums said in a meeting regarding Safety of the Tourists visiting Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

While talking to the meeting, he said, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tourism & Culture Authority launched online Foreign Tourist Registration Portal to facilitate the smooth and secure registration of international visitors holding tourist-cat-

egory visas and soon this facility will also be available for foreign Mountaineers and Treckers.

He said, this digital platform aims to streamline the registration process for foreign tourists, enabling hassle-free access and movement across KP’s breathtaking tourist destinations. By embracing technology, the initiative enhances visitor convenience while ensuring effective coordination with relevant security and tourism bodies.

He said, the dashboard represents a major step forward in KP’s commitment to promoting sustainable and secure tourism, while showcasing the province’s rich cultural heritage, scenic

landscapes, and unmatched hospitality. He said, approved travel guides firms, transporters and other facilities providers lists will be uploaded on the same portal for tourist attractions and trust.

This digital system streamlines the process of obtaining necessary permissions i.e. NOC for travel to regions like Upper Dir, Chitral, Swat, and other northern areas.

Foreign tourists can apply for NOCs directly through the portal. Applicants can check the status of their NOC requests. Passport copies, visa details, and travel itineraries can be submitted digitally.

He said, the KP Tourism Department is dedicated to develop and promote tourism in the province, ensuring a safe and memorable experience for visitors while preserving its natural and cultural heritage.

He further said, this portal reduces manual paperwork and delays And Authorities verify the applications efficiently. Tourists may download the App (Available on Google Play Store or Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tourism’s official website). Certain areas in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa require special permission due to security regulations. The NOC ensures tourists’ safety and compliance with local laws, he concluded.

Historic meeting with civil society: City moves toward urban afforestation

PESHAWAR (APP): In a significant move toward sustainable urban transformation, environmental experts, policymakers, and civil society representatives gathered in Peshawar to deliberate on Urban Afforestation and Biodiversity Conservation in Peshawar, a step aimed at reclaiming the city’s lost identity as the “City of Flowers.”

The session was co-chaired by Special Assistant to CM, M Muhammad Asim Khan and Shahzad Arbab chairman SCN.

“It is significant that this was a historic interaction with the government, the first of its kind, bringing together a galaxy of seasoned luminaries to focus on the long-neglected subject of urban afforestation in Peshawar. Since long a growing gap was being felt between the government and the civil society” said a participant.

The consultative meeting, held at in Hayatabad, was organised by the SCN with support from SRSP.

The session was moderated and facilitated by Dr. Khalid Khan, a climate change expert and SCN member, who guided the discussions with focus and clarity.

In his opening remarks, Masud Ul Mulk, CEO of SRSP, reaffirmed institutional commitment, stating, “SRSP has survived 35 years of challenges and we’re ready to support this initiative.”

Shahzad Arbab noted that existing development plans already provide a strong foundation. “We already have solid plans,”

he said.

“To move them forward, we need stronger ownership and coordination from within government institutions for implementation.” He also suggested making use of underutilized public spaces such as Pakistan Railways’ land for plantation projects and proposed improvements in governance.

“Since the highest authority of KP is engaged with other pressing governance issues, development & environmental issues do not receive the attention it deserves. Therefore, there is an urgent need for structural changes in the hierarchy of command” he said.

Concluding the session, Muhammad Asim Khan assured full government support for the initiative.

“Civil society should come up with a realistic action plan, and I will personally see that it is implemented to turn Peshawar back into the proverbial City of Flowers,” he affirmed.

The meeting featured thematic presentations from various experts.

Tariq Shah discussed eco-sensitive urban devel-

opment strategies, while Azhar Ali outlined a vision for greening KP’s cities through environmental assessments and practical local planning.

Nusrat emphasized the importance of green building designs, sustainable materials, and vertical expansion to manage space more efficiently.

“Green building is essential for long-term climate resilience,” she noted.

Adeel Saeed from APP highlighted the vital role of media in spreading environmental awareness and engaging the public on green initiatives.

An expert panel comprising legendary names of pioneers in their fields like Muhammad Rafiq, Prof. Dr. Shafiq ur Rehman, and Arshad Samad shared valuable recommendations for making urban afforestation part of long-term development plans in KP.

Fazal Ghafoor, representing the SPO, highlighted the need for inclusive planning. He stressed that community involvement is key to the success and accountability of such environmental projects.

Participants also raised key concerns such as the lack of proper urban laws, poorly designed drainage systems, and traffic congestion that undermines public transport. Experts stressed the need for better building codes, land-use rules, and policies to reduce plastic waste and protect open spaces from uncontrolled development.

They recommended creating special zones for plantations, especially using local and fruit-bearing trees, with proper care and maintenance plans lasting at least three years to help the trees survive. They also called for eco-friendly construction, reduced plastic use, and better waste management systems in cities.

Governance issues remained a major focus. Speakers pointed out the need for capacity building in both local and provincial government departments, better coordination among institutions, and using existing systems more effectively instead of creating new ones.

Muqam expresses condolences on death of sister of former KP CM Pervez Khattak

PESHAWAR (APP): Federal Minister and President Pakistan Muslim League (N), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Engr Amir Muqam Saturday expressed condolences on death of sister of former CM KP Pervez Khattak here. He offered Fateha and extended heartfelt sympathy to family members. He also prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul. Senior PMLN leader Pir Zulfiqar Bacha, PML-N District Nowshera President Sahibzada Hamza Pervaiz, General Secretary Mashiat-ur-Rehman, Tehsil Pabbi President Kashif Khan, General Secretary Zahir Khan, Tehsil Nowshera City President Tahir Khan, Tehsil Jahangira Youth Wing President Faizan Khan, President Union Council Amangarh Nowshera Chaudhry Khalid, President Union Council Jalozai Zafar Khan, President PK-88 and Information Secretary of District Nowshera Youth Wing Zarshir were present on the occasion.

Climate change threatens beekeeping in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

PESHAWAR (APP): As monsoon clouds hover over the River Kabul, 28-year-old beekeeper Malyar Khan scrambles to evacuate his bee colonies in Mohib Banda village, Nowshera.

With floodwaters already encroaching on his farmland, Malyar and his brothers, Hussain and Kamal, race against time to load 500 bee boxes onto pickups, desperate to save their livelihoods from being washed away.

“When I woke up, I saw over half of our bee colonies submerged in floodwater,” Malyar recalled, his voice weary from a sleepless night. “We had no choice but to shift everything. The 2022 floods destroyed over 300 boxes. We couldn’t afford another loss.”

Kamal, the youngest of the brothers, had painstakingly restored the colonies

by taking loans after their previous losses. But like hundreds of beekeepers across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, his efforts remain under constant threat—this time not just from floods, but from the growing wrath of climate change.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with its lush flora and favorable conditions, is traditionally a hub of Pakistan’s beekeeping industry. But increasing climate volatility, ranging from erratic rainfall, floods, and droughts to extended dry seasons and scorching temperatures has made honey production unpredictable and riskier than ever.

“Bees are incredibly sensitive to environmental and climate changes,” said Iftikhar Khalil, former Director of Apiculture at the Forest Development Department.

“Excessive rainfall or

hailstorms destroy flowers. If flowers don’t bloom, bees can’t collect nectar, and honey production drops sharply.”

He added that the disappearance of plants like ber (jujube) and palosa—key sources of nectar for honeybees—due to deforestation and land-use changes, has further endangered bee populations, particularly wild bees like Apis dorsata.

He said Pakistan is home to four major bee species such as Apis cerana (small native bee), Apis dorsata (wild bee), Apis florea (little bee) and Apis mellifera (an imported species introduced in 1977).

Among them, Apis mellifera dominates commercial honey production due to its high yield by producing 20–25 kg of honey per box twice a year, compared to just 6–8 kg from native species.

However, it is more vulnerable to bacterial diseases like the American and European foulbrood, which thrive in humid and warm conditions worsened by climate change.

“About five to ten kilograms of honey can be lost from every 1,000 kg batch if preventive measures aren’t taken against climate change,” warned Iftikhar, emphasizing the need for modern apiculture techniques and disaster preparedness among local beekeepers.

Despite the challenges, beekeeping remains a beacon of hope in Pakistan’s rural economy. Experts estimate that if the country achieves its full potential of 70,000 metric tons of honey annually, it could generate revenues of Rs 43 billion and create over 100,000 new jobs.

“Our honey, especially ber and phulai varieties, is

in high demand in Saudi Arabia, UAE, USA, China, and even countries like Azerbaijan and Malaysia,” said Sher Zaman, General Secretary of the All Pakistan Beekeepers Association. “It’s rich in taste and medicinal value, but we need better marketing and government support.”

Zaman urged the KP government to issue identification cards to beekeepers for easier migration during seasonal movements and avoid losses during inspections at checkpoints.

He also called for an immediate ban on deforestation, especially of nectar-producing trees like berry and palosa, which are lifelines for honeybees.

Musawar Khan, Advisor to the Chief Minister on Forests, acknowledged the growing climate challenges and highlighted Govt poli-

cies for promotion of beekeeping.

“We are prioritizing bee-friendly species in monsoon and spring plantations while thousands of bee boxes have already been distributed to flood-affected farmers, and we are expanding training programs for beekeepers through the ASPIRE project.”

The National Apiculture Up-scaling Program for Income and Rural Employment (ASPIRE) aims to train 15,000 beekeepers through NAVTTC, enhancing capacity and certification to promote commercial beekeeping as a viable, climate-resilient livelihood.

Beyond honey, bees are indispensable to food security. Globally, one-third of all food production depends on pollination by bees and other insects. Without them, crops such



as apples, almonds, and cucumbers could fail to thrive.

“Bees are not just about honey—they’re guardians of our ecosystem,” Iftikhar Khalil reminded. “Losing them would not just end an industry but threaten our food supply and biodiversity.”

As climate change tightens its grip on the region, the survival of Pakistan’s bees and the livelihoods of thousands who depend on

them now hinges on swift, coordinated action.

This includes climate smart policies, interest-free loans, plantation of bee flora, disease management, and most importantly, awareness among the beekeepers themselves.

For Malyar Khan and many like him in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, every hive is a symbol of resilience—a small but potent hope in the fight against a global food crisis.



In brief

World Population Day observed F.P. Report

LOWER Dir: World Population Day was Observed on Lower Dir. A seminar was organized on the Family Planning & Reproductive Health for Family Welfare Workers. Kinan Pasha, Deputy District Population Welfare Officer was the resource Person. The Speaking at the seminar, he said that Pakistan is blessed with youthful population which is demographic plus for any nation. "Investing in youth can change the destiny of a nation & steer towards prosperity, growth, progress and development. Demography shapes destinies of countries and it's statistically quantify the phenomena in numbers," he said. The total population of the district is 1,650,183 with an annual growth of 2.38 % as per census of 2023. "The growth rate of the district is high in this regard," he said, adding the Population Department is trying it's best to stabilize the current growth rate with increase in contraceptive prevalence rate. He also highlighted and discussed in detail the new national narrative of Population growth to establish the balance between population growth and resources. Hastam Khan, Tehsil Population Welfare Officer also shed light on the population growth and allied problems and issues emerged by rapid population growth. He said that families need to adopt short family norms which guarantee a better standard of living to coup the life socio-economic hardship and challenges. Shah Nawaz Khan, Deputy Demogrpther shared his thoughts on the occasion that due to over population problem, Pakistan faced various problems that hamper the pace of progress and development. Parents must adopt proper birth spacing to create a smart family where parents can invest in their youngs properly & equally.

Wheat cultivation subsidy program F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: Under the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif "Prosperous Farmer, Prosperous Punjab" the wheat cultivation subsidy distribution campaign has formally commenced in Toba Tek Singh district. Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Naeem Sandhu inaugurated the campaign by distributing subsidy drafts to farmers at a ceremony held at the District Agriculture Office. The event was attended by Deputy Director Agriculture Dr. Nausheer Ali Khan, officials from the Agriculture Department and a large number of farmers. Special counters have been set up at the district office for the distribution of subsidy drafts, while drafts for 1,891 farmers have already been dispatched to the respective tehsil offices across the district. Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Commissioner Naeem Sandhu stated that the Chief Minister's mission is the welfare of farmers, and her vision is both farmer-friendly and revolutionary. He noted that the subsidy amount is being provided at a rate of Rs. 5,000 per acre, up to a maximum of 12 acres—ranging from Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 60,000 per farmer. The DC emphasized that timely provision of the subsidy will help boost agricultural productivity and provide real relief to farmers, who are the backbone of the national economy. He added that the subsidy distribution process has been made transparent, swift, and convenient to ensure that every eligible farmer receives their due without delay.

Protesters demand reopening of Angoor Adda crossing

F.P. Report

WANA: The ongoing protest sit-in in Wana, the district headquarters of Lower South Waziristan, continued today as part of a multi-day demonstration organized by the All Parties Alliance and Siyasi Aman Pasoon. The sit-in, now gathering momentum, aims to draw attention to mounting public grievances, including deteriorating security, lack of basic services, and the denial of local rights over natural resources.

A large number of people from across the tribal belt, including representatives of major political parties, civil society, tribal elders, and public officeholders, participated in the protest. Members of the Makeen Peace Jirga Committee also joined the demonstration, led by MPA Asif Khan from Upper South Waziristan, reflecting growing regional solidarity.

Protesters are calling for the immediate reopening of the Pak-Afghan Angoor Adda border, which has remained shut for 22 months, bringing cross-border trade—and the local economy—to a standstill. Other demands include an end to illegal deforestation in Tehsil Birmal, electricity provision from the Gomal Zam Dam to Wana, and the granting of constitutional rights over local mineral and natural resources to the indigenous population.

Criticizing the federal government, speakers at the protest argued that the current Minerals and Mines Policy favors external stakeholders while sidelining the interests of the tribal people. They demanded an urgent policy review to

ensure equitable distribution of benefits and true local empowerment.

Addressing participants, leaders of the All Parties Alliance and Siyasi Aman Pasoon announced, after which a unified tribal declaration will be issued. The declaration will outline key demands and serve as a collective expression of the region's political and economic aspirations.

Speakers emphasized that sustainable peace and development cannot be achieved unless federal institutions build trust-based partnerships with local communities and ensure their inclusion in decision-making processes. They warned that ignoring tribal voices would only deepen the crisis of governance and security in the region.

During the protest, participants also offered prayers for Maulana Khanzeb, a peace campaigner who was martyred a day earlier in Bajaur. His sacrifice was hailed as a profound symbol of the ongoing struggle for peace and justice across the tribal belt.

Elected representatives including MNA Zubair Khan, MPA Ajab Gul, and MPA Asif Khan addressed the sit-in, vowing to unify protest movements across the merged tribal districts into a single platform. They expressed their commitment to formulating a joint strategy aimed at ending unrest and reclaiming tribal rights over local resources. As the sit-in enters another day, its momentum continues to grow, reflecting the deepening frustration of a region long beset by neglect, insecurity, and exclusion from national policymaking.

Political elites reject proposed revival of Jirga

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Local political leadership in Landi Kotal rejected the proposed revival of the Jirga system in the merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in a seminar held in the District Press Club.

It is to be stated here that the Prime Minister formed a committee last month to revive the Jirga system of KP for an effective alternative dispute mechanism. Speakers including Senior Vice-President of Pakistan Tehsree-e-Insaf (PTI) Khyber Zarbullah Shinwari, local leader of Qawmi Watan Party (QWP) Kashef Shinwari, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Fazalrehman (JUI-F) Landi Kotal General Secretary Maulana Azeem Shah, Awami National Party (ANP) central council

member and distract head of Khudai Khedmatgar Fazal Rehman Afridi, Jamat-e-Islami (JI) tehsil General Secretary Aman Ullah, Pakistan Muslim League, Nawaz (PML-N) district General Secretary Sajid Ali Afridi, political leaders Abdurrazizq, Najeed Khawarichan, Aftab Shinwari and others categorically rejected revivalism of Jirga in the merged tribal region and said it was an attempt to get hold of minerals in the ex-Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA).

Why does the federal government feel the need to revise the Jirga system, they questioned. Instead of providing a financial package to the former tribal region to improve infrastructure, the government intends to make another experiment in the tribal areas, they added.

They declared the initiative of the Prime Minister as a violation of the Constitution and said after 25th Amendment it was the domain of the provincial government to form a committee. They maintained that consent of the tribesmen was ignored at the time of merging and in the present development no one felt the need to ask the tribal of their miseries and necessities, they remarked.

The setting parliamentarians were the true representatives of the merged tribal region therefore before forming a committee they should be taken on board, they suggested. The participants blamed that merging has been done in hurry in 2018 and in the same way, the presently Jirga revivalism has been formed in run for unknown reasons.

AWKUM signs MoU for legal & execution education enhancement

F.P. Report

MARDAN: In a significant stride toward international academic collaboration, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan (AWKUM) has signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with GLO LLC, a US-based global leader in legal and executive education.

The agreement marks a bold step in enhancing Pakistan's legal education landscape, particularly in the integration of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) with Islamic jurisprudence and the cultural heritage of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In this regard, a signing ceremony was held on Thursday at AWKUM which was attended by distinguished guests including Senator Zeeshan Khanzada, who lauded the partnership as a "bold academic alliance that not only uplifts Pakistan's legal education but also projects our traditional jurisprudence to global academic platforms."

The MoU was officially signed by Professor Dr. Muhammad Zubair Khan,

Chairman of the Department of Law at AWKUM and Dr. Jo Chitlik, Senior Fellow at Emory University's Center for the Study of Law and Religion on behalf of Global Learning Online LLC (GLO), in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. The event was convened by Prof. Dr. Jamil Ahmad, Vice Chancellor of AWKUM, and attended by prominent faculty and administrative staff members including Dr. Noor Jehan, Dr. Muhammad Arif, Abdus Samad Khan and other relevant officials.

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CTD arrests alleged terrorist F.P. Report

SAHIWAL: Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) police arrested Nazim Wattoo son of Shafiq, a member of the banned organization Sipah Sahaba Pakistan, on the charge of spreading religious hatred and distributing literature among people on Nagina Chowk Pakpattan opposite Zeenat Grand Marquee Sahiwal Pakpattan Road. The police have registered a case and started investigation.

According to DSP CTD, a person from Bahawalnagar district, Nazim, was gathering people and inviting them to join the organization Sipah Sahaba and was agitating against Shia people. He was in possession of a large quantity of literature, on which the police caught him. A pistol, 30 bore bullets, cash and booklets have been recovered from his possession.

Moreover, the Punjab Land Records Authority Board held its third meeting of the year 2025. Chairman Punjab Land Records Authority Muhammad Tariq Subhani presided over the meeting. Senior Member Board of Revenue Nabeel Javed, Member Taxes and all Divisional Commissioners participated in the meeting via video link.

Director General Punjab Land Records Authority Ikramul Haque presented a ten-point agenda. The meeting approved the annual budget for the financial year 2025-26 and a 10 percent increase in the salaries of employees, the issuance of property certificates from the Land Records Center and the approval of hard area allowance for field staff.

Under the Plus Project, waiver of service charges in the distribution of joint accounts, two-month fee concession to land assistant, change in the regulation of legal advisor, reduction in fees for verification of records from government institutions were also approved. In addition, approval of PALRA service charges in US dollars for overseas Pakistanis and new service regulations for PALRA employees were approved.

The meeting was attended by PALRA board members Mubinnuddin Qazi, Advocate Supreme Court, Dr. Muhammad Tahir and Muhammad Yathrib Hanjira, while Additional Director General Admin Asim Saleem, Additional Director General Technical Zahid Sohail, Additional Director General Operations Farooq Akmal, Chief Financial Officer Kamran Hafeez, and Additional Director Finance Aamir Muzaffar.

Meanwhile, the 9th South Asian Karate Championship was held in Sri Lanka. Pakistani players performed well in the championship and won 2 gold medals, 1 silver and 7 bronze medals.

Representing the Pakistani team, Hafiza Arshad of District Sahiwal won the gold medal in the under-10th category, Arshad won 2 bronze medals and Hasnain won 3 bronze medals, which is an honor for Pakistan and District Sahiwal.

Ali Tareen farms showcases modern agricultural practices

Saqib Mushtaq

LODHARAN: A roadshow was organized to highlight modern agricultural reforms that ensure sustainable development through the use of advanced agricultural technologies and water conservation.

Held at Ali Tareen Farms with the special collaboration of Pepsi International, the conference familiarized participants with the practices of the Ali Tareen Model Farm.

Representatives from dozens of organizations—including the United Nations, Pepsi, Ali Tareen Farms, and JDW/JK Sugar Mills—attended the event.

On this occasion, Pepsi International presented an honorary shield to Ali Tareen Farms in recognition of its exemplary practices.

Dr. Thirah Rungruang, Head of the United Nations Asia Pacific Bone Screw, also praised the innovations at Ali Tareen Farms. He remarked that by following the practices of the Ali Tareen Model Farms, other farms could similarly achieve water conservation and increased agricultural productivity.



Ali Nisar Bajwa, General Manager of Ali Tareen Farms, briefed participants on the farm's efficient water utilization, the application of modern technology, the farm's history, and Jahangir Khan Tareen's efforts in transforming hundreds of acres of barren land into cultivable fields.

Despite challenges such as the availability of canal water for only six months a year and saline, uncultivable soil, the consistently high yields from Ali Tareen Farms stand as a testament to Jahangir Tareen's innovative mindset and practical capabilities.

Expressing his appreciation, Izhar ul Haq Awan, Supply Chain Development and Commercialization

Manager at Pepsi International, commended how Jahangir Khan Tareen turned barren land into productive farmland through years of hard work. Today, the yields from this farm surpass those of surrounding areas.

Participants noted that the use of modern technology and effective planning in agriculture not only increases productivity but also ensures land preservation and water savings. At the end of the event, participants visited Ali Tareen Farms, where they were briefed on modern practices, advanced machinery equipped with technology, state-of-the-art agricultural tools, and various community welfare projects.

BISP beneficiaries facing hardships

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Women beneficiaries of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) in Hafizabad district are facing severe hardships due to gross mismanagement and poor arrangements at the disbursement centers. Long queues, slow processing systems, and alleged misconduct by staff and agents have turned the process of receiving financial aid into a distressing ordeal for these underprivileged women.

According to reports, women from Hafizabad city, as well as nearby towns including Sukheke, Kot Sarwar, and Pindi Bhattian, are being subjected to humiliating treatment while trying to collect their installment payments under the BISP scheme. Many of them travel long distances, often bearing high transportation costs, only to be met with disrespect and disorder at the centers.

Eyewitness accounts suggest that hundreds of women are forced to wait for hours in long lines, often under the scorching sun, with no proper seating, shelter, or water facilities. Several women complained that agents and center staff physically push them out or deny them entry without valid reasons, treating them with utter disrespect.

"The situation is heart-breaking," said one woman standing in line. "We are not beggars. We are here to claim our lawful right. But we are being treated worse than animals." Many women expressed frustration over the malfunction-

ing systems and the lack of any organized process at the BISP centers, stating that the delays and mistreatment are taking a toll on their health and dignity.

The affected women have appealed to higher authorities to take immediate notice of the situation and ensure their rightful aid is delivered with respect and dignity. They demanded that, instead of forcing them to stand in long queues and face abuse, arrangements should be made to deliver the assistance directly to their homes or through a more efficient and respectful mechanism.

Meanwhile, following the recent monsoon rainfall, Nawab Colony located on Alipur Road in Hafizabad city has been transformed into a waterlogged area resembling open drains and canals. Due to the blockage of drainage systems, several feet of stagnant water still remains, causing immense distress to local residents. In protest, the residents have put up "Nawab Colony for Sale" signs to highlight their frustration and helplessness.

Residents held a strong protest against the Municipal Committee officials, accusing them of negligence. They complained that the continuous blockage of the main drainage channels is turning their colony into a permanent swamp. Stepping out of their homes has become extremely difficult due to the standing water, yet the authorities have failed to take any action to clean the clogged drains.

Dist Council presents 2025-26 budget F.P. Report

LARKANA: The budget meeting of the District Council Larkana for the year 2025-26 was held under the chairmanship of Chairman Ejaz Ahmed Leghari, in which the budget for the next financial year 2025-26 was presented, under which the total proposed income is Rs 73 crore 34 lakh 81 thousand 203, non-development expenditure is Rs 54 crore 05 lakh 82 thousand 785.

The proposed budget was presented in the meeting. Among them, the District Council Larkana will provide sewing machines to women in every union council, wheelchairs to the disabled, push loaders for sanitation, taps to the poor and needy people, and push rickshaws to unemployed youth in every union council.

Monsoon magic at Saiful Malook lake captivates tourists in Kaghan

SAIFUL MALOOK (APP): With monsoon clouds rolling across the northern skies of Pakistan, the fabled Saiful Malook lake has transformed into a breathtaking haven, captivating visitors with its blend of natural grandeur and mythological charm. Tucked beneath the mighty Malka Parbat in the upper Kaghan Valley, the famous lake has become a magnet for tourists and ecotourism lovers arrived from across Pakistan.

The seasonal momson rains ranging from gentle drizzles to sudden downpours have given the landscape a surreal beauty to tourists as black clouds hovering over their surrounding amid thrill and excitement. Mist rises from the surrounding pine forests, and the interplay of sunlight and clouds with chirping birds casts magical reflections across the lake's crystal-clear, blue-green waters.

The recent spell of monsoon rain has not only revived the verdant surroundings in Kaghan but also sparked a notable influx of travelers and adventure sports enthusiasts. The lake is spanning on 1.06 square miles with a depth of 113 feet and sitting at an elevation of 3,224 meters above sea level leave an indelible mark on the hearts of thousands of tourists.

Among them is 25-year-old Waris Khattak from Karak, who sought refuge from the scorching southern heat. "The oppressive weather back home pushed me to visit this beautiful lake," said Waris, who was enjoying a plate of freshly grilled trout with his family along the lake's shore. "The peace, the cool breeze, and this amazing water—it feels like another world."

Children ran carefree along the banks, dipping their hands into the cold water, while couples posed for pictures amid cascading waterfalls that flow from the snow-capped Malka Parbat, feeding the lake and enhancing its serene, oval-shaped beauty. Locals and tour operators alike say this season has brought one of the highest turnovers in recent years, driven by improved road access and social media buzz. Many of them emphasize the importance of maintaining cleanliness and eco-responsible tourism, urging visitors to preserve the lake's pristine environment.

But beyond its natural allure, Saiful Malook is steeped in folklore. According to legend, the lake was named after a Persian prince, Saiful Malook, who is said to have fallen in love with a fairy princess, Badri Jamala. Historians recount how the prince was drawn back time and

again to this enchanted place, chasing visions of his ethereal beloved. Today, the myth lives on not just in local storytelling but in the very ambience of the lake, which feels touched by the otherworldly.

The lake is immortalized in Sufi poet Mian Muhammad Baksh's epic, "Fairytale of Saiful Malook," which recounts the prince Saiful Malook quest for the fairy princess Badriul Jamala, a journey marked by enchanting stories and unfilled longing. Though Pakistan boasts numerous stunning lakes like Ansoo, Lulusar, Dudipastar, and Sheosar, Saiful Malook stands out for its unique blend of fairytales, striking beauty, and pristine waters.

Gulzar Rehman, ex-conservator forest along with his wife attested to the Saiful Malook lake's exceptional charm, citing its lasting impression compared to other global lakes destinations. In the today's digital age, he said there is a growing recognition of the potential for leveraging social media to enhance mountains and eco-tourism as well as archeology for economic development.

He highlighted how the growing digital and social media can transform the tourism landscape especially Saiful Malook charm in Pakistan. "Saiful Malook and

similar breathtaking tourism sites offer stunning beauty and significant economic promise for Pakistan subject to the KP government patronage." Despite its immense potential, he said Pakistan's tourism sector had struggled to reach its full economic potential mainly due to natural calamities and security challenges.

Tourism contributed only \$8.8 billion, or 2.9% of GDP in 2017—a stark contrast to the \$15 billion, or 5.7% of GDP in 2019. However the COVID-19 pandemic and security issues have exacerbated these challenges, with a notable decline in tourism revenue and employment in Pakistan. He emphasized the importance of embracing digital innovations, such as virtual tours of Saiful Malook through social media campaigns, to attract more visitors.

He advocated for hiring digital professionals and utilizing platforms like GPS and artificial intelligence to promote Pakistan's diverse tourism offerings. He also suggested that developing attractions like a chairlift between Naran and Saiful Malook lake could generate significant revenue and enhance the socio-economic conditions of people of the region.

However, challenges remain,

including environmental and accommodation concerns. Efforts to improve waste management and enhance facilities are crucial for preserving the natural beauty of Saiful Malook and other lakes of Pakistan. Increased litter bins, sanitary workers, and improved parking facilities are among the necessary measures to maintain the lake's allure.

Professor Dr Naveed Farooq of Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan underscored the importance of digital showcasing of all lakes especially Saiful Malook for attracting foreign tourists. "Saiful Malook Ansoo and Mahudhand lakes are gems of Pakistan. Utilizing digital technology to highlight these treasures can draw international visitors in droves and further boost tourism."

KP Wildlife Department, which oversees Saiful Malook and Lulusar lakes as national parks, is working to ensure sustainable protection and improved tourist facilities. Future developments, such as a chairlift project and enhanced service areas, aim to elevate the tourist experience while supporting local economies.

Key projects has been approved by KP Govt for heritage preservation and tourism promotion Under World Bank's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Integrated

Tourism Project (KITE) Program. Tourism Department spokesman told APP that these projects include upgradation of various museums in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa costing Rs. 295 million, Development and Preservation of Babu Dheri, District Swabi of Rs. 45 million, restoration and conservation of Dilip Kumar and Raj Kapoor's Historic Buildings in Peshawar with allocation of Rs 33.8 million and Beautification and Renovation of Rani Ghat, District Buner costing Rs 40 million.

The other approved projects are provision of modern facilities at Takht-e-Bhai archaeological site Mardan costing Rs30 million, upgradation of security and safety measures at key archaeological sites in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa costing Rs 220.59 million, development of Gali Bagh, Mansehra costing Rs 35 million and improvement of Koh-e-Suleman tourist site at Dera Ismail Khan costing Rs 155 million besides restoration of Sheikh Badin site at Dera Ismail Khan costing Rs 190 million. As clouds drift over the glistening water and the sound of distant thunder echoes through the valley, Saiful Malook once again proves why it remains one of Pakistan's most iconic and mystical destinations.



India electoral roll revision sparks fear and fury

NEW DELHI (AFP): Indian election officials have given voters in Bihar state just weeks to prove their citizenship, requiring documents few possess in a registration revamp set to be applied nationwide, triggering disenfranchisement fears. The Election Commission of India (ECI) announced the revision of the voter rolls in June ahead of upcoming polls in the eastern state.

It said the exercise will later be replicated across the nation of 1.4 billion people. According to the ECI, the "intensive revision" was needed in part to avoid the "inclusion of the names of foreign illegal immigrants". Members of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have long claimed that large numbers of undocumented Muslim migrants from neighbouring Bangladesh have fraudulently entered India's electoral rolls. Critics say the overhaul could render vast numbers of Indian citizens unable to vote. "You are being asked to produce documents that very few people have," said Asaduddin Owaisi, a prominent Muslim lawmaker. "It will lead to mass disenfranchisement." Opposition lawmakers say it will impact minorities the hardest, including Muslims and Dalit communities, those on the bottom rung of India's rigid caste hierarchy.

All potential voters in Bihar will have to provide proof of citizenship by July 25. Those registered in 2003, the last time scrutiny of the voter list took place in Bihar, can submit a copy

of that. The rest -- around 30 million people, according to the ECI's estimates -- have to provide evidence of their place and date of birth. And those born after 1987 must also furnish proof of their parents' Indian citizenship. The requirement affects more than a third of potential voters in Bihar, India's third most populous state and its poorest. It is also a crucial election battleground as the only state in India's northern Hindi-speaking belt where Modi's BJP has only ever governed in a coalition. Bihar's main opposition party, the Rashtriya Janata Dal, has challenged the election commission in the Supreme Court, along with other parties and activists. "It is being used to justify aggressive and opaque revisions of electoral rolls that disproportionately target Muslim, Dalit and poor (Indian) migrant communities," the court petition read.

"They are not random patterns but... engineered exclusions." Unlike many other countries, India does not have a unique national identity card. The widely used biometric-linked "Aadhaar" identity card is not among the documents listed by the ECI as acceptable proof. Documents that can be used include birth certificates, passports and matriculation records. Of these, most people are likely to rely on their matriculation certificates. But even those are in short supply in Bihar, where literacy rates are among the lowest in India.

According to an analysis published in The Indian Express newspaper, only 35 percent of people in the

state hold such a document. "In Bihar, where literacy is not very high, many people are not likely to have the kind of documents the ECI has demanded," said Jagdeep Chhokar from the New Delhi-based Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR). "The poor, poorly educated, uneducated and minorities will be the most impacted." Detractors say the drive is unprecedented because "documentary proof has never been demanded" of people to vote in India.

"Only those who especially wanted their name inserted needed to fill a form," said political activist and academic Yogendra Yadav. "For the rest, someone would come to their house and get their names registered." "The onus in India was never on the voter but on the ECI officials," he added. In previous verification drives, modifications were made to the existing rolls, Yadav said. Now, a list is being drawn from scratch. Yadav said the drive was a "de facto" implementation of an earlier plan to put together a list of Indian citizens.

The National Register of Citizens (NRC), which was compiled in the eastern state of Assam in 2019, left out almost two million people. Many of them were Muslims. The BJP had said the NRC would be replicated nationwide as it was necessary to detect "foreign infiltrators", but was forced to backtrack after furious protests. "Everyone has to now prove that they are citizens of India," said Yadav. "That is exactly what the NRC is... this is NRC by the backdoor."

Bandits kill 70 volunteers in Nigeria ambush

BAUCHI, Nigeria (Reuters): Bandits killed at least 70 community security volunteers in an ambush in violence-ridden Plateau state in central Nigeria, residents and a volunteer leader said. Volunteer leader Aliyu Baffa said the ambush occurred around 1300 GMT on Monday near the Kukawa and Bunyun communities in the Kanam district as hundreds of volunteers were heading to Madam Forest, a known hideout of heavily armed bandits.

Baffa said more than 70 volunteers were killed and that more bodies might be recovered. Over 60 were buried in Kukawa alone, he said by phone. Musa Ibrahim, a resident of Bunyun, corroborated the incident, reporting that the bandits also killed 10 security volunteers in his community and burned down several houses. The ambush underscored a surge in factional bloodshed, often involving Islamist militias or criminal gangs, across Africa's most populous country in recent months, with 2,266 people killed in the first half of 2025. Plateau police could not be immediately reached for comment.

N Korean defector to sue Kim Jong Un for abuse

SEOUL: A North Korean defector is set to file civil and criminal charges against North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and four other Pyongyang officials for abuses she faced while detained in the country. Choi Min-kyung fled North Korea to China in 1997 but was forcibly repatriated in 2008. She said she was sexually abused and tortured after her return.

The case, which will be filed, marks the first time a North Korean-born defector is taking legal action against the regime, said a South Korea-based rights group assisting Ms Choi. South Korean courts have in the past ruled against North Korea on similar claims of abuse made by South Koreans but such verdicts are largely symbolic and ignored by Pyongyang. The NKDB says it also plans to take Ms Choi's case to the United Nations and the International Criminal Court. "I earnestly wish for this small step to become a cornerstone for the restoration of freedom and human dignity, so that no more innocent North Koreans suffer under this brutal regime," Ms Choi said, according to a statement from the Database Center for North Korean Human Rights (NKDB). "As a torture victim and survivor of the North Korean regime, I carry a deep and urgent responsibility to hold the Kim dynasty accountable for crimes against humanity," she said. Ms Choi fled North Korea again in 2012 and settled in the South. She said psychological trauma from the ordeal remains and that she continues to rely on medication.

For years international rights groups have documented alleged human rights violations by North Korea, ranging from the abuse of political prisoners to systematic discrimination based on gender and class. Hanna Song, executive director of the NKDB, told BBC Korean that the lawsuits were significant because they were pursuing criminal charges "in parallel" to civil cases. Previous court cases against North Korea had been "limited to civil litigation", she said. In 2023, a Seoul court ordered North Korea to pay 50 million won (\$36,000; £27,000) each to three South Korean men who were exploited after being taken as prisoners of war in North Korea during the Korean War. In 2024, the North Korean government was also ordered to pay 100 million won to each of five Korean Japanese defectors. They were part of thousands who had left Japan for North Korea in the 1960s and 1980s under a repatriation programme. — Aljazeera



KYIV: A woman standing among debris next to a recruitment centre building damaged after a drone attack in Kharkiv, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Russia's summer push in Ukraine targets three fronts

KYIV: While Russia's overnight drone and missile attacks on Ukraine have hit record levels, on the ground its military is claiming territorial gains. Last month Russian forces seized 556 sq km (215 sq miles), its biggest land grab this year, according to the open-source DeepState monitoring website in Ukraine. That is an area four times the size of Liverpool and nearly the same size as the city of Chicago.

Russia's goal is to cut off supply routes used by Ukrainian troops in the east, and create a buffer zone inside Ukraine's northern borders. But its advance remains relatively slow. At this pace it would take more than 70 years to capture the entire country. Most Russian attacks have been concentrated on three areas: The Sumy region that borders Russia in the north-east; the two eastern cities of Pokrovsk and Kostyantynivka; A third front, west of Pokrovsk. Russian troops managed to push about 10-12km (6-7.5 miles) deep inside the Sumy region, but that advance has come to a stop in the face of fierce resistance. Vladimir Putin says he wants to create a buffer zone to protect Russian territory, after Ukrainian forces captured a swathe of Kursk territory last summer. Russian forces eventually drove them out, with the help of North Korean troops and ammunition. The Russians then crossed into Ukraine but quickly became bogged down in fighting over small border villages, which keep

changing hands even today. Without major reinforcements, it is unlikely Russian troops will be able to push much further here.

Another northern region where Russia's army has reportedly crossed the state border is Kharkiv. Last week they claimed the capture of a border village, but without committing substantial resources they are unlikely to make further gains. Military observers believe these operations are aimed at forcing Ukraine to spread its forces too thin along the entire 1,200-km long front line, so that they divert troops from key areas. One of those frontline areas is Pokrovsk, a strategic hub in eastern Ukraine, which Moscow has been trying to capture for more than two years. According to the head of Ukraine's army Gen Oleksandr Syrskiy, Russia has concentrated some 111,000 troops in that area. Russians rarely launch massive assaults, says Lt Artem Pribylnov from Ukraine's 155th brigade, stationed near Pokrovsk.

Any large movement of troops and armoured vehicles will be quickly detected and destroyed by drones. Instead, Lt Pribylnov says, the Russians rely on small groups of infantry troops who relentlessly attack Ukrainian positions, sometimes on motor bikes but more often on foot. This kind of "creeping offensive", as some call it, is aimed at exhausting Kyiv's resources until endless waves of Russian soldiers eventually push the Ukrainians out of

their positions. But the price they pay is frighteningly high. Ukraine's general staff puts Russia's casualties at more than 1,000 soldiers a day. The BBC cannot verify these figures independently, but they do indicate the heavy losses Russia is suffering. Russia's aim in eastern Ukraine appears to be to create "a cauldron", semi-encircling the Ukrainians around Pokrovsk and Kostyantynivka and then forcing them to retreat.

Russian troops are now trying to wedge into the area between these two cities to create "a bridgehead from where they can attack Pokrovsk or Kostyantynivka", says Maj Viktor Trehubov, a spokesman for the Khortytysya operational-strategic group, which co-ordinates forces in eastern Ukraine. A breakthrough here is not considered likely. Russia's advance between Kostyantynivka and Pokrovsk is already slowing down and earlier attempts to push from other sides have stalled. The biggest Russian gain in recent weeks was further west from Pokrovsk, in an area referred to by the Ukrainian military as the Novopavlivske direction, named after the village of Novopavlivka which became a defence hub following the westward retreat of Ukrainian troops. Military observer Kostyantyn Mashovets says Moscow's operation there was most threatening for Ukraine as its defence measures "collapsed", allowing the Russians to advance up to 10km a day. — Aljazeera

Russia seizes \$50b in assets during war in Ukraine

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russian authorities have confiscated assets worth some \$50 billion over the past three years, underscoring the scale of the transformation into a "fortress Russia" economic model during the war in Ukraine, research showed. The conflict has been accompanied by a significant transfer of assets as many Western companies fled the Russian market, others' assets were expropriated and the assets of some major Russian businesses were seized by the state.

In response to what Russia called illegal actions by the West, President Vladimir Putin signed decrees over the past three years allowing the seizure of Western assets, entangling firms ranging from Germany's Uniper to Danish brewer Carlsberg. Besides the Western assets, major domestic companies have changed hands on the basis of different legal mechanisms including the need for strategic resources, corruption claims, alleged privatisation violations, or poor management. Moscow law firm NSP (Nektorov, Savilev & Partners) said that the scale of what it called the "nationalisation", opens new tab amounted to 3.9 billion roubles over three years, and it listed the companies involved. The

research was first reported by Kommersant, one of Russia's leading newspapers, which said it illustrated a "fortress Russia" economic model.

The 1991 bread-up of the Soviet Union ushered in hopes that Russia could transform into a free-market economy integrated into the global economy, but vast corruption, economic turmoil and organised crime undermined confidence in democratic capitalism through the 1990s. Putin, in his first eight years in power, supported economic freedoms, targeted some so-called oligarchs and presided over a significant growth of the economy to \$1.8 trillion in 2008 from \$200 billion in 1999. In the 2008-2022 period, the economy grew to \$2.3 trillion, though Western sanctions hit it hard after Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014, according to figures from the International Monetary Fund. Though the Russian economy has performed better than expected during the war in Ukraine, its nominal dollar size in 2024 was just \$2.2 trillion, according to IMF figures, much smaller than China, the European Union or United States. Russian officials say that the Ukraine war - the biggest confrontation with the West since the depths of

the Cold War - has demanded extraordinary measures to prevent what they say was a clear Western attempt to sink the Russian economy.

Putin says the exit of Western firms has allowed domestic producers to take their place and that the Western sanctions have forced domestic business to develop. He has called for a "new development model" distinct from "outdated globalisation". But the wartime economy, geared towards producing weapons and supporting a long conflict with Ukraine, has put the state - and those officials who operate it - in a much more powerful position than private Russian businesses. Russian prosecutors are now seeking to seize billionaire Konstantin Strukov's majority stake in major gold producer U z h u r a l z o l o t o (UGLD.MM), opens new tab (UGC) for the state. More than a thousand companies - from McDonald's (MCD.N), opens new tab to Mercedes-Benz (MBGn.DE), opens new tab - have left Russia since the February 2022 start of Russia's war in Ukraine by selling, handing the keys to existing managers or simply abandoning their assets. Others had their assets seized and a sale forced through.

Dozens of sites vie for UNESCO world heritage list spot

NEW YORK (AFP): The United Nation's cultural organisation announces its choice of sites for inclusion in its world heritage list this week, with pre-historic caves, former centres of repression, forests, marine bio-systems and others vying for the coveted spots.

Making the UNESCO's heritage list often sparks a lucrative tourism drive, and can unlock funding for the preservation of sites that can face threats including pollution, war and negligence. Climate change is another growing problem for world heritage sites, UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay told Monday's opening session of the body's World Heritage Committee.

"Close to three quarters of world heritage sites are already faced with serious

water-related risks, lack of water or floods," she said. Governments failing to ensure adequate protection of their sites risk them being added to UNESCO's endangered sites list -- which currently contains over 50 names -- or dropped from the list altogether. Armed conflict is the reason for about half of the downgrades to the endangered sites list, Azoulay said. Many of such problem areas are located in the Middle East. The current world heritage list contains 1,223 cultural, natural or mixed sites. Of the organisation's 196 member states, 27 are absent from the list, including several African nations. Two of them -- Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone -- hope this will change this year, as they

pitch the Bijagos islands and Gola-Tiwai wildlife reserves, respectively, to UNESCO.

UNESCO has been seeking to boost Africa's presence on the heritage list, officials say. "Since her arrival in 2018, Audrey Azoulay has made Africa not just her own priority, but one of UNESCO's overall priorities," said Lazare Eloundou Assomo, who heads up the organisation's world heritage centre. "We're starting to see very positive results." Sub-Saharan Africa's listings have risen from 93 to 108 in recent years, but the continent continues to be under-represented on a global scale. This year, Cameroon is hoping for a spot for its Mandara mountains, while Malawi is pitching Mount Mulanje.

Global Fund finalize plan to supply HIV prevention drug to poor countries

NEW YORK (Reuters): Gilead Sciences and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria said they had finalized plans to supply a long-acting HIV prevention drug to low-income countries, despite the absence of funding from a key US initiative aimed at addressing the global HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Under the agreement, Gilead said it will supply, at cost, enough doses to reach up to 2 million people over three years in countries supported by the Global Fund. Both parties said price terms are confidential, and the Global Fund declined to comment further on how many doses would be ordered immediately. The US Food and Drug Administration last month approved Gilead's lenacapavir, a

twice-yearly injection, for preventing HIV infection in adults and adolescents. The World Health Organization and other regulators are currently reviewing it.

Last year, Gilead signed royalty-free deals allowing six generic drugmakers to make and sell low-cost versions of the drug in 120 low- and middle-income countries, but those supplies will take time to get up and running. Some AIDS experts have said the new drug could help end the 44-year-old epidemic that infects 1.3 million people a year and is estimated by the World Health Organization to have killed more than 42 million. The Global Fund said it will prioritize access based on HIV incidence and prevention strategies, including coun-

tries in sub-Saharan Africa that have expressed strong interest - notably South Africa, which will be among the first to roll out the drug among around 10 other nations. The partners aim to have the first delivery reach at least one African country by the end of this year.

"For the first time, a tool to prevent HIV infection is coming available in low and middle-income countries at the same time as in high-income countries," Peter Sands, executive director of the Global Fund, said in an interview with Reuters. In the past, this has taken years, he added. Gilead, the Global Fund and the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief had announced the plan in December. However, the administra-

tion of US President Donald Trump, who took office in January, has pulled back on PEPFAR funding, limiting global HIV prevention programs to pregnant and breast-feeding women. In response to questions about the impact of the cuts on HIV programs worldwide, a US State Department spokesperson told Reuters: "PEPFAR-funded programs that deliver HIV care and treatment or prevention of mother-to-child transmission services are operational... All other PEPFAR-funded services are currently being reviewed." They did not respond to questions on lenacapavir specifically. Gilead CEO Daniel O'Day said he is still hopeful that US aid spending to fight the epidemic will resume.

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Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

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Peshawar Office: 0300- 9009001

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

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

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

Human cost of conflict

THE residual effects of Israel's ruthless attacks against Iran in 2025 -and Tehran's legitimate retaliation under Article 51 [1] of the UN Charter, which allows targeted states to respond in self-defense- include extensive damage to Iran's health infrastructure [2] and nuclear facilities [3], as well as economic losses amounting to \$6 billion in Israel [4]. While the conflict has shaken global oil markets [5], one of the most critical casualties - apart from the lack of credible information from Israel and the absence of impartial or de-escalatory rhetoric from the Netanyahu government- has been the widespread loss of civilian lives and mass displacement. Over 900 civilians [6] were killed in Iran during the twelve-day conflict, while the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center of the Norwegian Refugee Council estimates that around 2 million people [7] were displaced in Iran. In Israel, close to 18,000 civilians [8] were displaced due to incoming Iranian missiles.

At the very least, the damage to Iran aligns with Israel's Defense Minister Israel Katz's dangerous aim of collectively punishing the Iranian people for the actions of the regime in Tehran. However, Israel's bombardment has only wreaked havoc on peace and tranquility, with mass displacement having a reverberating impact on neighboring Gaza, Lebanon and the already fragile security situation in Syria. The displacements in Iran add to the plight of an estimated 124,000 already displaced [9] in Lebanon and close to 1 million in Syria [10]. As displaced populations jostle with relocation challenges, they have faced the brunt of funding shortages due to the Iran-Israel conflict amid precarious security situations due to the palpable threat of incoming Israeli missiles on Iran and neighboring territories.

In light of this, Türkiye's close proximity to conflict-prone regions in the Middle East, its status as a regional power with a historical role as a net provider of humanitarian aid in an apolitical and nonpartisan manner places it in a strong position to play a constructive role in addressing the variegated displacement quagmires in the Middle East which threaten strategic stability. Ankara is no stranger to conflicts in its neighborhood. Its response has consistently involved providing humanitarian aid based on historical precedents and careful planning. During the Assad days in Syria when peace and tranquility remained elusive for the average Syrian for 14 years, the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) in collaboration with local NGOs and civil society organizations successfully provided humanitarian aid [11] to afflicted populations in the form of dry food items to 160 families including orphans and widows in the suburbs of the capital Damascus, such as Beit Sawa, Medyara and Ghouta. Internally, Syrian refugees in Türkiye benefitted from comprehensive responses from governmental agencies such as the Turkish Disaster and Management Authority, which provided health care facilities, housing, sanitation and schools to 233,400 Syrian nationals [12] housed in 21 provisional houses in 2017. Furthermore, as a testament to Ankara's commitment to self-actualization, political participation and mobilization of communities, AFAD encouraged Syrian refugees to partake in the management of their own camps by holding local elections to work towards social contracts anchored in popular sovereignty.

The same can also be said about Lebanon, where Israel's bombardment in the South of the country during the Gaza war prompted both the Red Crescent of Türkiye and NGOs to address the plight [13] of displaced Lebanese by providing food packages and aid weighing 500 and 1,300 tons respectively in late 2024. Again, TIKA collaborated with more than 30 Lebanese public institutions and civil society organizations to distribute aid, including hygiene supplies, to displaced Lebanese lacking access to hospitals. Such recent historical precedents of apolitical and transparent humanitarian aid establish Türkiye as one of the world's top donor nations in 2017 [14]. This has been made possible due to synergy between public and private institutions as the standard, comprehensive and multilayered modus operandi.

The scale of devastation in 2025 due to Israel's hostilities and the Iranian response, places Türkiye in an important, critical and unique position to build on its historical support for humanitarianism, such as the opening up of safe corridors during Russia's war in Ukraine, involving evacuations in the southern city of Mariupol in Ukraine [15] with the assistance of Russia and concomitant with diplomatic support for a ceasefire.

As Ankara's foreign policy is anchored in neutrality and nonpartisanship, it is a critical variable to ensure that humanitarian aid and assistance for the displaced continues uninhibited. As reports of political tensions and polarization continue to make headlines [16], it is clear that the status quo will remain unchanged. Türkiye's moderating influence can hence, act as a potential bridge between the two sides to ensure that people-centric humanitarian aid materializes in letter and spirit. Türkiye's role as a humanitarian actor is also critical, given that failing to address humanitarian quagmires can result in greater destabilization as disillusioned/ displaced populations become more prone to radicalization. Refugee flows due to unaddressed plights can also present an existential challenge in the form of immigration to Europe which puts a further strain on the continent's local economies. This warrants a proactive role in addressing the humanitarian quagmire as residual effects of the Iran-Israel conflict, which Türkiye, along with international powers, can work to prevent - thereby averting multiple, complex humanitarian crises from emerging as a domestic challenge to be managed by individual states alone. Such proactiveness boosts Ankara's image in the region with policies going beyond mere emergency responses toward rebuilding infrastructure and supporting social services for ravaged communities. Behind every statistic is a human life that has suffered, whether due to Israel's senseless bombardments or Iran's legitimate right to self-defense. It is clear that Türkiye's historical and strategic role as a humanitarian actor in the Middle East is established and more critical than ever.

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Climate justice, a critical necessity

Hafsa Rauf

CLIMATE Change is a global phenomenon that affects the world population unevenly. 'Climate justice suggests that the responsibilities in addressing climate change should be divided according to who is contributing most to the problem,' according to the UNDP, where the World Health Organization extended the UNDP's words as, 'Climate-sensitive health risks are disproportionately felt by the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, including women, children, ethnic minorities, poor communities, migrants or displaced persons, older populations, and those with underlying health conditions.'

Based on the UNDP's data analysis, the primary causes of the disproportionate impacts of global warming on society are embedded in structural and socioeconomic inequalities, as well as intergenerational policy gaps. These factors also include age, race, ethnicity, and gender.

Structural and socioeconomic inequalities: The effects of global warming and the resources required to combat these effects are unevenly distributed worldwide, primarily driven by global capitalism. Low-income countries and vulnerable groups within these countries face a greater risk of climate-related losses and damages, according to UNDP reports.

The academic literature describes social inequality as a vicious cycle, where initial disparities cause disadvantaged groups to face varying impacts from climate change, which in turn leads to further exacerbation of these disparities. International humanitarian agencies classify the types of inequalities into three categories: intersocietal (including gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and age), financial and income-related, and political power and access to public resources, such as health, education, housing, and finance.

James K. Boyce, a renowned environmentalist at the University of Massachusetts, discusses how political processes embed inequality and environmental harm into the power structure of a state or country. According to his analysis, social decisions tend to favour the powerful, following the Power Weighted Social Decision Rule (PWSDR). In the PWSDR, privileged class utilises laws, policies, and

budgets to shield itself from the impacts of climate change. Consequently, the political elite directs resources and policies that benefit itself, keeping disadvantaged groups vulnerable and exposed to climate risks. Additionally, all these phenomena, as discussed above, can be observed explicitly on the roads and streets of Pakistan, particularly in the lives of workers and laborers, which highlights their vulnerability to sun exposure.

Yaqub Khan, a laborer at the Work Department of ICP, reported developing a headache, body pains, extreme exhaustion, and worsening vitiligo, a skin disease marked by white patches, while working during peak hours from 8 to 4 in the morning and at noon.

A security guard at the Bank of Khyber, who requested anonymity, talked about socioeconomic disparities, highlighting the systemic inequality between public officials and workers like himself. He observed that the privileged perform their duties in comfortable environments with air conditioning, while he works under a hot fan. He expressed discomfort from dry, teary eyes and his frequent feelings of exhaustion during these scorching heat days.

Muhammad Ismail, an elderly disabled man who sells masks to earn a living, prayed to God to reduce the global heat. His situation appears heartbreaking; he has no wheelchair to move around, no house to live in, nor any head covering to beg or sell his goods on the streets. He drags his feet across the hot pavement to move from one place to another.

Zahir Sher, a laborer aged over 60, was complaining of intense heat, compounded by the problems of poverty, financial instability, and unemployment. He claimed that he cannot beg, nor can he work, due to the unbearable heat and the unavailability of work. Lacking basic facilities, such as fans and electricity at home, he is indecisive about which way to adapt.

An Afghan immigrant, Muhammad Saddiq, aged 35. He faces discrimination at the hands of the bureaucratic elite, per se, due to his status as a refugee. The issue of global warming has exacerbated his already existing problems, making his life more vulnerable, including the fragile infra-

structure of his house, the scarcity of clean water, and frequent power cuts.

Cultural norms: Societal expectations are the second element listed, which explains why only certain parts of society are highly vulnerable to the effects of global warming. Stereotypical roles in Pakistan have exacerbated these issues, like in KPK and in interior Sindh and Southern Punjab, where they are tasked predominantly to handle their household chores of fetching food and water from remote areas.

Pakistan is the fifth most vulnerable nation to the impacts of the climate crisis. The gender disparity in susceptibility indicates that women are the most affected. A claim supported by research data from Dawn and others suggests that 77 percent of women and 34 percent of men in Sindh, as well as 70 percent of women and 30 percent of men in Punjab, are adversely affected by climate change.

Rachel Yavinsky, senior advisor to PRB, Population Reference Bureau, a non-partisan research organisation focused on population, health, and the environment, said, 'Studies have shown that women disproportionately suffer from the impacts of disasters, severe weather events, and climate change because of cultural norms and the inequitable distribution of roles, resources, and power, especially in developing countries.'

Climate change isn't gender neutral, said the footer of the UN's website. Studies have found that women can barely survive in extreme weather conditions and natural hazards. A 2025 UN Spotlight brief, an EU and UN's joint initiative to end gender violence under the SDG of gender equity, finds that climate change is intensifying the socio-economic stresses that are heightening the levels of abuse against females, as one study found that a 28 per cent increase has been recorded in femicide during heatwaves.

Intergenerational Inequity: The last and third factor mentioned in the existing literature regarding the oversensitivity of some parts of the global community is intergenerational inequity. Young and old are the most affected at this instant, compared to adults observed by the IPCC, the Intergovernmental Panel on

Climate Change, stating that natural hazards impact girls more than women and boys more than men, whereby the elderly over 65 years of age are prone to heat related deaths that are being increased by approximately 85% between 2000-2004 and 2017-2021, according to the WHO.

The inability to regulate internal body temperature and eliminate heat can put humans at risk for heat exhaustion and heatstroke. This bodily strain stresses the heart and kidneys, resulting in their acute injuries and failure.

On the other hand, when considering intergenerational inequality in particular, children and young people today have not significantly contributed to the climate crisis; yet, they will bear the brunt of its impacts as they progress through life. The decisions of previous generations jeopardise human rights; these rights must be central to all climate decision-making and action (UNDP). Our youth are chanting slogans while criticising their ancestral generations in the following words: 'You'll die of old age, and I'll die of climate change.' 'The climate is changing, why not we?', 'Go green, there is no planet B', where some, like Greta Thunberg, a Swedish activist, constructively composed her thoughts, saying, 'My generation and those coming after are the future we deserve to be fought for, we deserve climate justice, social justice, and equity.'

Recent findings from the 2024 report indicate that three-quarters of the world's children (approximately 766 million) experienced extreme heat waves. UNICEF warns that record temperatures threaten all children in Pakistan with heat stress, risking dehydration, heat stroke, and issues like psychological stress, concentration problems, and school closures.

Global warming is a complex issue that unfairly impacts the underprivileged. Structural, cultural, and generational gaps increase the vulnerability of specific societal groups. The facts and data presented are based on empirical sampling, collected through interviews and secondary sources from impartial international humanitarian organizations. These all demonstrate that climate change, driven by global capitalism, is occurring, making climate justice a necessity.

Foreign leaders turn Trump sycophancy up to 11

Aaron Blake

IT'S not exactly news that foreign leaders - much like their counterparts in the United States - have concluded that flattery is a necessary prerequisite to doing business with President Donald Trump. In his first term, Trump seemed practically smitten by the "love letters" he received from North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. Other leaders pulled out all the stops to make him feel special.

But even against that backdrop, we've entered new and striking territory. As Trump has undertaken a much more transparently transactional second term and busted a series of norms while politicizing his office, it seems foreign leaders have taken notice of the new paradigm. So they've turned the obsequiousness up to 11. It seems no amount of sycophancy is deemed over the top, no accolade too premature.

Despite most of the world's people having remarkably little faith in Trump, these leaders are treating him as an all-conquering hero on the world stage, in escalating terms. On Wednesday, this took the form of multiple African leaders, expressing support, with some prompting, for Trump to receive his much-coveted Nobel Peace Prize. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had gotten the ball rolling on this Monday by signaling he had nominated Trump, and nobody was about to disagree.

"I can guarantee you that Mauritania would never be opposed to President Trump receiving a Nobel Peace Prize," said the president of that country, Mohamed Ould Ghazouani, during a lunch at the White House. "Of course we are" supportive of Trump winning the prize, Guinea-Bissau's President Umaro Sissoco Embaló said.

Senegalese President Bassirou Diomaye Faye called it "a deserved prize." "I think that President Trump deserves it for all the efforts that he's worked on," Gabonese President Brice Oligui Nguema said. Nguema cited a peace deal the Trump administration has brokered between the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda. Never mind that we have no idea how real that deal actually is, and that Trump has failed to end the wars in Gaza and Ukraine, as he promised to do upon taking office. And never mind that Trump, in the same event Wednesday, displayed a striking lack of familiarity with the African continent. "I didn't know I'd be treated this nicely," Trump said. "This is great. We could do this all day long." It seems foreign leaders would happily oblige. At the same event Wednesday, Senegal's president suggested Trump's supposed foreign policy acumen stemmed from his prowess as a "tremendous golf player." He even suggested the American president might invest in a golf course in Senegal, as Trump's personal business has done in ethically dubious ways elsewhere. Netanyahu was also effusive after Trump authorized US strikes on Iran.

He repeatedly cast the strikes as history-altering, calling them a "pivot of history" that can help lead the Middle East and beyond to a future of prosperity and peace." Netanyahu added that the "forces of civilisation thank you." Perhaps even more remarkable recently has been NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte's rhetoric,

given Trump's less-than-easy relationship with that alliance. After the Iran strikes last month, Trump posted on Truth Social a personal message from Rutte that sounded as if it could have been written by the White House's communications team. Rutte called the strikes "truly extraordinary, and something no one else dared to do."

"Europe is going to pay in a BIG way, as they should, and it will be your win," Rutte said, remarking on Trump's push to get NATO members to spend more on defense. "You will achieve something NO American president in decades could get done," he added. Then at the NATO summit in The Hague, Rutte responded to a vulgarity Trump uttered by likening him to "daddy." He said: "Daddy?has to sometimes use strong language." Rutte denied he was calling Trump NATO's "daddy." But his use of the word aligned with Trump allies' well-cultivated image of him as a domineering "daddy" figure dispensing tough love. And the White House and Trump quickly seized upon the remark accordingly. We might never know how intentional Rutte's remark was. But it was a massive gift to the American president that cast NATO in a subservient position vis-à-vis Trump, just as he would prefer. And despite Rutte's efforts to downplay it, Trump clearly isn't about to let him. And that's really the point here. Praising Trump so effusively might seem harmless. Foreign leaders often heap praise on one another while conducting diplomacy, however disingenuously, because that's what you do.

But while some level of that is to be expected, there are gradations. At some point, leaders may sacrifice their credibility and rhetorically transfer power to someone who might not always have their interests at heart. You might recall how then-Vice President Mike Pence heaped praise on Trump; in 2017, he spent three straight minutes at a Cabinet meeting praising Trump an average of once every 12 seconds. Fast forward to January 6, 2021, when Trump - appearing indifferent to Pence's fate - criticized his vice president as rioters descended on the US Capitol. Pence has since expressed plenty of concern with the direction Trump has taken the conservative movement and his power grabs on issues like tariffs. The effusive treatment of Trump also can't help but reinforce the transactional nature of his second term. To the extent the flattery actually works on Trump, it's in effect trading policy decisions for his own personal accolades. Netanyahu seems to have calculated that this is a great way to keep Trump interested in a controversial policy that the Israeli leader supports: striking Iran. Qatar's leaders have clearly deduced that giving the aviation-enthusiast Trump a souped-up airplane is a great way to win his affections, even as some Republicans have worried about the strings that are attached and about Trump getting too cozy with a country that has been linked to terrorist groups.

But the calculation that you just give Trump what he wants and worry about the rest later is proliferating, as evidenced by the increasing number of institutions bowing to Trump's transparent domestic power grabs. Now, it appears to have resulted in a game of one-upmanship by foreign leaders.

Historic opportunity to transform Lebanon is being squandered

Khaled Abou Zahr

A few days before US Special Envoy Tom Barrack's visit to Lebanon on Monday, Hezbollah organized mass demonstrations in Beirut's southern suburbs, giving its answer to the American request for the group's disarmament. Hezbollah stated clearly: it will not disarm.

Thousands of its members took to the streets chanting slogans such as "the resistance will not kneel," "no to American dictates," and "weapons protect the homeland." This show of force diverges from the written answer given to Barrack by President Joseph Aoun, which the former described as "something spectacular," adding he was "unbelievably satisfied" with it.

While the content of the letter has not been shared, it clearly contradicts Hezbollah's message of sending its people to the streets and rejecting the US-backed plan calling for a phased disarmament.

Moreover, in a televised speech, Secretary-General Naim Qassem reaffirmed that Hezbollah would not consider laying down its arms for now. This represents a clear departure from the negotiated path that Aoun stated he was aiming for, as well as the US requests.

Let us call it what it is: Hezbollah can only send messages of threat to the Lebanese and no one else. It was soundly defeated by the Israelis. Moreover, its own master was also delivered a severe military blow while it stood silent. And so, these weapons are worthless in terms of national defense and they are not a form of resistance but of oppression.

I agree (though not for the same reasons) with Hezbollah that its arsenal should not be subject to negotiations, because it should be surrendered immediately, without any preconditions or a political solution. These weapons are nothing but a threat to other

Lebanese and the sovereignty of the country. These weapons are the cause of the destruction, as much so as the dangerous ideology pushed by Hezbollah.

What comes next? Hezbollah will probably execute "loosely" on the Israeli requests for disarmament, particularly regarding its presence south of the Litani River. And so, the exit formula will be another version of what was witnessed between Iran and Israel following their 12-day war: a formula that gives enough butter to Hezbollah's leaders to spread on their bread and to shift their speech into a symbolic victory to market to their crowd. Do the group's members still believe this? Even after the severe hits it has taken. The reality is that Israel is the only victor here and a historic opportunity for the Lebanese government to transform the country is being lost.

Unfortunately, the Lebanese state will not be able to push forward with a full disarmament. It has surrendered to Hezbollah's will, like all its predecessors. Moreover, the US will not act with increased pressure, nor will it propose a timeline. It is up to the Lebanese to take care of themselves. This was very clear from Barrack's statement: great words for and about the Lebanese people, including Hezbollah, which he qualified as a political force that Israel must accept. Nothing solid delivered or to deliver. And it is better this way. Let the Lebanese handle it.

There is, hence, a total acceptance of Hezbollah's status within the Lebanese state. The direct threat to Israel has been eliminated and the rest now seems irrelevant. The Lebanese leadership has submitted to the will of Hezbollah and Lebanon will continue to drift in chaos. Barrack said

as much to the Lebanese, just dipped in a honeyed speech of greatness: "Good luck with that, you can do it" was the message. The total collapse of the Lebanese file has a different tone this time, and I do not think the Lebanese even care anymore. Life under occupation and amid geopolitical shifts has taken its toll. Aside from a small minority, the Lebanese have accepted this situation and will live with it.

The biggest threat to Lebanon regarding Hezbollah's disarmament is that its continued provocations may force a response from Damascus. The group is inviting renewed foreign interference that will further undermine Lebanese sovereignty. This is the biggest difference in our current environment. The US does not need to threaten; it can leave it to the new leadership in Syria to deal with this if things get out of hand. This solution will not bring stability to Lebanon, as we can all

imagine. It will perpetuate the never-ending cycle of interference.

Taking the transformation in Syria and Barrack's speech into account, Hezbollah should act fast and smart: deliver its arsenal to the Lebanese state, free its community and free Lebanon from this regional entanglement. The odds of this happening are slim to none. Yet the risk of other groups resorting to weapons to protect themselves against Hezbollah's domestic show of force is increasing by the day. Geopolitical situational awareness is needed by all.

In this current scenario, where the centralized government is not able to reassert full sovereignty over the country, the decline will certainly continue. How can we not see that federalism is the best solution? It will give each group local autonomy while preserving national unity. This is a final chance before the total dissolution of the country.

North Caucasus women decry dire conditions in Syrian camps

Ayman Eckford

‘There are 2,000 Dagestani women without children in the Al-Hawl and Roj camps, which are under Kurdish control in Syria,” said L., a Dagestani woman recently rescued from Al-Hawl, a sprawling detention facility in northeastern Syria. “Many more families with children are also held there. I don’t know the exact number, but our living conditions are absolutely unbearable,” she said, speaking on condition of anonymity for safety reasons.

Located near the Iraqi border, Al-Hawl was initially established to house Iraqi refugees fleeing the Gulf War and, later, the US-led invasion of Iraq. Today, it holds thousands of women and children, many of them relatives of Islamic State fighters, under the control of Kurdish-led forces. “Women and children are subjected to torture and beatings by the Kurdish authorities,” L. said. “We are being held without any legal protection, in horrific conditions. Some of us don’t just live in tents, but in ‘prison toilets’ - essentially latrines converted into cells. Even healthy people develop heart conditions and contract tuberculosis in those cells.”

L. is one of many women labeled as affiliated with the Islamic State (ISIS), the terrorist organization that seized swathes of territory in Syria and Iraq in 2014 and declared a caliphate. While IS still exists in some form, the self-proclaimed state collapsed in late 2019 after the battle of Baghuz Fawqani. In the aftermath, wives, sisters and children of ISIS fighters, many of whom are foreign nationals, were sent to Kurdish-controlled camps in northeastern Syria.

There are no precise figures on how many women and children from Russia and its annexed territories are being held in these camps, but many appear to hail from the North Caucasus. Families detained in these camps describe harrowing living conditions and say they feel they have been abandoned by the international community. Some children have spent their entire lives in detention, either being born in the camps or brought in as infants during the final battles with ISIS. Others were preschoolers at the time and barely remember the group.

“For six years, children aged 12 and older have been taken from Al-

Hawl and separated from their mothers, essentially locked in special prisons for teenagers,” L. said. “The conditions they live in are terrible. You can imagine the trauma they’ve endured, being separated from their mothers and siblings. Regardless of a mother’s past, she is still a mother. And children should not be punished for their parents’ mistakes.”

According to L., mothers are often left in the dark about their sons’ whereabouts. Though a handful of children have been returned to families, she described these instances as “manipulative gestures” rather than systemic change.

“In Roj, this particular practice doesn’t exist, but even there, Kurdish authorities are cruel toward children, including toddlers, abusing them physically and emotionally. When the media are nearby, they pretend to be kind. But when the cameras are gone, they show their true faces,” she said. On social media platforms such as Telegram and Facebook, North Caucasus women routinely organize fundraisers for warm clothing and blankets for their imprisoned sons, or to pay bribes to Kurdish guards in hopes of securing their release. “The Chechens have practically ransomed all their fellow citizens. There are far fewer Chechen families left in the camps,” said Ansar Dishni, a representative of NIYSO, a Chechen independence organization.

He said his group regularly receives requests for help raising the money needed to free someone. “There are many groups that pay bribes to get women and children out of the camps - if you’re able to pay,” added Ali Charinskiy, a representative of the Independent Dagestan in Ukraine initiative. “It costs around \$15,000 to get someone out. I know, because I personally helped to ransom and free one family from the camp.” Charinskiy also blamed Russian authorities for funneling disaffected youth toward Syria in the early years of the war.

“Before 2014, the authorities in the North Caucasus were pressuring young Muslims who could resist,” he explained. “The FSB allowed people to leave for Syria, doing nothing to prevent families from joining the anti-Assad resistance or even terrorist groups. Their goal was to get rid of Muslim youth who might engage

in Islamic solidarity or the Dagestani liberation movement. And then Russia came to Syria to fight for Assad, and bombed them.” Dishni echoed that view, attributing youth radicalization to decades of Russian repression.

“The main reason was strict control and persecution by Russian authorities. That’s what drove many young families to leave,” he said. While Russia had a role in creating the conditions that led to the camps, it has done little in the way of resolving the crisis. Inside Russia, the plight of ISIS-affiliated women and children is taboo, and even discussing it can lead to criminal charges. In July 2024, Russian theater director Zhenya Berkovich and playwright Svetlana Petriyчук were sentenced to six years in prison for “justifying terrorism” over their play “Finist, the Brave Falcon,” which tells the story of Russian women lured into joining ISIS fighters in Syria. Though the play clearly condemns ISIS, its subject matter proved too politically charged. In contrast, British author Nussaaibah Yoonis’ 2025 satirical novel “Fundamentally,” about a London academic trying to rescue a former ISIS bride from a Syrian camp, became a bestseller and was short-listed for the Women’s Prize for Fiction.

And in 2019, Azadeh Moaveni’s “Guest House for Young Widows,” a nonfiction account of 13 women linked to ISIS, was named one of the year’s best books by The New York Times, The Toronto Star and The Guardian. Experts agree that early intervention is key for deradicalization. The sooner children are removed from such camps, the better their prospects. But return efforts remain inconsistent. Though some women and children have been returned to the North Caucasus, the process is slow and complicated. “We know of only a few isolated cases where women who voluntarily returned from the camps were subjected to criminal prosecution,” said Dishni of NIYSO. Generally, in Chechnya and other parts of the region, families of former ISIS members face little systematic prosecution, he said. While returnees are screened, these measures rarely escalate into persecution.

However, he warned that “in Russia, where the repressive machine operates outside the law, no one is truly safe.” Even if not officially charged, women returned to Chechnya may face intimidation and harassment, he said. Charinskiy, from Independent Dagestan in Ukraine, described cases in which Dagestani women deported back to Dagestan were separated from their children and jailed. “That’s why many women are afraid to return,” he said. “Whether to return or stay is a deeply personal choice,” said L., the Dagestani woman. “Everyone has their own plans and preferences. But right now, Syria seems like the safer option.” Still, many women say they want to go home.

“There’s no one-size-fits-all answer,” said Dishni. “Each case is unique. You have to consider broader factors - regional dynamics, international policies and how returnees are treated.” He added that in some cases, returning teenagers to their extended families in the North Caucasus may offer the most humane and stable path forward. “The family structure there is based on mutual support. If these kids are surrounded by their loved ones, they might find stability, care and a path to reintegration,” he said. The political landscape in Syria is also shifting. Since the fall of Bashar al-Assad’s regime, the new Salvation Government led by President Ahmed al-Sharaa has spoken about freeing detainees from Kurdish camps and has reportedly opened negotiations with Kurdish forces - though no concrete progress has been made. L. said that conditions have worsened under the Kurdish authorities, who are now abdicating responsibility.

“With the arrival of new authorities, we hope for the emergence of more transparent and legal mechanisms for rescuing the women and children trapped in these camps,” Dishni said. “We expect that competent bodies within the new Syrian government will establish channels for their release and ensure their safety.” “I’m sure the new government is preoccupied with other issues right now, so the women and kids from Roj and Al-Hawl are not their priority. And the Kurds see them as bargaining chips,” Charinskiy said. “It’s a shame, but I hope it will change.”

The Moscow Times

Putin is laughing at Britain and France’s desperate N-gambit

SIR Keir Starmer and Emmanuel Macron are the undisputed leaders of Europe - or at least that’s what the British Prime Minister and French president hoped to convey during their three-day summit in London this week. At this stage, it’s hard to disagree.

Despite Chancellor Friedrich Merz’s aim to give Germany the strongest conventional military in Europe, Berlin is still reticent to stick its neck out on behalf of the entire continent - and it’s unlikely that certain other European countries would support German military leadership in any case. Poland, meanwhile, might spend more on defence as a proportion of GDP than anybody else in Nato, but it lacks the institutional heft or influence to organise a pan-European response.

Starmer and Macron, for better or worse, have taken the weight on their shoulders because nobody else was going to do it. The so-called “Coalition of the Willing” in support of Ukraine is in essence a British-French mechanism designed as much to send a message to Trump’s Washington as it is to back Kyiv. And the message is clear: Europe, or at least Europe’s most significant powers, are taking responsibility for their own neighbourhood.

The UK-France summit was an attempt to codify this leadership role through a litany of joint defence initiatives, from researching the next generation of anti-ship cruise missiles to coordinating their respective nuclear forces to deter - and if necessary, respond to - Russian nuclear threats against Europe. As a press release from 10 Downing Street stated, “any adversary threatening the vital interests of Britain or France could be confronted by the strength of the nuclear forces of both nations”.

On paper, this sounds like a big deal. The French have been historically touchy about their sovereignty, especially in the nuclear domain. The purpose of this announcement, of course, is to give Europe’s adversaries - chiefly Russia’s Vladimir Putin - second thoughts about ever using his 5,500-strong nuclear warhead

Daniel DePetris

stockpile on a European target.

Look a bit deeper, however, and it is less significant than advertised. In fact, it feels awfully similar to the “Coalition of the Willing,” where the perception of the Europeans stepping up to the plate is outpacing the reality.

The pro-Ukraine coalition was sold by European politicians and policy elites as an illustration of Europe’s boldness at a time of war. The Russian despot next door was menacing a free and democratic neighbour, the logic went, and European governments were pooling resources and exhibiting the political will

result: with Trump on the sidelines, Europe’s “Coalition of the Willing” has not been willing to do much of anything other than establish a symbolic headquarters in Paris to engage in yet more planning.

Nuclear collaboration between the UK and France looks like a sequel to this movie. Yes, both states are now on record that their nuclear arsenals can - and likely would - be coordinated in the event of an extreme threat to Europe’s security. But most of Europe is already under the US nuclear umbrella anyway, so this latest declaration is more a supplement to the existing arrangement than a new paradigm.

The purpose of this announcement, of course, is to give Europe’s adversaries - chiefly Russia’s Vladimir Putin - second thoughts about ever using his 5,500-strong nuclear warhead stockpile on a European target. Look a bit deeper, however, and it is less significant than advertised. In fact, it feels awfully similar to the “Coalition of the Willing,” where the perception of the Europeans stepping up to the plate is outpacing the reality.

to not only stop the Russians in their tracks but to enforce any ceasefire hammered out between Kyiv and Moscow. And even more important, the Europeans were proceeding without relying on the United States to organise the initiative.

But it turned out too good to be true. The UK and France may have been prepared to deploy some ground troops and combat aircraft to preserve the peace in Ukraine, but only if they received a back-stop - i.e. protection - from Uncle Sam. Starmer and Macron talked a big game but weren’t willing to go further without Washington in their camp.

The Trump administration had no intention of serving as Europe’s insurance carrier on a scheme that, if the worst case scenario occurred, would have forced the US military into a direct conflict with a nuclear-armed Russia. The

Frankly, it’s easy for both states to pledge something like this when they understand perfectly well that any major armed conflict in Europe is likely to drag in the United States anyway.

And will UK-French nuclear cooperation even strengthen Europe’s deterrence against Russia? We can certainly hope so. Yet non-nuclear countries along Russia’s periphery will continue to ask the same question they asked of the US nuclear deterrent: can we really assume a foreign country would use a nuclear weapon in our defence, knowing full well that its own cities and populations will be at high risk of nuclear retaliation? In other words, if Russia used a nuclear weapon in the Baltics (fortunately still a highly implausible scenario), can those countries truly count on Starmer and Macron to make the conscious choice to plunge into a nuclear exchange?

Democratic leaders can’t beat Trump’s agenda

THE immigration policies included in the “big, beautiful bill” that President Trump just signed into law are not wise, strategic or safe. It’s not even enforcement. It’s politics. With this bill, we’ve created a detention and deportation machine with a footprint comparable to the defense budgets of nations like Poland, Israel and France. That is the scale of what Congress has now funded: an enforcement regime so massive it rivals military-grade spending in allied nations, deployed not abroad for national defense, but at home, against workers, families and longtime residents.

Trump and Congress have expanded Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention by \$45 billion - a 265 percent annual increase to ICE’s current detention budget. It is a nearly 62 percent larger budget than the entire federal prison system and could result in the detention of up to 150,000 people. By spring 2026, we’re looking at a projected 30,000 removals each month - many of them non-criminal migrants, workers and families, with more than a decade of residing and working in the US. These are not mostly fugitives. They are parents, caregivers and employees being ripped from their families and jobs. With this budget bill, we are diverting law enforcement agents from real threats - drug traffickers, sexual predators and human smugglers - to arresting grocery clerks, construction workers and housekeepers.

That’s because Trump is forcing ICE to focus on migrants who are easy to deport, not dangerous. People who are easy targets, not threats. Congress and the Trump administration have turned

Jason P. Houser

law enforcement into a numbers game, when what we need is an actual security strategy - policies, not just punishment.

Democrats now have no choice but to lead with something better. As Trump allies focus on mass arrests while ignoring actual public safety and economic needs, the country needs a meaningful counterproposal: a functional blueprint that takes law enforcement seriously, protects communities and honors our values. Immigration is complicated, but Democrats need to stop hiding. The American people are ready for leadership.

Let’s be clear: our immigration system is overwhelmed. But throwing more people in detention won’t fix it. It only creates the illusion of action. The root problem lies in our overwhelmed immigration courts: there are over 3.7 million pending court cases. Many migrants wait five years or more for a decision. If we brought on 1,500 immigration judge teams, at approximately \$12 billion over the next five years, this could significantly reduce the court backlog by half within that time frame. We also need to focus enforcement: create Tier One Threat Teams to target those convicted of violent crimes and present national security risks. Right now, nearly 65 percent of those in custody have no prior criminal convictions, and only 7 percent have any history of a violent conviction. That 7 percent is what ICE needs to keep its focus on - not cracking down on day laborers.

We need to fund case management, to ensure people show up to their immigration court dates without fear that they’re going to be thrown into detention. Community programs can

cost just \$7 per day to run, and have traditionally ensured over 90 percent compliance. Through these programs we can support a million people annually for just \$3 billion. We need to streamline legal pathways. US Citizenship and Immigration Services has an additional backlog of 4.3 million cases, spanning employment, family reunification, asylum and naturalization applications. For \$5 billion, we can hire 10,000 US Citizenship and Immigration Services adjudicators and digitize processing.

Finally, we need to improve removal infrastructure and ensure oversight. For \$4-\$5 billion, we can deport people with final removal orders, instead of the chaos and cruelty we’re seeing right now with mass workplace raids. With an additional \$3 billion, we can build real-time data dashboards, implement body-worn camera mandates, and establish oversight boards to ensure immigration enforcement remains honest and humane. This plan costs between \$32 billion and \$34 billion. That still leaves about \$8 billion from the current law’s spending to manage migration spikes or return to taxpayers. It’s a real plan - not a press release or campaign stunt, but a humane, working immigration system.

Democratic leaders in Congress must now take a firm stance in response to a law that is taking our country in the wrong direction. This is the moment to speak, legislate boldly, and lead with a vision of a functional and humane immigration system that meets America’s needs. The summer of 2025 is the front line. It’s time to fight. As Gen. George Patton said, “Fear kills more people than death.”

The Hill

Indonesia’s procurement of Turkish fighter jets

Adinda Khaerani Epstein

THIS year, Türkiye and Indonesia celebrated the 75th anniversary of their diplomatic relationship. During a visit to Indonesia in February, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan met with Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto. The leaders convened a high-level strategic cooperation council, a bilateral mechanism for state-level negotiations that resulted in multiple [1] agreements in the fields of energy, health, agriculture, defense, communications, and education. The leaders also agreed to speed up the comprehensive partnership agreement process, aiming for a higher trade volume of \$10 billion [2].

Later, in June, the two countries also signed a memorandum of understanding for the sale to Indonesia of 48 units [3] of Türkiye’s fifth-generation fighter jet KAAAN. The agreement was made during the biennial Indo Defense Expo & Forum, which took place in Jakarta. This initiative is seen as part of Indonesia’s efforts to diversify its sources for primary defense systems. The expected delivery date for the fifth-generation fighter aircraft manufactured by Turkish Aerospace Industries is expected within the next 10 years [4].

The KAAAN fighter, which is equipped with stealth technology, is expected to enhance Indonesia’s air defense capabilities, particularly in

light of the escalating air threats from adversarial forces [5] with fifth-generation technology in the Indo-Pacific region. Jakarta and Ankara have a history of engaging in defense collaboration. In the 2010s, the Kaplan MT, a medium-weight tank, was developed through a collaboration between Turkish armored-vehicle manufacturer FNSS and Indonesian state-owned firm PT Pindad. The new fighter jet pact demonstrates the countries’ commitment to strengthening their relationship through strategic collaboration. In addition, Erdogan hailed the agreement as the most significant [6] in the history of his nation’s defense industry. The agreement between Indonesia’s Defense Ministry and the Turkish Defense Industries Secretariat (SSB) is anticipated to broaden the partnership in accordance with their free and active foreign policy and their aim to reduce dependence on China and the United States.

In addition to demonstrating Indonesia’s confidence in Türkiye’s defense capabilities, the pact also indicated that the two countries have become increasingly close partners. Baykar, a Turkish company that specializes in unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), has formed a joint venture [7] with Republikorp, Indonesia’s foremost defense company, in order to build a drone factory in Indonesia. This partnership was established the

same year. Both heads of state were present in February at Bogor Palace in West Java to witness the signing of the agreement.

Türkiye maintains the second-largest permanent military force in NATO and benefits from a robust defense industry. Given his background as a former general and defense minister, President Prabowo’s administration is expected to prioritize national defense capabilities. His perspective on the significance of sufficient defense capabilities is in alignment with Türkiye’s Asia Anew Initiative, which emphasizes cooperation with its Asian counterparts, including members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Furthermore, the fact that the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has become the focal point [8] of global trade and the necessity for Türkiye to diversify its trade have created the potential for even more significant collaboration between the two countries, particularly in defense. For example, Malaysia, another ASEAN member state, has also expressed interest in the KAAAN program. Indonesia has the potential to produce a significant air force in Southeast Asia by actively participating in international fighter aircraft programs and diversifying its fleet. Nevertheless, this position can only be attained if the government is able to align its ambitious

goals within current fiscal realities, adheres to a consistent investment strategy, and settles on a clear strategic orientation.

Türkiye is likely to find it more convenient to continue implementing its Asia Anew Initiative in ASEAN, as the bloc’s economic dynamics are consistent with Ankara’s geopolitical objectives. This is likely to lead to stronger ties between the two countries. The broader geopolitical strategy of Türkiye, which is to establish new alliances in a multipolar world as the global economic and political power center shifts toward Asia, can also be interpreted in the context of improved relations with ASEAN. Given the current state of regional security, it is crucial for ASEAN member states to avoid excessive dependence on any major powers. Instead, they should strive to diversify their defense and economic cooperation with middle power countries, such as Türkiye. This is especially important given the current challenges to ASEAN’s centrality. Subsequently, the regional bloc’s strengthening partnership with Ankara is anticipated to yield favorable results.

The security dynamics of Southeast Asia are significantly shaped by ASEAN, and Türkiye plays a prominent role in both the Middle East and Southeastern Europe. Both parties may benefit from collaboration in regional security dialogues, counterterrorism, and defense.

Whose power is the war power?

Don Wolfensberger

JUNE was dominated in official Washington by news of all the political gyrations, frustrations and manipulations in President Trump’s massive reconciliation bill, which covered everything from budget cuts and tax cuts to border security and defense spending increases.

Trump’s “One Big Beautiful Bill Act,” as it was officially titled, was only displaced briefly as the top story by his June 21 use of B-2 Spirit bombers to drop a dozen big bad bunker-busting bombs on three Iranian nuclear enrichment facilities. The response from Congress was tepid at best, mainly because the bombing was followed by a cease-fire between Iran and Israel and Trump’s assurance that the bombing had destroyed Iran’s ability to develop nuclear weapons for decades to come. Any further US military actions would not be necessary.

Nevertheless, there was some concern on Capitol Hill that the president was going back on his campaign promises not to involve the US in any more “forever wars” in the Middle East, or anywhere else. That concern was reflected in public opinion polls showing overwhelming American opposition to being drawn-in militarily to the Israeli-Iranian conflict. During

Trump’s elaborate June 14 celebration in Washington of the US Army’s 250th anniversary, the display of military hardware on parade evoked reactions of both pride and trepidation. Large counter-protests were held across the country that same day under the rubric, “No More Kings.”

Members of Congress from both parties shared private concerns that Congress should play some role in at least overseeing any potential expansion of hostilities given the first branch’s constitutional role to declare war. Whenever the US is either attacked by a foreign power or initiates a preemptive strike against a foreign power, Congress usually reacts, at least rhetorically, to protect its prerogatives. At the very least, Congress expects to be consulted, either before or after an executive military move, and asked to authorize any continuing action.

All this back-and-forth raises the question as to whose power is the war power. The historical record of constitutional debates shows that the founders intentionally meant that answer to remain ambiguous so the two branches could sort it out, depending on the situation. Out of the tug-and-pull

between the two branches, the American people would be alerted to the core issues involved and weigh-in with their elected representatives.

That has not stopped Congress from trying to better define and delineate the lines of responsibility. The last declaration of war was for World War II. In 1973, during the tumult of the Vietnam War, Congress enacted the War Powers Resolution with, certain conditions and guard rails for American military involvement abroad. The measure was enacted over President Richard Nixon’s veto. He argued the act put unconstitutional constraints on his role as commander-in-chief.

Under the War Powers Resolution, absent a direct attack or a declaration of war by Congress, the president’s commitment of troops to hostilities must terminate after 60 days. Congress can end the US role sooner by passing a concurrent resolution (which does not require the president’s approval). Or, Congress can extend the continuation of American involvement by enacting a joint resolution authorizing the use of military force.

In the Iran case last month, Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Va.) and Reps. Thomas Massie (R-Ky.) and Ro Khanna (D-Calif.) introduced con-



Minister chairs 35th PSQCA Board Meeting

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The 35th Board of Directors meeting of the Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) was convened in Islamabad under the chairmanship of the Khalid Hussain Magsi, Federal Minister for Science and Technology and Chairman of the Board. The meeting was attended by Rizwan Ahmed Sheikh, Director General PSQCA, Muhammad Ashraf, Executive Director General, Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), Member; Abdul Karim Rind, Secretary PSQCA, Member; along with other participants with special permission. The session focused on a comprehensive agenda aimed at institutional reform, employee welfare, and service mod-

ernization.

In a series of landmark decisions, the Board took firm action on several long-pending issues to enhance the operational efficiency of PSQCA and provide relief to its workforce. Among the key outcomes was the approval for the regularization of PSQCA employees and the release of their pending salaries, signifying a strong commitment to staff welfare. Furthermore, the Board sanctioned the immediate disbursement of salaries to employees in the BS-01 to BS-04 categories, ensuring financial relief to lower-grade staff.

Promoting sustainability, the Board approved the installation of solar energy systems at all PSQCA Component Centers and the Head Office in Karachi. This move aims to encour-

age environmentally responsible and cost-effective energy practices. In line with Pakistan's international trade goals, the Board also gave the green light to initiate MoU with the UK's Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to boost trade facilitation for Pakistani food products.

To further modernize its internal processes, the Board endorsed the implementation of SAP software across PSQCA's Accounts, Finance, and Human Resource departments. The procurement of new operational vehicles, subject to approval from the Finance Division's Austerity Committee, was also approved to strengthen logistical and field operations across the organization.

In terms of employee support, the Board

approved the disbursement of incentive shares for the current fiscal year and sanctioned the continuation of existing medical services as per the Medical Attendance Rules 2004. Additionally, a significant step was taken towards international collaboration in automotive standards, with approval granted for signing a Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) with a foreign automobile testing laboratory.

The meeting concluded with a strong emphasis on transparency, accountability, and the swift execution of all approved decisions. Federal Minister Mr. Khalid Hussain Magsi praised the efforts of the PSQCA team and instructed all departments to ensure timely implementation to deliver improved services and outcomes.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Science and Technology Khalid Hussain Magsi chairing 35th PSQCA Board Meeting.

ICCI vows strong advocacy for community

ISLAMABAD (APP): Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), has reaffirmed the business community's unwavering commitment to national development, stating that despite various challenges, entrepreneurs remain determined to serve the country.

He emphasized that ICCI is fully dedicated to its advocacy role, serving as a bridge between the government and the private sector to facilitate ease of doing business and promote economic progress.

He expressed these views while addressing a delegation of the Builders Association, which visited the Chamber House under the leadership of its President Sardar Khurshid Ahmed Khan to discuss mutual cooperation and highlight sector-specific concerns.

Qureshi assured the visiting delegation that ICCI will proactively take up the issues facing the builders community with the relevant authorities, including the Capital Development Authority (CDA), to ensure their timely resolution and to help create a more congenial and supportive environment for builders and developers to operate efficiently.

Earlier, Sardar Khurshid Ahmed Khan, President of the Builders Association (H-13), briefed the Chamber leadership on the pressing challenges confronting the builders' sector, particularly those related to regulatory matters with CDA.

MG official urges industry to rethink pricing

F.P. Report

LAHORE: As Pakistan unveils its long-awaited New Energy Vehicle (NEV) Policy 2025-30, aimed at reducing emissions and fuel dependence, voices from within the auto industry are calling for a shift in how new technologies are priced and positioned in the market.

In a recent interaction with media in Lahore, Syed Asif Ahmed, General Manager Marketing Division at MG Motors, said that while the policy is a step in the right direction, the local Hybrid Electric Vehicle (HEV) market remains largely unaffordable and does not pass on the benefits of technological advancements to the average Pakistani consumer.

"HEVs in Pakistan have become a luxury for a niche market," Ahmed remarked. "Despite policy support, the real advantages have not trickled down to car buyers."

He noted that the most expensive HEV SUV in Pakistan—a seven-seater—carries an ex-factory price tag of Rs 16 million, while five-seater variants range from Rs 9.6 to 12 million.

"The industry must think seriously about affordability," he added, "and consider shifting toward Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEVs), which are better suited for urban use and offer real electric range."

Unveiled by the Ministry of Industries, the NEV

Policy 2025-30 introduces official classification for EVs, PHEVs, and hydro- gen-powered vehicles as "New Energy Vehicles"—in line with global standards.

Ahmed was also critical of how earlier tax incentives were structured, allowing traditional hybrids to be labelled as "New Energy Vehicles", primarily to benefit large automotive players. "Unfortunately, these subsidies neither helped the environment nor the people. They only benefited the principal companies and their local partners."

In contrast, PHEVs offer a more meaningful alternative, with pure EV driving capabilities for daily urban commutes and hybrid flexibility for long routes—helping tackle the range anxiety often associated with EVs.

MG Motors has taken a lead with the introduction of Pakistan's first locally assembled Plug-in Hybrid SUV, the MG HS PHEV. It features a 16.6kWh lithium-ion battery offering over 52 km of electric-only range, combined with a 1.5L turbocharged engine to deliver 260 HP and 370 Nm of torque—achieving 0-100 km/h in just 7.1 seconds. Priced under Rs 10 million, Ahmed described the MG HS PHEV as "the best value-for-money vehicle in its class," offering advanced tech, performance, and fuel economy.

Asif informed that MG has sold more than 16,000 vehicles in Pakistani market so far out of which approximately 2000 were Plug In Hybrid vehicles (PHEV) as Pakistani customers are realizing the true economic benefit of PHEV as it's a perfect urban mobility option for the urban consumers.

He says despite the changing trend of converting to PHEV from HEV Pakistani consumers have

just one choice in the shape of MG HS PHEV, although having a better technology but still placed lower than most hybrids in Pakistan.

Asif said that MG leads specification leadership in Pakistan. All automakers now follow the global specs MG introduced in MG HS in both CBU & CKD. MG vehicles have crossed approximately 350 million miles since its launch in Pakistan in 2021, and MG HS has successfully tested for Pakistan's fuel, terrain (road), and weather conditions, he added.

Asif said the vehicles in Pakistan are still expensive. Globally, hybrid vehicles deliver financial value when their purchase price does not exceed more than 10% of the cost of an equivalent petrol vehicle.

However, this benchmark is not practised in the Pakistani market. Here, the price gap between hybrids and their petrol counterparts is significantly wider averaging around 45%. For example, a C SUV hybrid vehicle costs up to Rs 12 million, while similar C SUV conventional petrol cars cost Rs 8.0 million. In Pakistan, the difference of price between hybrid and conventional petrol cars is approximately 4.0 million in the C SUV category.

While Pakistan's NEV policy sets a progressive roadmap, industry execution remains key. With more PHEV models expected to enter the market, the question remains will automakers use these incentives to empower consumers—or repeat the hybrid playbook of high margins and minimal environmental gains?

"The potential is enormous," Ahmed concluded. "But only if we prioritize real consumer value and environmental impact—over short-term profits."

Stocks fall as Trump ramps up tariff threats

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): European and US stock markets retreated Friday as US President Donald Trump ramped up his trade offensive, threatening a 35-per cent levy on Canada. Trump dampened earlier optimism by firing off more than 20 letters to governments outlining new tariffs if agreements are not reached by August 1. Bitcoin meanwhile pushed on with its climb, reaching an all-time high above \$118,000. The dollar was higher against its main rivals, and oil prices gained. Wall Street's three main indices fell, with both the S&P 500 and Nasdaq retreating from records. But the pullback was relatively modest, implying that many investors are taking a wait-and-see approach to Trump's latest tariff broadsides.

PIAF urges withdrawal of harsh tax laws to restore business confidence

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) has strongly opposed the recently introduced taxation measures that it says are stifling business activity and undermining trust in the formal economy. In a joint statement, PIAF Chairman Faheemur Rehman Saigol, Senior Vice Chairman Nasrullah Mughal, and Vice Chairman Tahir Manzoor Chaudhary demanded the immediate reversal of controversial laws empowering the tax authorities to arrest taxpayers on allegations of fraud and disallowing business expenses based on payment modes or supplier registration status.

The PIAF leadership criticized the introduction of laws that enable the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to arrest individuals without conviction and treat legitimate business transactions in cash as suspicious.

According to the newly inserted Sections 21Q and 21S of the Income Tax Ordinance, any transaction above Rs200,000 made in cash will result in the disallowance of 50 percent of claimed expenses, effectively increasing taxable income. Similarly, a 10 percent disallowance has been

imposed on purchases from suppliers who do not possess a National Tax Number (NTN), even if those suppliers are part of informal supply chains vital to small and medium enterprises.

Chairman Faheemur Rehman Saigol noted that these measures have triggered unrest across the country's business landscape, where traders and manufacturers are already struggling with high input costs, inflation, and regulatory burdens.

He said that while PIAF has always advocated for broadening the tax net and improving documentation, such punitive steps will backfire by driving more businesses toward informality and non-compliance. Saigol argued that instead of building a relationship of trust with the business community, the government seems to be criminalizing entrepreneurship by giving unchecked powers to tax officials.

Senior Vice Chairman Nasrullah Mughal said that the business sector had already shown patience despite shrinking margins and uncertain market conditions, but the recent amendments were seen as the last straw. He warned that these policies are creating a climate of fear rather than fostering transparency

or reform. Mughal urged the government to consult stakeholders before rolling out such measures and demanded the repeal of arrest powers granted to tax officers, the withdrawal of the cash expenditure disallowance clause, and the suspension of deputation of FBR staff in industrial units. He warned that if these demands are not met, PIAF members may not be able to hold back from joining the wider agitation campaign being considered by affected businesses nationwide.

Vice Chairman Tahir Manzoor Chaudhary emphasized that while PIAF supports digitalization and formalization of the economy, it cannot support abrupt enforcement without practical infrastructure, capacity-building, or support for smaller enterprises.

He said many businesses operate in cash not out of choice but due to supply chain realities and low digital penetration in certain markets. Penalizing them without offering viable alternatives amounts to punishing survival strategies. Chaudhary said the implementation of e-invoicing without phased adaptation is creating compliance chaos and disrupting regular operations.

The PIAF leadership

also expressed concern over the broader economic environment, saying that business confidence is rapidly eroding. Investors are wary of bringing capital into a system where the rules change overnight and businesses are treated as suspects.

The government, they said, must realize that no amount of taxation can compensate for the loss of trust. Instead of relying on coercion, it should pursue policy reforms through meaningful engagement and practical incentives.

They also stressed that the arrest provisions violate the principles of justice and due process, as the power to detain someone for alleged tax fraud should only rest with the courts, not enforcement officers. They emphasized that tax evasion must be dealt with, but within a legal and transparent framework—not through intimidation or harassment.

PIAF concluded that its doors remain open for dialogue and policy cooperation, but it expects the government to take immediate corrective action before the situation escalates further. If these laws are not suspended promptly, the organization fears irreversible damage to industrial activity, employment, and economic stability.

APBF urges refinement of new tax laws

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF) has taken note of the federal government's recently introduced tax-related policy decisions aimed at documenting the economy, broadening the tax base, and encouraging digital transactions. While expressing general support for the objectives behind these reforms, APBF leadership has urged the authorities to ensure that the roll-out of new measures is handled with clarity, fairness, and coordination to prevent disruption for businesses—particularly small and medium enterprises.

The All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF) President Syed Maaz Mahmood appreciated the govern-

ment's resolve to build a transparent tax culture and limit undocumented financial activity. He noted that global best practices encourage traceable, non-cash transactions, and Pakistan's journey toward such a model is both timely and essential. However, he pointed out that the private sector's cooperation depends on the government's ability to strike a balance between enforcement and facilitation.

APBF Chairman Ibrahim Qureshi echoed the sentiment, stating that Pakistan's economy is at a pivotal juncture where structural improvements in tax compliance can yield long-term benefits. He added that while deterrents for fraudulent behavior are justified, they must be accompanied by safeguards to

ensure genuine businesses are not unnecessarily penalized or subjected to procedural bottlenecks.

The All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF) leadership offered friendly advice to policymakers, suggesting that effective communication and stakeholder engagement would enhance the success of recent fiscal amendments. In particular, there is a need for clear guidance around the treatment of cash-based transactions and the recently enacted clauses that disallow a portion of expenditures in cases where payments exceed Rs200,000 without using banking channels.

The forum also advised a gradual adjustment period for the implementation of these clauses so that busi-

nesses can align their accounting and procurement practices with the new requirements.

On the issue of granting arrest powers to the tax authority in cases of suspected fraud, the forum emphasized the importance of judicial oversight and institutional checks. Rather than criticizing the initiative, the All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF) stressed that such provisions must be exercised with restraint and legal transparency to avoid misuse or fear among compliant taxpayers.

President Maaz Mahmood said that most responsible businesses are ready to adapt, but they require time, technological support, and a clear understanding of the operational changes

involved. He welcomed the Ministry of Finance's commitment to publishing an explanatory memorandum and hoped it would offer sufficient detail to dispel confusion and reduce ambiguity for taxpayers.

Chairman Ibrahim Qureshi pointed out that digital adoption should be supported through practical steps such as technical helplines, training sessions, and the availability of basic digital infrastructure—especially in underserved areas.

He emphasized that inclusivity and gradualism are vital to building a culture of voluntary compliance rather than resistance.

The forum assured the government of its willingness to collaborate in public outreach efforts, policy

feedback loops, and awareness campaigns designed to equip the business community with the tools needed for smooth compliance. APBF's regional chapters across the country have already initiated consultations with traders and industrialists to gather feedback and provide education on the implications of the new rules.

While the APBF expressed satisfaction that the government is taking strong action to curb tax evasion and undocumented trade, it urged that the voice of legitimate businesses be heard and addressed during the implementation phase.

Reforms are more effective, the forum noted, when they are co-owned by the stakeholders who are subject to them.

Khawaja Wajihuddin

The recent tragic episodes involving Humera Asghar and Ayesha Khan—both young actresses—have prompted me to write this article. These are not just isolated tragedies; they reflect a deep rot in our society's moral compass. What is even more disturbing is the sadistic attitude of society toward its own. These events hint at a truth we are often unwilling to face: the social fabric of Pakistan is fraying, and ethical and moral values are in freefall.

I recall a former railway minister who, when asked whether he would resign after a deadly train accident, casually responded that the manufacturer of the train should resign, not him. This casual deflection of responsibility is emblematic of a wider

trend. Consider the case of Noor Mukadam, the brutal lynching of two brothers by a mob in Punjab, or the recent murder of TikTok influencer Sana Yousaf in an alleged case of 'honour killing'. These are not aberrations; they are recurring headlines. And they speak to a society that seems increasingly indifferent to injustice.

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) reported over 60,000 cases of violence against women and children in Punjab alone in 2024. These included 405 honour killings, 4,175 rape cases, 1,641 domestic-related murders, and 1,630 instances of violence against children. A separate report by the Sustainable Social Development Organisation (SSDO) documented 32,617 gender-based violence (GBV)

cases across Pakistan, with conviction rates shockingly low: around 0.5% for rape and honour killings, 0.1% for kidnapping, and 1.3% for domestic violence.

These statistics are not just numbers—they are an indictment of a national failure. Our widespread indifference to moral issues has made it easier to ignore injustice, cruelty, and systemic breakdowns. Ironically, we're quick to criticize Western societies for their perceived lack of values. Yet, in my own life, I have seen non-Muslims display far more ethical consistency and a higher sense of moral duty—qualities that, tragically, are becoming rarer in our own country.

The Holy Quran contains nearly a hundred verses emphasizing the importance of ethics and morality. It urges believers to

embody justice, kindness, honesty, and personal responsibility. These values should have formed the moral foundation of our society. Instead, we see a disturbing contrast between these ideals and the everyday reality in Pakistan, where dishonesty, impunity, and moral decay dominate headlines and social media feeds alike.

But this is not because the people of Pakistan are inherently immoral. Rather, it is the result of systemic collapse, historical baggage, and institutional failure. Justice, when delayed or denied, undermines the very basis of a moral society. In Pakistan, the powerful often operate above the law, while the vulnerable are left defenseless. Accountability is selective. In such an environment, ethics are viewed not as strength, but as weakness.

Corruption is another deep-rooted moral issue. When political leaders, bureaucrats, and even religious figures are openly involved in corrupt practices, it sends a dangerous message: that integrity is incompatible with success. This culture of impunity normalizes dishonesty and cultivates cynicism among the masses.

Feudal and tribal structures still dominate large swathes of our society, where loyalty to caste or clan often takes precedence over truth and justice. These outdated power systems reinforce submission and discourage ethical dissent. Ethical conduct is frequently sacrificed to protect personal or group interests.

Our education system does little to reverse this moral decline. Schools teach students to memorize rather than to think. Civic

responsibility, empathy, and moral reasoning are rarely encouraged. Even religious education is often reduced to ritualistic learning, divorced from its ethical core. The result is a generation disconnected from the very values their faith promotes.

Moreover, religion itself is often politicized. Instead of serving as a moral compass, it is used as a tool for power and division. Public displays of religiosity—beards, slogans, and ritual—replace the actual practice of moral behavior. This disconnect breeds a dangerous form of hypocrisy that discredits religion's ethical message.

The media adds another layer to this moral erosion. Sensationalism sells. News channels and social media influencers celebrate controversy, wealth, and scandal over honesty, sacrifice,

or service. In this climate, public figures who lie or cheat often enjoy more admiration than those who tell the truth. No wonder we see little hesitation in electing the immoral or corrupt to positions of authority.

The roots of this decay also lie in our colonial legacy. Pakistan inherited not just railways and courts from the British, but also a bureaucratic mindset built to control, not serve. Even today, loyalty to authority is valued more than service to the people.

In a country where tens of millions live below the poverty line, moral choices are harder to make. For those struggling daily for survival, idealism becomes a luxury. Yet the problem isn't poverty alone—it's a system that rewards exploitation and punishes virtue, leaving little room

for ethical choices.

The moral crisis in Pakistan is not inevitable, and it is certainly not irreversible. Our people are not born unethical. They are products of a system that punishes truth and rewards deception. If we are to turn the tide, we must demand accountability, reform our education system, and cultivate ethical leadership. We must return to the true values—religious, cultural, and human—that form the bedrock of a just society.

Ethics must not remain confined to sermons and textbooks. They must become part of our everyday choices. Until then, morality in Pakistan will remain not just a personal dilemma, but a national emergency.

(The writer is former Registrar of Peshawar High Court)



In brief

National Tennis C'ship to begin in Karachi

KARACHI (PPI): The "National Tennis Championship" will commence at the DA Creek Club in Karachi from July 18. The tournament, organized by the Karachi Tennis Association, will continue for a week on synthetic hard courts. Top performers will be awarded prizes worth Rs. 150,000. The competition will include several categories: Juniors Under 18 (boys' and girls' singles and doubles), Boys Under 14 (singles and doubles), Girls Under 14 (singles and doubles), Boys Under 12 singles, Girls Under 12 singles, and Seniors 35 Plus doubles. To broaden participation, organizers have incorporated local ranking events, which include Men's singles, Women's singles, Boys and Girls Under 10 singles, and Under 7 singles. Interested players can register for the championship until July 15.

Swimming C'ship on Sunday

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Federal Area Swimming Association is holding the 2nd Twin Cities (Islamabad & Rawalpindi) Inter-School Boys Age-Group Swimming Championship 2025, on Sunday, July 13, here at the indoor Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) Swimming Pool. This exciting championship brings together young and talented swimmers from schools across Islamabad and Rawalpindi, offering them a platform to compete, showcase their skills, and foster healthy sporting spirit, said a press release. As part of the association's commitment to promoting aquatic sports in the region, the event aims to strengthen inter-school collaboration while identifying promising talent for future development. The competition will feature age-group categories and is expected to witness participation from dozens of schools, making it a key event in the region's youth sports calendar. All media representatives, school sports heads, and swimming enthusiasts are cordially invited to attend and cover this exciting event.

Marc Marquez battles back

SACHSEN RING (AFP): Marc Marquez overcame a first turn mistake to land the German MotoGP sprint race on the final lap at a slippery Sachsenring on Saturday. The run-away championship leader started on pole but the Ducati factory rider went wide at the first corner to drop back to fifth, with Marco Bezzecchi inheriting the lead. On lap three Franco Morbidelli suffered a bone-crunching crash at turn eight, the Ducati VR46 rider somersaulting through the air before landing on the gravel safety run-off area. With 10 laps to go Marquez had crept up into third as Bezzecchi (Aprilia) led by over one second from Fabio Quartararo, Yamaha's former champion who had set off from the third row of the grid. He then went in pursuit of Bezzecchi, hitting the front on the final lap to pull clear and leave the Italian in his wake, Quartararo hanging on for third. "I made a mistake on the exit of turn one, then I lost some positions, but step by step I got some rhythm, I'm happy," said Marquez who is seeking a seventh elite world title to draw level with the legendary Valentino Rossi and move one behind record-holder Giacomo Agostini. Bezzecchi was far from dejected at coming off second best to the man of the moment.

Swiatek inflicts 6-0 6-0 defeat on Anisimova to win Wimbledon

LONDON (Agencies): Poland's Iga Swiatek ruthlessly took advantage of American opponent Amanda Anisimova's nerves to win her maiden Wimbledon title, with the 6-0 6-0 victory taking just 57 minutes. Swiatek, 24, was also playing in her first final at the All England Club but looked more assured from the very start. No woman had won a Wimbledon with a double bagel - the name given to a victory without dropping a game - since 1911. It is the sixth Grand Slam victory of Swiatek's career, having won on each of her appearances in major finals. "It seems super surreal," said Swiatek, whose five previous titles came on clay or hard courts. "Honestly, I didn't even dream of winning Wimbledon because it was way too far. I feel like I'm an experienced player, having won other Slams, but I didn't expect this." Eighth seed Swiatek drew on all of her greater experience to race through the first set in just 25 minutes. Anisimova, just three months younger than Swiatek, looked tense from the very start and made a flurry of errors in an opener where she won just nine points. Despite a sympathetic Centre Court crowd willing her on, things did not improve in the second set for the 13th seed. A total of 28 unforced errors, plus five double faults, starkly illustrated Anisimova's struggles. Fighting back the tears as she addressed the crowd, Anisimova said: "It's been an incredible fortnight for me

- even though I ran out of gas. "I wish I could have put on a better performance for you today." Swiatek becomes an all-court great. If Swiatek had not already proved she should be ranked among the greats of the game, she has certainly done so now. Mastering a surface considered her weakest - even though she won the Wimbledon junior title in 2018 - has added further credibility to her case. Swiatek has become the youngest woman since 23-time champion Serena Williams in 2002 to win Grand Slam titles on all three surfaces. A sixth major takes her clear of Maria Sharapova and Martina Hingis, with only a total of 10 women now having won more in the Open era. Swiatek became known as the 'Queen of Clay' after winning four French Open titles in five years, while her two-year reign as the world number one - ended by Aryna Sabalenka last year - was underpinned by consistent success on the hard courts. Grass was the surface she had not cracked. Before this triumph, Swiatek had made the second week at the All England Club only once, when she reached the quarter-finals in 2023. Losing in this year's Roland Garros semi-finals - early by her previous standards - meant she had longer to prepare on the surface, helping her quickly readjust improve her confidence and game. Anisimova's struggles meant Swiatek was not fully tested.

Nevertheless, the weight and depth of the Pole's ball provided constant pressure which her opponent could not deal with. Anisimova's inspiring Wimbledon journey ends. While it was a chastening experience for Anisimova in her first major final, it had been an encouraging and inspiring journey to get there. The big-hitting American has been tipped as a future Grand Slam champion since she was a teenager and reached the 2019 French Open semi-finals as a 17-year-old. Later that year, the sudden death of her father Konstantin - who was also her coach - contributed to her falling out of love with tennis. Four years later, Anisimova took a break for her mental health and spent about seven months off the tour. This time last year she was trying to avoid watching Wimbledon as she had lost in the third round of qualifying while ranked 191st in the world. But, having climbed back to the verge of the top 10, she has reminded the world of her obvious talent, particularly against world number one Aryna Sabalenka in the semi-finals. Anisimova was far below her best against Swiatek, however. In the warm-up she looked tense and it showed in the opening points of the match. Rushing into her shots, Anisimova's groundstrokes were loose and Swiatek continued to take time away from her. Afterwards, Anisimova revealed she



Iga Swiatek of Poland lifts the Ladies' Singles Trophy following her victory against Amanda Anisimova.

did not practise on Friday because she felt "really fatigued" and also had to take regular breaks during her pre-final warm-up on Saturday. "If anything, it's my physicality that

I need to work on," she said. "To be able to last two weeks in a Grand Slam is definitely something that you need to work a lot on. It's not an easy feat."

Coach Nisar Ahmed sent to Korea for UCI Level 2



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Cycling Federation (PCF) is proud to announce that Coach Nisar Ahmed, one of Pakistan's most accomplished cycling professionals, has arrived in Korea to participate in the prestigious UCI Level 2 Coaching Course. This elite program is being hosted by the Korean Cycling Federation in collaboration with the World Cycling Centre (WCC). A former international cycling champion, Nisar Ahmed has proudly represented Pakistan on numerous occasions, earning multiple gold medals and podium finishes in South Asian competitions. Domestically, he has been a consistent high performer at the

national level. Transitioning from a decorated cycling career to coaching, Nisar has already completed the UCI Level One Inline Coaching Course, as well as the Level One Coaching and Mechanic Courses, proving his dedication to the sport beyond competition. Recently, the Korean Cycling Federation, through WCC, extended an exclusive invitation to Pakistan for one coach and one rider to attend their advanced training course. While the nominated rider was unable to obtain a visa, Nisar Ahmed successfully secured his travel documents and has now reached Korea, ready to undergo the intensive UCI-certified training. This accomplishment is

particularly significant as Nisar Ahmed becomes the first coach from Balochistan to participate in a UCI Level Two certification program, marking a proud moment for the province and for Pakistan's cycling community at large. The Pakistan Cycling Federation applauds this milestone, which reflects both Nisar's personal determination and the Federation's ongoing efforts to elevate cycling across all regions of the country. We extend our best wishes to Nisar Ahmed for a successful training experience and eagerly await his return as a UCI Level Two Certified Coach — ready to inspire and train the next generation of cycling champions in Pakistan.

Akram hails 'modern-day great' Starc on 100-Test milestone

KARACHI (AFP): Pakistan fast bowling legend Wasim Akram on Saturday hailed Australia's Mitchell Starc as a "modern-day great" for reaching 100 Test appearances. Starc, who draws comparisons with fellow left-arm quick Akram, will reach the milestone later Saturday when the third Test against the West Indies begins in Jamaica. "It is a big deal in this

day and age to reach 100 Tests, congratulations to Starc," Akram told AFP. "That shows the quality and resolve of the man." The 35-year-old becomes the 83rd player and 16th Australian to play 100 Tests, and only the second Australian fast bowler after Glenn McGrath. "To play 100 Tests shows how consistent Starc has been and also shows where his priorities lie --

that is to play red-ball cricket," said Akram. "He has also played Twenty20 and league cricket but his career in Test cricket is way ahead and to me he is a modern-day great." Starc stands on 395 Test wickets, so has the tantalising prospect of taking his landmark 400th wicket during his 100th Test. His strike rate is remarkably similar to Akram, who

retired in 2002 after taking 414 wickets in 104 Tests. Both players, said Akram, had suffered injuries to "every joint, every part of the body" during their careers. "People often compare us but we have played in different eras," said Akram. "He's got the pace, he's got the swing and he's bowling very intelligently to the new batsman, especially with the new ball."

Pakistan to face Japan in Asia Cup Hockey final today

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The Green Shirts have reached the final of the Under-18 Asia Cup Hockey Tournament. Pakistan will face Japan in the final on Sunday in Dazhou, China. Japan defeated Bangladesh in the second semi-final. Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, PHF President Tariq Bugti, PSB DG Yasir Pirzada, and PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi congratulated the national team on reaching the final and expressed their best wishes for success. Pakistan's Under-18 hockey team will face Japan in the final of the AHF Men's Under-18 Asia Cup this Sunday. The championship match is scheduled for 4:30 pm Pakistan time. The young Green Shirts have secured their place in the final, setting the stage for a thrilling encounter against the Japanese squad. Further details about the tournament, including the venue, have not yet been released.

England effort leaves tetchy third Test in balance



LORD'S (Agencies): England's tireless efforts were finally rewarded to leave a tetchy third Test against India hanging in the balance after three days at Lord's. In sweltering conditions, England took the last four India wickets for 11 runs to dismiss the tourists for 387, meaning the scores were level on first innings. The home side looked set to be defied by Ravindra Jadeja, but after he was caught down the leg side by Chris Woakes for 72, England surged. Woakes, so prolific on this ground, ended with three wickets, while Jofra Archer's pace deserved more than the 2-52 he claimed on Test comeback. In the lengthening shadows, Zak Crawley used some creative time-wasting tactics to ensure England faced only one over, bowled by Jasprit Bumrah. Tempers flared, England closed 2-0.

Earlier, opener KL Rahul completed a controlled 100 and Rishabh Pant made 74, while Jadeja shared vitals stands of 72 with Nitish Kumar Reddy and 50 with Washington Sundar. As usual, England found inspiration from captain Ben Stokes. Stokes produced a stunning direct hit to run out Pant and, in a tireless spell after tea, found the venom to have Reddy caught behind. Crucially, England had already missed three opportunities to run out Reddy and one to dismiss Jadeja. Off-spinner Shoaib

Bashir spent a prolonged period off the field with an injury to his left little finger. It is not his bowling hand, so he should be fit for the fourth innings, when he would be important in a potential England push for victory. Late drama in curious Test This has been a curious Test, often characterised by a slow pitch, slow scoring and a slow over-rate. The trench warfare has occasionally been interrupted by flashes of brilliance. On Saturday these came from Pant, Archer and Stokes. The words between Crawley and the India fielders in the dying moments provided the drama, demonstrating the high stakes of a tight game and level series. For long periods, the day was shaped by the innings of Rahul and Jadeja, who separately but similarly ground England down. But, once more, the Test sprung to life. If there was an element of fortune in Woakes having Jadeja strangled down the leg side, England were ruthless in taking the final four wickets in six overs. Just as in their second-Test defeat at Edgbaston, England face an examination of their philosophy. Whereas in Birmingham Stokes' team were not able to bat for the draw they view with such disdain, now they have the task of maneuvering themselves into a position from which they can win. How will the home side weigh up the time needed to bowl out India on this pitch in the second innings against the target they are able to set? England strike late after tale of run outs In such gruelling conditions, on such a docile pitch, it is to England's credit they maintained their energy throughout the day. Archer bowled some rapid spells in the afternoon session, at one point going 15 consecutive deliveries over 90mph, while Stokes bowled with similar hostility. The captain's run out of Pant came from nothing. In the final over before lunch, Pant was attempting to give the strike to Rahul to allow him to move to three figures. Stokes, in the covers, swooped and threw off-balance at the bowler's end, catching the trundling Pant short of his ground. England needed more of the same in the afternoon. Brydon Carse missed a shy at the stumps when Jadeja was on three, before Reddy's triple reprieve. Twice he could have been run out on nought, Ollie Pope missing on both occasions, then Ben Duckett was off target when Reddy had 18. The home side missed Bashir, who drew Rahul into an edge to slip. Jadeja, on 23, belted one back on the full, no more than a half-chance. Bashir immediately went for treatment and spent half the day off the field. Woakes has a peerless record on this ground, yet this slow pitch has hindered his effectiveness.

Irfan Khan to lead Pakistan Shaheens in Top End T20 Series

LAHORE (APP): Muhammad Irfan Khan, who has featured in nine ODIs and 14 T20Is for Pakistan will lead Pakistan Shaheens in the Top End T20 Series scheduled to take place in Darwin, Australia from 14 to 24 August 2025. Pakistan Shaheens will play the opening match of the 11-team tournament against Bangladesh 'A' on 14 August at TIO Stadium in Darwin. The 15-member squad announced includes Abdul Samad (five T20Is), Faisal Akram (three ODIs), Haider Ali (two ODIs, 35 T20Is), Mubasir Khan (one T20I) - all featured for Pakistan men's team previously, while Ahmed Daniyal and

Mohammad Salman Mirza are part of Pakistan T20I squad for upcoming Bangladesh series. Shaheens' second fixture in the T20 tournament will be against Scorchers at the TIO Stadium on 16 August with the first ball set to be bowled at 4pm local time. The third Shaheens' encounter in the tournament will be against Renegades on 18 August at the same venue with the first ball to be bowled at 6pm local time. On 19 August, Shaheens will take on Kingsmen at the DXC Arena with first ball to be bowled at 1pm local time. Shaheens' fifth fixture in the event will be against Strikers at the DXC Arena, with the first ball to be

bowled at 7pm. The sixth and final fixture of Shaheens will be against Nepal on 22 August at the DXC Arena with the first ball to be bowled at 7pm local time. The semi-finals and final of the event were scheduled for 24 August. The training camp for the Darwin-bound squad will be announced in due course. 1 5 - m e m b e r squad: Muhammad Irfan Khan (captain), Abdul Samad, Ahmed Daniyal, Faisal Akram, Haider Ali, Maaz Sadaqat, Mehran Mumtaz, Khawaja Mohammad Nafay (wicket-keeper), Muhammad Ghazi Ghori (wicket-keeper), Mubasir Khan, Saad Masood, Mohammad

Salman Mirza, Shahid Aziz, Ubaid Shah and Yasir Khan. Pakistan Shaheens fixtures: 14 Aug - vs Bangladesh 'A', TIO Stadium (7pm local time) 16 Aug - vs Scorchers, TIO Stadium (4pm local time) 18 Aug - vs Renegades, TIO Stadium (6pm local time) 19 Aug - vs Kingsmen, DXC Arena (1pm local time) 20 Aug - vs Strikers, DXC Arena (7pm local time) 22 Aug - vs Nepal, DXC Arena (7pm local time) 24 Aug - Semi-finals and final of the series will be played at the DXC Arena in Darwin.

**In brief****Six drug suppliers held**

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Police on Saturday have launched a crackdown against six drug suppliers including two Afghan nationals and recovered more than 11 kilograms of drugs from their possession. According to police, the Rawat Police arrested two Afghan drug suppliers and seized 4.1 kg of ice (crystal meth) during operation. Similarly, Waris Khan Police apprehended two drug dealers with 4.9 kg of drugs while Saddar Wah Police arrested two drug suppliers and recovered 2.2 kg of drugs from their custody. Police have registered separate cases against all of them and further investigation was in progress. City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Mehmood Hamdani commended police teams and said "we are taking every possible step to eliminate the drug abuse and to protect the youth from its harmful effects".

Man held for fake robbery call

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested a man for making a fake call to the emergency helpline 15 and staging drama of a robbery. According to police, the man had called the police helpline and claimed that four armed men had snatched his cash, mobile phone and motorcycle at gunpoint. Acting swiftly, the police reached the scene. However, during the investigation, it was found that no robbery had taken place. Instead, the man's brother had hidden Rs 260,000 and the motorcycle in his shop. To cover up, they staged a fake robbery and reported it to the police. Rata Amral police registered a case against the man for making a bogus emergency call and took him into custody. SP Rawal Muhammad Haseeb Raja warned that the 15 helpline is meant for public safety and any misuse will lead to legal action.

Criminals involved in robbery arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested five wanted criminals involved in robbery, fraud and theft cases during separate operations on Saturday. According to police, Waris Khan Police arrested two proclaimed offender who were wanted in robbery and fraud cases since 2023 and 2024. Meanwhile, Wah Cantt Police apprehended three offenders who were on the run in a theft case and were wanted since 2024. Police said the arrests were made through the use of human intelligence and other resources. Divisional SPs commended police teams and stated that those involved in criminal activities and their facilitators will not escape from the law.

Police nab suspect, recover nine bikes

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested thief involved in multiple motorcycle theft cases and recovered nine stolen motorcycles from his possession. According to police on Saturday, Saddar Wah police apprehended motorcycle lifter during crackdown. The suspect is also linked to several robbery cases and has a previous criminal record. Police have registered a case against him and started investigation. SP Potohar Talha Wali appreciated the performance of police team and said the accused will be presented in court with solid evidence. He added that those who were involved in depriving the citizens from their valuable would not be allowed to escape the law. He made it clear that it was the prime duty of the police to protect the lives and properties of the people.

NA Speaker reaffirms support for brave Kashmiris facing Indian Oppression

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq reaffirmed Saturday that India's oppression cannot break the spirit of the Kashmiri people, and Pakistan remains committed to offering steadfast, unequivocal support. Paying solemn tribute on Kashmir Martyrs' Day, commemorated annually to honor the 22 Kashmiris martyred on July 13, 1931 outside Srinagar's Central Jail, Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq emphasized that their sacrifice in defense of truth, freedom, and self-determination remains an enduring milestone in the collective memory of the Kashmiri liberation movement.

Speaker noted that the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) have, for decades, faced a brutal regime of state-sponsored oppression, systemic human rights violations, and relentless militarized coercion, yet remain unflinchingly committed to their just cause. He emphasized that India's persistent attempts to stifle dissent through violence, demographic manipulation, and communication blackouts will never extinguish the aspirations for emancipation ingrained in the hearts of the Kashmiri people. The right to self-determination is their inalienable entitlement, acknowledged by UN

Security Council resolutions. Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq urged the international community, the United Nations, and global human rights institutions to take immediate cognizance of the grave humanitarian crisis unfolding in occupied Kashmir. He stressed the need for tangible and result-oriented interventions to ensure that the Kashmiri populace is granted the freedom and dignity they have long been denied. The global conscience must awaken to the plight of Kashmir and speak out against tyranny in favor of justice and human dignity. NA Speaker further stated that the Parliament of

Pakistan, through numerous unanimous resolutions, has consistently reaffirmed the nation's principled and unwavering support for the Kashmiri people's struggle. He reiterated Pakistan's enduring moral, political, and diplomatic commitment to the Kashmiri cause until a just and peaceful resolution is achieved in accordance with international law and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. On this solemn occasion, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah also extended homage to the martyrs of Kashmir and lauded the Kashmiri people's undaunted persever-

ance in the face of extreme adversity. He expressed confidence that the sacrifices rendered by the martyrs would not go in vain, and that the day is not far when the people of Kashmir would breathe the air of freedom and justice. NA Deputy Speaker called upon the global community to take substantive notice of India's repressive policies in Kashmir and to uphold the international norms of human rights and self-determination. He reiterated Pakistan's solemn pledge to continue standing shoulder to shoulder with the people of Kashmir in their rightful quest for liberation.

Musadik orders swift action after black bear killing in GB

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Dr Musadik Malik, has ordered immediate and strict action following the brutal killing of a black bear in Tangir, a remote area of Gilgit-Baltistan. The incident has sparked national outrage and renewed calls for stronger enforcement of wildlife protection laws.

Calling the act "utterly unacceptable," Dr Malik emphasized that violence against wildlife will not be tolerated under any circumstances. "We will ensure that those responsible are held fully accountable," he said in a statement on Saturday. "Justice must be served — not just for this bear, but to send a clear message that Pakistan will not allow such cruelty against its natural heritage." An official First Information Report (FIR) has been registered against the accused individuals, and local authorities are working closely with community members to identify all those involved.

The Minister has also directed the Wildlife Management Boards to take immediate and decisive measures to investigate and prosecute the case. In a move signaling high-level engagement, Dr Malik announced he would coordinate directly with Gilgit-Baltistan's Chief Minister to oversee the investigation and ensure swift legal action. "This is not an isolated incident — it reflects a broader challenge in enforcing conservation laws. We are determined to close these gaps," he said.

The killing of the black bear, a species already facing significant threats due to habitat loss and illegal hunting, has drawn condemnation from conservation groups and environmental advocates. Dr Malik reaffirmed the government's commitment to protecting the country's endangered wildlife and stressed the need for public cooperation in conservation efforts. "Our wildlife is not just a national treasure — it is part of our identity. Protecting it is a responsibility we all share," he said.

Civil society urges expansion of Pink Bus Service

ISLAMABAD (APP): Civil society activists have called for the expansion of the Pink Bus Service across Pakistan to ensure safer, more accessible and dignified travel options for women, especially those commuting from rural and suburban areas to cities for education and employment.

Talking to APP here Saturday, Advocate Aliya Faheem, a traveler welcomed the initiative and emphasized the growing demand for such gender-sensitive transport. "The Pink Bus service is not just a transportation option, rather, it is a step toward women empowerment. It enables women to travel without fear and with dignity," she stated.

Launched under the tag line "No Fear, No Barrier," the Pink Bus project is a government-led effort, supported by various public transport authorities and local administrations, aimed at improving woman's access to public spaces by providing female-only transport.

The service primarily benefits female students commuting to schools, colleges, and universities and working women, including nurses, teachers, and office employees, domestic workers and low-income women who lack private transport options.

Noreen Fatima that the number of buses is insufficient to meet current demand, often resulting in overcrowding and long waiting times. "An increase in the fleet and route coverage will help bridge the urban-rural mobility gap and encourage more women to participate in public life," she said.

The initiative is seen as part of broader efforts to promote gender-inclusive urban planning and uphold women's right to safe mobility, which is essential for achieving gender equality in Pakistan. She added.

Civil society members also urged provincial governments and transport departments to allocate more funds to expand the initiative and ensure its sustainability. In some cities, such as Lahore, the Pink Bus Service had faced operational challenges in the past, including fuel shortages and maintenance issues, but advocates believe that with proper policy support, the service can be scaled up effectively.

Currently operational in selected cities like Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad, Rawalpindi

and Multan, these buses operate on fixed routes during peak hours and are exclusively for female passengers. They are staffed with female conductors and, in some areas, even female drivers to ensure comfort and a sense of security for the passengers.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor display antique items to attract customers at Saidpur Village, reflecting its rich cultural heritage in the heart of the Federal Capital. —APP Photo

Govt appoints Dr. Ehsan Ghani as CEO Health Authority Rawalpindi

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Government of Punjab's Health and Population Department has made key transfers of senior medical officers as part of a reshuffling of various District Health Authorities (DHAs) across the province.

Dr. Muhammad Asif Arbab Khan Niazi, Additional Principal Medical Officer and Chief Executive Officer (DHA), Rawalpindi, has been transferred and appointed as the new Chief Executive Officer (DHA), Lahore, replacing Dr. Zohaib Hassan who has been directed to report back to the Health and Population Department. Dr. Ehsan Ghani, Additional Principal Medical Officer and District Health Officer (Preventive Services), Rawalpindi, has been transferred and posted as Chief Executive Officer (DHA).

Dr. Ehsan, while talking to APP, affirmed that he would put his energies into the best outcomes in the district to provide a healthier environment for the citizens. He said that the health authority has a robust and dedicated team that has shown tremendous performance during major challenges the city has faced, including the dengue issue and polio eradication campaigns.

"I will take full advantage of the Pindi's top professionals and health workers of the health department by deployment-surveillance strategy to come up with the Punjab government's health vision", said the new CEO. He further reaffirmed his strong collaboration with the media in highlighting awareness among the masses.

"Media is one of the core partners of the health department that has been playing an important role spreading our initiatives and identifying the areas seeking DHA's special focus", he said adding that soon he would arrange a meet up with journalists covering the health department.

Dr. Ghani appreciated the hard work and dedicated professionalism of his predecessor Dr. Asif Arbab Khan Niazi who has been transferred to Lahore in the same position and challenges.

Dr. Asif has been famous in Rawalpindi for rendering his services in a dynamic way to meet diverse challenges during his tenure as CEO Health Authority. His indoor and outdoor activities, assertive approach and strong liaison with the media put him in high regard.

"I have tried my best to deliver at a maximum level of success, and the credit goes to Pindi's professional team that has always shown outstanding performance. I am especially grateful to the media for its great support", said Dr. Asif Niazi.

Other transfers made by the Punjab government include Dr. Shahbaz Ahmed as Chief Executive Officer (DHA), Faisalabad, with additional charge as Medical Superintendent, Government General Hospital Samanabad, Faisalabad. Dr. Soban Zia as Chief Executive Officer (DHA), Multan, while Dr. Muhammad Shahbaz has been directed to report to the Health Department. Dr. Muhammad Saqib Munir will continue as Chief Executive Officer (DHA), Chiniot.

Free poultry farming course begins

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Poultry Research Institute in Rawalpindi will begin week long free training course on poultry farming, scheduled to be held from July 14 to 18. The course will be conducted daily from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm in the premises.

The course will cover various aspects of poultry farming, including housing, hatchery management, and disease prevention. A Senior Research Officer told here Saturday that the training course aimed to provide participants with comprehensive knowledge and practical skills in poultry farming, enabling them to develop their skills and contribute to the growth of the industry.

The course will start for both men and women and the aspiring individuals can obtain application forms from the Poultry Research Institute before July 14. Upon completion of the course, the participants will be awarded certificates. For further details and registration, interested individuals can contact the Poultry Research Institute at Main Murree Road, Shamsabad, Rawalpindi.

Parental vigilance key to child protection and nation's future, Says DG MoHR

ISLAMABAD (APP): In an exclusive interview, Director General (DG) of the Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR), Abdul Sattar here on Saturday, outlined recent developments and ongoing challenges in the Ministry's efforts to uphold child rights and human rights commitments at both national and international levels.

Speaking on institutional frameworks, Abdul Sattar highlighted the critical role of the National Commission on the Rights of the Child (NCRC) and the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) in protecting vulnerable children, especially girls. "These girls are not enjoying their rights the way they should. That's where our national commissions play a vital role," he said.

He drew attention to the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2016, and the newly introduced Early Child Marriage Restraining Act, which sets the legal age for marriage at 18. "The new legislation strengthens protections, but the real challenge is implementation, especially in remote areas," Sattar noted.

Addressing these implementation gaps, he explained that the 18th Constitutional Amendment

had devolved human rights responsibilities to the provincial and district levels. "Now, human rights are a provincial subject. Each district, especially in Balochistan and Sindh, has its own department or social welfare setup. Our role at the federal level is now focused on policy, coordination, and international reporting," he stated.

Sattar also elaborated on Pakistan's international obligations: "We've ratified seven out of nine core human rights conventions and regularly submit reports under these frameworks. We're also responsible for defending Pakistan's human rights record in international forums."

About the query of help line, the DG said that the Ministry's 1099 Helpline has become a central mechanism for addressing complaints related to child abuse, early marriages, and other violations. "Complaints are received, digitally registered in our IT system, and followed up with relevant departments across the country," said the DG.

On child labor and begging, particularly involving Afghan refugee children, Sattar stressed the need for coordinated action. "We play an advisory role, but law enforcement and local gov-

ernments are the primary implementers. In Islamabad, the Chief Commissioner's Office and Police are actively working to address child labor," he shared.

He also emphasized the work being done under Pakistan's GSP+ trade status, which is linked to the country's human rights performance. "Our compliance with international treaties and conventions is directly tied to our trade incentives. Human rights protections are not just moral obligations—they are also economic imperatives."

In addition to legislative reforms and human rights monitoring, DG Abdul Sattar emphasized the rising importance of cybersecurity, particularly in safeguarding children from online threats such as exploitation, cyberbullying, and harassment.

"With increased internet usage, children are more vulnerable than ever to online abuse. It is crucial that parents and guardians closely monitor their children's digital activity, including social media, gaming platforms, and chat applications," he warned.

To address these concerns, the Ministry of Human Rights, in coordination with other relevant bodies, has taken proactive

steps. "A special Cyber Wing has been established to respond to cases of online abuse, cyber harassment, and exploitation of children," Abdul Sattar confirmed. "This wing works in coordination with the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and other law enforcement institutions to ensure rapid action and digital protection," he added.

The Cyber Wing not only investigates cybercrime cases but also plays an educational role. "We are raising awareness about digital literacy and safe internet practices through schools, public campaigns, and community outreach," he added. "It's not just about punishing offenders—it's about preventing cybercrime before it happens, further he added.

He urged families to remain vigilant. "Children today have access to technology, but not always the judgment to use it safely. It is the shared responsibility of parents, teachers, and the government to create a safe digital environment for child.

The Ministry is also collaborating with civil society and tech platforms to implement reporting mechanisms and content regulation. "When a child is exposed to harmful content or contacted by

suspicious individuals online, we want to ensure there's a clear and safe way to report and resolve the issue immediately."

As Pakistan continues to develop its digital infrastructure, Sattar stressed that cybersecurity must remain a national priority. "Digital rights are human rights. Just as we protect children in schools and homes, we must also protect them in the digital world."

In closing, Abdul Sattar reiterated the Ministry's commitment: "Laws are in place, institutions are working, and international obligations are being fulfilled. But without stronger local implementation and awareness, our vision for a rights-respecting society will remain incomplete." Sattar, urged parents across Pakistan to take a more active role in the upbringing and supervision of their children — both at home and in society. Emphasizing the importance of strong moral and social guidance, he stated.

"Parents should keep a close eye on their children — not just to protect them from mobile addiction or harmful digital content, but also to ensure they don't fall into bad company. Good training at home is the first line of defense. Children are the

future of Pakistan, and it is our duty to raise them with care, discipline, and values."

He stressed that alongside schools and the state, families have a crucial role to play in ensuring a child's emotional and psychological well-being. Abdul Sattar also highlighted the need for community-level vigilance, especially in cases of child abduction or missing persons. He encouraged citizens to take swift action if a child goes missing or is suspected of being kidnapped.

"At the grassroots level, people should immediately contact the emergency helpline 15 to alert the police in case of any suspicious activity or abduction. Time is critical in such cases, and quick reporting can save lives."

The Ministry of Human Rights is working to strengthen collaboration between law enforcement agencies and communities to ensure quicker responses and better child protection outcomes. The Ministry also promotes public awareness campaigns on safe parenting, child safety, and reporting mechanisms. "Protecting children is a shared responsibility. From home to street to school — every space must be made safe for our children," Abdul Sattar concluded.

Flash floods devastate Kunar

KUNAR (BNA): Heavy rainfall and subsequent flash floods have wreaked havoc in the center of Kunar and several surrounding districts, leading to the destruction of 12 residential houses and significant damage to farmland. A local official Ehsanullah, the Manager of the Disaster Management Department in Kunar, reported to the Bakhtar News Agency that the Tisheh area was particularly hard hit, with 12 homes and approximately 65 acres of farmland lost to the flooding.

Five projects launched

BADAKHSHAN (BNA): The construction of five infrastructure projects has begun in Badakhshan Province, aimed at improving local transportation and community safety. These projects, which include the building of five retaining walls and a culvert along the Argo-Darayim district route, are being overseen by the Public Works Directorate of Badakhshan. The total budget for these initiatives amounts to 3 million Afghanis, sourced from the local administration.

Babaji district faces education crisis

HELMAND (TOLONews): Several residents of Babaji district in Helmand province are urging the Islamic Emirate to build more schools in various areas of the district. These residents say that due to a lack of sufficient schools, most children in the district are deprived of education. Abdul Qudoos, a resident of Babaji district, told TOLONews: "We ask the Islamic Emirate to build schools for our children in Babaji district because there is only one school here that has been operational since the government of Sardar Mohammad Daoud Khan. More schools need to be built. Around 70% of our children are deprived of education." Sardar Wali, another resident of the district, said: "We have only one school in the center of Babaji district. We are demanding an increase in the number of schools and strengthening of the education process to provide proper education for our children in this district." However, the Helmand Directorate of Education says it has begun efforts to improve educational development in Babaji and other remote areas of the province. Mohammad Awaz Ansari, head of the Helmand Education Department, stated: "Work is underway on rebuilding school buildings and constructing new ones in other parts of Babaji district. We are striving to resolve the educational challenges of students not only in Babaji but also in other remote regions in the future." According to the Helmand Education Department, more than 400 schools are currently operating in the province, where thousands of students are receiving education.

Kazakhstan to accept IEA envoy to Astana



KABUL (Ariana News): Kazakhstan has decided to accept an ambassador from the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) to Astana in the near future and to upgrade its diplomatic mission in Kabul to ambassadorial level, an Afghan official said on Saturday. The decision was conveyed by Kazakhstan's Foreign Minister to his Afghan counterpart and is being viewed as a significant signal of renewed political engagement between the two countries, Zia Ahmad, Director of Public Communication of Afghanistan's Foreign Ministry, said. Russia is the only country that has formally recognised the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) government that seized power in August 2021 as US-led forces staged a chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan after 20 years of war. China, the United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan and Pakistan have all designated ambassadors to Kabul, in a step towards recognition.

Journalists in exile report widespread self-censorship

KABUL (Amu TV): More than 70 percent of Afghan journalists working in exile say they regularly practice self-censorship to protect sources, colleagues and family members, according to a new study released by Leipzig University. The widespread use of caution, researchers say, has come at a cost to journalistic depth and integrity. The study, presented Friday by Afghan journalist Hamid Obaidi at the "Scholarship in Diaspora: Unlocking the Potential of Diaspora Scholars – The Case of Afghanistan," conference in Berlin, Germany, surveyed 147 Afghan reporters living outside the country. Of those, 115 are currently working with exiled media outlets. The research aimed to assess how Afghan journalists gather information, manage risks, and continue their work in the face of displacement. Despite operating far from Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, 97 percent of respondents said they still conceal sources in sensitive reports, and 90 percent admitted to withholding stories entirely due to safety concerns. Only 42 percent said they were satisfied with internal support from their organizations. Encrypted messaging platforms such as WhatsApp, Signal and Telegram have become the primary tools of information gathering, used by 95 percent of the journalists surveyed. Many rely on social media, diaspora networks, and contacts within Afghanistan to verify details and track developments on the ground. Digital security remains a significant gap. Respondents rated their confidence in their own digital safety at just 2.8 out of 5, citing a lack of access to formal training and resources. The report, supported by Leipzig University, also revealed a strong sense of purpose among Afghan reporters abroad. Ninety-five percent of journalists said their work in exile has helped bring global attention to Afghanistan, with a motivation score averaging 4.3 out of 5. Still, the mental, political and logistical strain remains heavy. Several female-led outlets have reported licensing obstacles and pressure to appoint male directors to remain operational. Others have been forced to abandon reporting altogether due to shrinking international support. The study calls for long-term structural backing for exiled Afghan journalists — including security training, funding and new reporting platforms — warning that without such support, independent coverage of Afghanistan could diminish further. "Journalists may have left the country, but their work continues," Obaidi said. "And so do the risks."

Afghan, Kazakh officials talk direct Kabul-Astana flights



KABUL (Pajhwok): Afghan and Kazakh transport officials have discussed strengthening transport ties, expanding land transport cooperation and launching direct flights between Kabul and Astana. Deputy Transport and Civil Aviation Minister Mullah Salam Haidari met with his Kazakh counterpart Kalyakparov Maksat during the latter's visit to Kabul, the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation (MoTCA) said. A statement from the ministry said both sides discussed enhancing transport cooperation, a bilateral and transport agreement and the start of direct flights between the capitals of the two countries. Haidari described land transport and the development of transport relations with Kazakhstan as a key part of Afghanistan's strategy to strengthen regional and international cooperation. He hoped that implementing the agreements would bring about a significant boost to trade and transit exchanges between the two countries and the region. For his part, Kazakhstan's deputy transport minister reaffirmed his country's commitment to enhancing transport cooperation with Afghanistan.

Alexander open to IEA representation

KABUL (Ariana News): Germany's Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt has expressed openness to allowing an Islamic Emirate-appointed Afghan representative to operate in Berlin, even without formally recognizing the government. Dobrindt has told Welt TV that he is prepared "to find the appropriate agreement with those responsible in Afghanistan to enable" repatriation of convicted criminals of Afghan nationality. "If the Taliban (IEA) send Afghan representatives here who may then serve in Berlin, then that can work even without diplomatic recognition. And I would have no problem if we had a contact person here on site for problems we want to solve," he said. In August, Germany resumed flying convicted criminals of Afghan nationality to their home country, after pausing deportations following the IEA's takeover in August 2021, with the support of what Berlin said were "key regional partners". The United Nations, however, has criticised the German interior minister's plan to deport criminals to Afghanistan, citing human rights issues. German Foreign Minister Johann Wadepuhl has also stated that there would be no relations with the IEA beyond the current contacts.

Closure of hospital

GARDEZ (TOLONews): The 50-bed hospital specializing in infectious diseases in Gardez city, the capital of Paktia province, has been closed for the past eight months due to lack of financial support. Residents of Gardez say that with the arrival of summer, the rate of infectious diseases among the population has increased, and there is a serious need for the hospital to resume operations. They add that due to poverty, they cannot afford treatment at private hospitals, and the Gardez 50-bed hospital has been non-operational for months. Asadullah, a resident of Paktia, told TOLONews: "We want the infectious diseases hospital to reopen. Illnesses have increased these days, the weather is very hot, and issues like coughing and shortness of breath have become more common." Mohammad Khan, another resident of Paktia, said: "People can't even afford twenty Afghanis. They can't pay for transport or buy medicine. Our request to the government is to reopen this hospital to assist the people and the poor." Inamullah Salahuddin, Paktia deputy governor said, "The contract for the infectious diseases hospital, which was previously awarded to a donor, has ended. We are working to award a new contract to another donor in the future so the hospital can provide services for infectious diseases to the people of Paktia."

Afghan and Pakistani diplomats discuss boosting bilateral ties



ASHGABAT (Ariana News): Fazal Mohammad Saber, Chargé d'affaires at the Afghan Embassy in Ashgabat, and Faryal Leghari, Pakistan's Ambassador to Turkmenistan, met on Saturday to discuss strengthening bilateral trade relations, addressing issues faced by Afghan refugees, and facilitating the visa issuance process for Afghans in Pakistan. The Afghan Embassy in Ashgabat said in a post on X that both sides emphasized the need to expand relations between the two countries to address ongoing issues. During the meeting, Leghari described the "good" relations between Kabul and Islamabad as important and pledged to convey the contents of the meeting to officials in her country. Meanwhile, the Islamic Emirate's Ambassador to Islamabad and the Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan also discussed bilateral relations between Kabul and Tehran, regional developments, Afghan refugees, and related topics. Meanwhile, Mohammad Sadiq, Pakistan's Special Representative for Afghanistan, and Mohammad Reza Bahrami, Director General for South Asia at Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, held an online meeting to discuss the latest developments in Afghanistan. Sadiq said that the meeting was constructive, and both sides expressed their concerns about terrorism as a shared challenge and reviewed ways to enhance bilateral cooperation and regional engagement with Afghanistan.

HRW says Afghan women at risk as US ends protected status

KABUL (Amu TV): Human Rights Watch said that the policy shift could strip more than 11,000 Afghans of legal residency and work authorization in the United States, opening the door to arrests and potential deportation. "Afghanistan is unsafe for anyone, but it is uniquely dangerous for women and girls," the group said in a statement issued. The warning comes days after the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for two top Taliban leaders on charges of crimes against humanity, specifically gender persecution. Human Rights Watch said those charges underscore the systematic nature of the Taliban's restrictions on women, which include bans on education, employment, healthcare access, and participation in public life. Many international organizations and Afghan women's rights advocates have characterized the Taliban's policies as a form of gender apartheid. The report also noted that many Afghans under TPS in the US are parents of US-born children. The termination of the status, the group warned, would force families into impossible choices: remain in the US without legal protection, leave their children behind, or take them to a country where girls and women are subject to harsh repression. In many cases, Human Rights Watch said, Afghan women may not have sufficient documentation to prove individualized threats, making TPS their only legal safeguard. The group called on the US government to reverse its decision, citing the ongoing human rights crisis in Afghanistan and Washington's stated commitments to protect vulnerable migrants, particularly women. "If the United States proceeds with this plan," the group warned, "it will bear responsibility for returning thousands of women and children to a land of repression and fear."

Afghanistan Ambassador meets Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan



KABUL(BNA): Sheikh Abdul Ghafar Bahr, the Ambassador of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, met with Bakhtiyor Saidov, the Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan, to discuss the enhancement of political ties between the two countries. The meeting, held at the Afghanistan Embassy in Tashkent, underscored the importance of strengthening political ties as a foundational step toward boosting economic, cultural, and commercial relations. Ambassador Bahr highlighted that enhanced political cooperation is vital for the mutual benefits of both nations. Key topics of discussion included the Afghan-Trans project agreement, which aims to improve regional connectivity, as well as visa facilitation measures for Afghan traders. The two officials also talked about simplifying border procedures to increase trade volume between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan. Saidov expressed appreciation for the active role of the Afghan Embassy in fostering collaboration and assured the continuation of economic cooperation. He emphasized the importance of ongoing efforts to enhance political relations, signaling a commitment to a stronger partnership between the two nations.

Returns from Iran reach 50,000 a day: UN official

KABUL (Amu TV): The daily number of Afghan migrants returning from Iran has surged to nearly 50,000, many arriving exhausted, disoriented and traumatized after difficult journeys, according to a senior United Nations official. "Many of these returnees have been suddenly uprooted from their homes and have endured grueling, humiliating journeys," said Ararat Jamal, the Afghanistan representative for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "They arrive tired, confused, having faced violence and despair — only to be dispersed through crowded centers in 40-degree [Celsius] heat." In a new report, UNHCR warned that unfamiliarity with Afghanistan — particularly among second- or third-generation Afghans born and raised abroad — has made reintegration especially complex. Many returnees have never lived in Afghanistan and bring with them cultural norms and expectations that often clash with those now imposed by Taliban authorities. "They are from Afghanistan, but they are not of Afghanistan," Jamal said. "Most were born and raised outside the country, with different levels of education and cultural values that often stand in stark contrast to the current reality here." The report said that the scale and speed of the returns — primarily from Iran but also from Pakistan — have placed unsustainable pressure on Afghanistan's already strained border provinces, which are ill-equipped to absorb large influxes of people. The influx, UNHCR noted, has deepened poverty, insecurity and humanitarian need in a country still reeling from economic collapse and ongoing rights violations.

Prices of fuel, flour and sugar down

KABUL (Pajhwok): The prices of fuel, flour, sugar and cooking oil decreased in Kabul market during the outgoing week, market sources said on Saturday. **Fuel prices:** A worker at the Ahmadyar pump station told Pajhwok Afghan News the rate of one litre of petrol decreased from 64afs to 60afs and the diesel price went down from 67afs to 62afs. Meanwhile, Mohammad Jan, a shopkeeper at Dahan-i-Bagh area said price of one kilogram of liquefied gas dipped from 50afs to 47afs. **Food items:** Zmarai Safi, head of the Food Traders' Association, said the price of a 49-kg sack of Kazakh decreased from 1,450afs to 1,400afs, a 16-litre bottle of Malaysian cooking fell from 1,700afs to 1,650afs and a 49-kilogram bag of Indian sugar surged from 2,550afs to 2,500. The price of a 24-kg bag of Pakistani rice remained unchanged at 2,600afs, the same rate as last week's. He added one kilogram of African black tea accounted for 400afs and the same amount of Indonesian green tea for 350afs. Hamid Sufizada, a retailer at Dahan-i-Bagh market, put the retail price of a 49-kg bag of flour at 1,450afs, a 24-kg bag of rice at 2,650afs and a 49-kg sack of sugar at 2,550afs. A 16-litre bottle of cooking oil cost 1,700afs, he said, adding one kilogram of black tea accounted for 400afs and the same quantity of green tea for 450afs. **Gold:** Mohammad Fawad, a jeweller in Timor Shahi area, said the price of one gram of Russian gold remained stable 4,700afs and the same amount of Arabian gold stayed unchanged at 6,000afs. **Afghani vs dollar:** Haji Mohammad Hussain, owner of the Sadaqat Money Exchange Service, said one US dollar was traded at 69.10afs and 1,000 Pakistani rupees at 235afs against their previous week's rates of 69.30afs and 235afs. The spike in the afghani value is essentially linked to periodic dollar auctions by the central bank.

Iran warns of more strikes on US bases after Qatar attack

FM Araghchi says Iran to work with IAEA, but inspections may be risky

TEHRAN (Agencies): Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has declared that the recent missile strike on the US military bases in Qatar was "no minor incident", while hinting that such actions could be repeated if necessary.

Speaking on state media, Khamenei emphasised Iran's capability to strike American installations in the region, specifically referencing the June 23 missile attack on the Al Udeid Air Base in Doha, which houses a significant US military presence. The strike, confirmed by Iranian state television, marks a major escalation in Iran-US tensions and demonstrates Tehran's growing willingness to challenge American military dominance in the Gulf.

In a parallel development, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, in an interview with a French newspaper, suggested that Iran is open to resuming talks with the United States – but only under specific conditions. "The US must correct its mistakes," Araghchi said, emphasising that future dialogue must be rooted in mutual respect and dignity. He added that any negotiations would require Washington to halt further attacks on Iran, particularly those targeting its nuclear facilities. Araghchi also stated that recent US actions have caused measurable damage to Iranian nuclear infrastructure, for which Iran reserves the right to seek com-

pensation. The dual messaging from Tehran – assertive military posture coupled with conditional diplomatic openness – illustrates the complex calculus behind Iran's strategy in the face of ongoing international pressure and internal demands for national security and sovereignty. As the Middle East continues to navigate a volatile geopolitical landscape, all eyes will be on whether Washington will respond with confrontation or reconsider its approach toward diplomacy with Tehran.

Reuters adds: Iran plans to cooperate with the UN nuclear watchdog despite restrictions imposed by its parliament, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Saturday, but stressed that access to its bombed nuclear sites posed security and safety issues.

The new law stipulates that any future inspection of Iran's nuclear sites by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) needs approval by the Supreme National Security Council, Iran's top security body. "The risk of spreading radioactive materials and the risk of exploding leftover munitions ... are serious," state media cited Araghchi as saying. "For us, IAEA inspectors approaching nuclear sites has both a security aspect ... and the safety of the inspectors themselves is a matter that must be examined."

Jordan, EU sign security pact to tackle terrorism

AMMAN: Jordan and the EU have signed a cooperation agreement aimed at bolstering efforts to combat organized crime and terrorism across borders, the Jordan News Agency reported. The working arrangements were signed between Jordan's Public Security Directorate and the EU Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation, or Europol, on Thursday.

The agreement establishes a legal framework to support joint action in fighting serious and organized crime, as well as terrorism, by facilitating cooperation and the exchange of non-personal information between Europol and Jordanian law enforcement agencies. According to a statement from the PSD, the agreement will allow both parties to coordinate on a range of issues, including migrant smuggling, drug trafficking, money laundering, and weapons smuggling.

Under the deal, Jordan and the EU will share specialized expertise, overall situation reports, and the results of strategic analyses. The agreement also enables participation in joint training initiatives, and includes provisions for advice and support in individual criminal investigations.

To streamline collaboration, the PSD will appoint a national contact point responsible for liaising with Europol and coordinating efforts between Jordanian agencies and their European counterparts. The arrangements also allow for the potential appointment of a Europol liaison officer to be stationed in Jordan, joining a global network of law enforcement representatives from more than 50 countries.

With the agreement in force, the EU and Jordan are expected to significantly strengthen their cooperation in addressing pressing regional and international security challenges. The arrangements represent "a pivotal step" in joint efforts to address the security threats affecting the EU, its member states, and Jordan, said Catherine De Bolle, executive director of Europol. She said the partnership "embodies mutual trust and understanding in the law enforcement area," paving the way for closer cooperation to achieve security within the EU and across the Middle East. — Arab News



ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Yahya Afridi chairing the meeting of Supreme Judicial Council.

London's Police arrest dozens of Palestine supporters

LONDON: London's Metropolitan Police arrested 41 people on Saturday during a protest in Parliament Square, accusing them of showing support for the now-banned direct action group Palestine Action, it was reported. The protest marked the second consecutive weekend of arrests over alleged references to the proscribed organization.

The demonstration was part of a coordinated campaign by the group Defend Our Juries, which held simultaneous actions in other UK cities including Manchester, Cardiff, and Derry. Protesters gathered in Parliament Square shortly after 1 p.m., sitting silently at the base of statues of Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi while holding cardboard signs bearing messages in support of Palestine Action. The Guardian reported. According to the Metropolitan Police, the arrests were made under terrorism legislation.

In a statement posted on social media, the force said: "We are responding to a protest in support of Palestine Action. Officers are in the process of making arrests. We will issue any updates on this thread." In a follow-up statement, the Met confirmed: "Officers have made 41 arrests for showing support for a proscribed organisation. One person has been arrested for common assault." Defend Our Juries said on X: "Over 300 police officers have been seen to carry away dozens of people from the

foot of statues of Nelson Mandela and Gandhi for alleged 'terrorism offences'. Those arrested are accused of holding signs in support of Palestine Action."

Officers were seen cordoning off demonstrators, searching their bags, inspecting ID cards, and seizing signs. Some protesters lay atop one another as police moved in to confiscate their placards. The demonstrators' signs reportedly included messages such as: "I oppose genocide. I support Palestine Action." The protest comes days after the UK government's controversial decision to ban Palestine Action under the Terrorism Act.

The move followed an incident in which activists allegedly broke into RAF Brize Norton and defaced two military aircraft with spray paint. The ban was announced by Home Secretary Yvette Cooper in late June and formally approved by MPs last Wednesday. The House of Lords backed the decision without a vote the following day. It marks the first time a direct action protest group has been proscribed under terrorism legislation in the UK, placing Palestine Action in the same legal category as Hamas, al-Qaeda, and Islamic State.

Under the new law, supporting or promoting the group now carries a prison sentence of up to 14 years. Palestine Action is known for its campaigns targeting Israeli and Israeli-linked businesses in Britain,

particularly defense firm Elbit Systems. Its protests have included blocking entrances, damaging property, and spraying buildings with red paint to symbolise blood.

Critics of the ban say the government is conflating protest with terrorism and suppressing legitimate dissent. In a failed legal challenge to the proscription, a lawyer for Palestine Action argued the government's move marked "the first time Britain had proscribed a group which undertook this type of direct action." UN experts, human rights organisations, cultural figures, and hundreds of lawyers have also voiced alarm over the decision, warning it sets a dangerous precedent for criminalizing civil disobedience.

Saturday's demonstration echoed scenes from the previous weekend, when 29 protesters, including 83-year-old former priest Rev Sue Parfitt, were arrested at a similar gathering in Parliament Square. In Manchester, police also made arrests at a protest in support of Palestine Action, while peaceful demonstrations took place in Cardiff and Derry.

The controversy surrounding Palestine Action's ban comes amid heightened tensions over the war in Gaza, where the International Court of Justice in The Hague is hearing a case brought by South Africa accusing Israel of committing genocide against Palestinians. Israel denies all allegations of wrongdoing. — Arab News

Sindh Minister calls on President

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Provincial Minister for Energy, Planning, and Development Nasir Hussain Shah called on President Asif Ali Zardari at Aiwan-e-Sadr, Islamabad. During the meeting, Provincial Minister for Energy, Planning, and Development Syed Nasir Hussain Shah briefed President Asif Ali Zardari on Sindh's energy issues, the province's representation in OGDCL, and other matters. He noted that problems are arising due to the lack of provincial representation in power companies.

Provincial Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah urged President Asif Ali Zardari to ensure the provincial government's representation in K-Electric. Energy Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah also briefed on the establishment of the Sindh Electric Power Regulatory Authority



(SEPRE), stating that the aim of this institution is "our own electricity, our own tariff" to provide relief to the people from high electricity costs.

President Asif Ali Zardari stated that Sindh is

the hub of energy and that the development of Sindh is, in fact, the development of the entire country. He assured that Sindh's energy issues will be addressed promptly and all concerns will be resolved.

Monsoon death toll rises to 90 amid rain forecast

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: At least 90 people have lost their lives and 158 others have been injured across Pakistan since June 26 as a result of intense monsoon rains and flash floods, officials confirmed on Saturday.

The ongoing spell, which experts say is being intensified by rapid environmental changes and unchecked urbanisation, is expected to continue well into August. According to Irfan Virk, Deputy Director at the Pakistan Meteorological Department, the unusually heavy rainfall is being driven by a combination of rising temperatures, urban heat islands, and changes in local weather dynamics.

"When your urban areas expand, the amount of concrete increases while tree cover diminishes," Virk said. "This leads to higher temperatures. When high humidity and cold air interact in such conditions, the result is more intense rain-

fall." The Meteorological Department has forecast continued rainfall across large parts of the country until at least July 17. Regions expected to receive rain include Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Kashmir, upper and central Punjab, and northeastern Balochistan. Monsoon activity is also expected to persist into August, with cloudy conditions prevailing in many parts of the country.

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has issued a flood alert for several districts in South Punjab, warning of flash floods and advising residents to remain cautious. A spokesperson for the NDMA said areas such as Bela, Multan, Muzaffargarh, Zahirpur, Mithankot, Rajanpur, Liaquatpur, Khanpur, and Alipur are experiencing significant rainfall and flash flood threats. Torrential rains have also been reported in Ahmedpur Sharqia, Jalalpur Peerwala, Dera Ghazi Khan, and Bahawalpur divisions.

The highest recorded rainfall so far has been 40mm at Nisab station in Muzaffargarh. Windstorms and rain are also expected to continue in Bahawalpur division, Multan, and parts of Cholistan. The NDMA has urged citizens to stay away from riverbanks and low-lying areas, and to seek shelter in safe locations to avoid risks from strong winds and lightning.

Experts have linked the intensifying rains to the growing impact of climate change. The urban heat island effect—caused by expanding cities, diminishing green cover, and extensive concrete structures—has been cited as a major factor behind the erratic weather patterns. "Villages and smaller towns with more natural vegetation are less affected," said Virk. "But in major cities, where greenery has been replaced by concrete, the local climate has changed significantly, leading to more heat and, consequently, heavier rainfall during monsoons."

US sanctions Cuban president

WASHINGTON: The US State Department has imposed sanctions on senior Cuban officials, including President Miguel Diaz-Canel, Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced as he marked the fourth anniversary of a brutal crackdown on historic antigovernment protests.

In a post on X, Rubio said the State Department would be "restricting visas for Cuban regime figureheads", including President Diaz-Canel.

Defence Minister Alvaro Lopez Miera, Interior Minister Lazaro Alberto Alvarez Casas, and their "cronies" for their "role in the Cuban regime's brutality toward the Cuban people". Rubio, the son of Cuban immigrants, also announced that the State Department has added the Torre K hotel to its restricted list of entities in order to "prevent US dollars from funding the Cuban regime's repression".

The Cuban government has promoted the luxury high-rise Torre K in central Havana as a symbol of modernisation. But the government has faced criticism for its large investment in luxury hotels amid a severe economic crisis in the nominalist socialist one-party state. "While the Cuban people suffer shortages of food, water, medicine, and electricity, the regime lavishes money on its insiders," Rubio said.

Ten other "regime-linked properties" were also added to the State Department's List of Prohibited Accommodations, it said in a statement. The statement said the sanctions were being enacted in "solidarity with the Cuban people and the island's political prisoners", citing the Cuban government's brutal crackdown on the July 2021 demonstrations – the largest since the Cuban revolution in the 1950s. — Aljazeera

PKK disarmament opens 'new page': Erdogan

ISTANBUL: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said the country has begun a new era as the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) started the process to disarm after a four-decade armed conflict that killed more than 40,000 people. In an address to his party, Justice and Development (AKP), Erdogan said on Saturday that the "scourge of terrorism has entered the process of ending".

"Decades of sorrow, tears and distress came to an end. Türkiye turned that page as of yesterday," Erdogan said. "Today is a new day; a new page has opened in history. Today, the doors of a great, powerful Türkiye have been flung wide open," the president added. In a cave in Sulaimaniyah in northern Iraq on Friday, 30 PKK members burned their weapons, marking a hugely symbolic step towards ending their armed campaign against Türkiye.

During Friday's ceremony, senior PKK figure Bese Hozat read out a statement at the Jasana cave in the town of Dukan, 60km (37 miles) northwest of Sulaimaniyah in the Kurdish region of Iraq's north, announcing the group's decision to disarm. "We voluntarily destroy our weapons, in your presence, as a step of goodwill and determination," she said. Since 1984, the PKK has been locked in armed conflict with the Turkish state, and decided in May to disarm and disband after a public call from the group's long-imprisoned leader, Abdullah Ocalan. Ocalan said in a video earlier this week, which was recorded in June by groups affiliated with Firat News Agency, that the move to disarm was a "voluntary transition from the phase of armed conflict to the phase of democratic politics and law", calling it a "historic gain".

But Ocalan, despite his imprisonment in solitary confinement on Imrali Island, Türkiye, since his capture in 1999, has remained a symbolic figure for the group and its offshoots outside the country. The PKK has been based in northern Iraq after being pushed out well beyond

Türkiye's southeastern border in recent years.

But the end of Türkiye's conflict with the armed group could have wider consequences for the region, including with neighbouring Syria, where the United States is allied with Syrian Kurdish forces, which Ankara deems a PKK offshoot. But Washington, DC and Ankara want Syrian Kurds to integrate into Syria's new government following the fall of former President Bashar al-Assad, who was ousted in December, which analysts say could be further pushed following the PKK's disarmament.

Still, within the country, the Turkish pro-Kurdish DEM party, PKK and Ocalan have called on Erdogan's government to address Kurdish demands for more rights in Kurdish-majority regions, including the southeast of the country. Further disarmament is expected to take place at designated locations, which involves coordination between Türkiye, Iraq and the Kurdish regional government in Iraq. — Aljazeera

Lavrov meets Kim in North Korea with Ukraine war at fore

MOSCOW: Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has met with Kim Jong Un in North Korea, during which Pyongyang reaffirmed its support for Russia's war in Ukraine in which thousands of its soldiers have been killed.

Lavrov "was received" by Kim, Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on Telegram on Saturday, posting a video of the two men shaking hands and embracing in Wonsan. Russian and North Korean state media had announced the visit earlier, saying Lavrov would stay until Sunday. It is the latest in a series of high-profile trips by top Moscow officials to North Korea as the countries deepen military and political ties with a focus on Russia's offensive in Ukraine.

Pyeonggang has become one of Moscow's main allies during its more than three-year-long war in Ukraine, sending thousands of troops and conventional weapons to help the Kremlin remove Ukrainian

forces from Kursk in Russia. More than 6,000 North Korean soldiers have died in the Russia-Ukraine war, according to British Defence Intelligence.

North Korea has also agreed to dispatch 6,000 military engineers and builders to help reconstruction efforts there. The South Korean intelligence service has said North Korea may be preparing to deploy additional troops in July or August. The United States and South Korea have expressed concern that, in return, Kim may seek Russian technology transfers that could enhance the threat posed by his nuclear-armed military.

Earlier on Saturday, Lavrov met with his North Korean counterpart Choe Son Hui in Wonsan, a city on the country's east coast, where a huge resort was opened earlier this month. "We exchanged views on the situation surrounding the Ukrainian crisis ... Our Korean friends confirmed their firm support for all the

objectives of the special military operation, as well as for the actions of the Russian leadership and armed forces," Russian news agency TASS quoted Lavrov as saying.

He also thanked the "heroic" North Korean soldiers, the Russian Foreign Ministry said. In April, the two countries officially confirmed the deployment of North Korean troops to Russia for the first time, saying these troops had helped Russia to recapture the Kursk region – a claim contested by Ukraine.

Since then, Kim has been shown in state media paying tribute in front of flag-draped coffins of North Korean soldiers. Russia's Security Council Secretary Sergei Shoigu has visited Pyongyang multiple times this year. The two heavily sanctioned nations signed a sweeping military deal last November, including a mutual defence clause, during a rare visit by Russian President Vladimir Putin to North Korea. — Aljazeera

Syrian, Israeli officials to meet in Baku

BAKU (AFP): A Syrian and an Israeli official are expected to meet in Baku later on Saturday on the sidelines of Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa's visit to Azerbaijan, a diplomatic source in Damascus with knowledge of the issue said. "There will be a meeting between a Syrian official and an Israeli official on the sidelines of the visit being conducted by Sharaa in Baku," said the source, who requested anonymity due to the sensitivity of the issue.

Israel is a major arms supplier to Azerbaijan and has a significant diplomatic presence in the Caucasus nation, which neighbours its arch foe Iran. The diplomatic source stressed that Sharaa himself would not attend the Baku meeting, which would focus on "the recent Israeli military presence in Syria".

After the overthrow of longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad in December, Israel carried out hundreds of air strikes in Syria to prevent key military assets from falling into the hands of the interim administration headed by Sharaa. It also sent troops into the UN-patrolled buffer zone that used to separate the opposing forces on the strategic Golan Heights, from which it has conducted forays deeper into southern Syria.

Sharaa has said repeatedly that Syria does not seek conflict with its neighbours and has instead asked the international community to put pressure on Israel to halt its attacks. His government recently confirmed that it had held indirect contacts with Israel seeking a return to the 1974 disengagement agreement, which created the buffer zone. Israel has views Sharaa's government in the context of his past links with Al-Qaeda.

But late last month, Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar said Israel was interested in striking a peace and normalisation agreement with Syria. A Syrian government source quoted by state media responded that such talk was "premature". But during a visit to Lebanon this week, US special envoy to Syria Tom Barrack said: "The dialogue has started between Syria and Israel." After meeting Sharaa in Riyadh in May, US President Donald Trump told reporters he had expressed hope that Syria would join other Arab states which normalised their relations with Israel.