

**PHC restrains NAB**  
**Humayun Khan**  
PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has restrained the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) from arresting Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Azam Swati in connection with a case related to the Kohistan corruption scandal. The court also directed Azam Swati to join the NAB investigation, on Wednesday.

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# The Frontier Post

DAMASCUS: Israel has struck the headquarters of the Syrian Ministry of Defence and close to the presidential palace in the capital Damascus, dramatically escalating on another military front in the region, and following through on its threats to intervene over clashes between government troops and Druze fighters in the southern Syrian city of Suwayda.

Syria's Interior Ministry announced a ceasefire agreement for Suwayda later on Wednesday. Druze religious leader Sheikh Yousef Jarbou confirmed a truce would take effect immediately. Jarbou said the agreement was "to completely halt all military operations in Suwayda by all parties" and "to fully integrate Suwayda into the Syrian state." Footage showed four explosions from Israeli strikes battering the sides of the Syrian military headquarters in Damascus earlier on Wednesday, leading to large plumes of smoke rising in the sky, before another air strike

hit close to the presidential palace. Israel claims it has been carrying out the strikes in Syria to protect Syria's Druze minority, which Israel views as a potential ally and which has been involved in clashes with Syrian government troops in Suwayda, a Druze stronghold. The community there has not welcomed Israeli intervention in the past. Syrian state news agency SANA reported that one person was killed, and 28 others were wounded in the strikes, citing the Ministry of Health.

Reporting from Damascus, Al Jazeera's Zeina Khodr witnessed the attack on the headquarters of the Syrian military, which followed Israeli drone strikes on the complex hours earlier. "We watched those strikes come in, one after another, in the heart of the Syrian capital," she said, adding that the sight of Israeli war planes overhead "caused panic". "This is a significant escalation," she said. "This is the Israeli leadership

giving a very, very direct message to Syria's new authorities that they will intensify such strikes ... if the government does not withdraw its troops from southern Syria."

Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said in a statement posted on X that the "warnings in Damascus have ended - now painful blows will come". As Israel's military announced it was beefing up its forces along the Syrian border, and had carried out strikes on Syrian military convoys moving south, he added that Israel's military would "continue to operate forcefully in Suwayda to destroy the forces that attacked the Druze until their complete withdrawal". The strikes followed the resumption of fierce fighting in Suwayda, a major centre for the Druze community, after a ceasefire announced by the Syrian government on Tuesday swiftly collapsed.

Syria's Defence Ministry officials blamed groups "outside the law" for

breaking the ceasefire and attacking government troops, who they said were responding to fire while taking measures to protect civilians. The ministry told Al Jazeera it had opened safe corridors in the city for civilians to flee. Speaking from Damascus, Al Jazeera's Bin Javaid said at least 70 people were believed to have been killed in the fighting so far. Medical sources in the city say more than 200 people have been injured in the violence.

Meanwhile, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a war monitor based in the United Kingdom, says more than 250 people had been killed as of Wednesday morning, including four children, five women and 138 soldiers and security forces. The observatory added that at least 21 people were killed in "field executions". One woman, 20-year-old Evelyn Azzam, told the Associated Press news agency from her home in Jaramana, near Damascus, that she

feared her husband had been killed by security forces in Suwayda.

She had been speaking to her husband, Robert Kiwan, on the phone when he was questioned by security forces about whether he was affiliated with Druze militias, when her husband was shot in the hip, she said. She had had no update on his condition since he was taken to hospital. The bloodshed has led to chaotic scenes along the border separating the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights from Syria. Large numbers of Israeli Druze gathered there, with some crossing into Syria to support Druze groups there, while hundreds gathered on the other side of the fence, calling on Israel and the international community to intervene and stop the violence.

The Israeli military said it had identified dozens of individuals trying to cross from Syria, while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appealed directly to Israel's Druze

community not to cross the border. "You can be kidnapped, and you hurt the [Israeli army's] efforts," said Netanyahu. "So I ask you - go back to your homes, let the [army] act."

On top of the clashes on the ground, Israel has pounded targets in Syria. Israeli warplanes have struck nearly 160 targets in Syria since Tuesday night, most of them in Suwayda, the Israeli public broadcaster Kan reported. Al Jazeera's Khodr said Israel's demands for Syrian troops to withdraw and create a demilitarised area in the south presented Syria's leadership with a dilemma. "If it continues its advance in Suwayda and maintains a presence in the province, then it will trigger more strikes like this and endanger its hold on power," she said. "But if it decides to withdraw from Suwayda and give in to Israel's demands, then the government has failed in its efforts to extend its authority across the country." — Aljazeera

## US Congress holds hearing on political repression and media crackdown in Pakistan

Jalil Afridi

WASHINGTON DC: The Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission held a high-level congressional hearing on Tuesday titled "Pakistan: Ongoing Political Repression," drawing sharp attention to the Pakistani military's growing grip on the country's political and media landscape. The hearing, held in the Rayburn House Office Building, was co-chaired by Representatives Chris Smith (R-NJ) and James P. McGovern (D-MA).

A number of US lawmakers, human rights experts, and exiled Pakistani political leaders participated in the hearing, which laid bare allegations of rigged elections, suppression of press freedom, torture in detention, and persecution of religious minorities in Pakistan.

Former Deputy Speaker of Pakistan's National Assembly Qasim Khan Suri and former Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Dr. Shahbaz Gill were present at the hearing and described in detail their arrests, torture, and harassment by Pakistani security agencies. They characterized the current government as a "military-installed regime" that has dismantled constitutional safeguards.

Congresswoman Ilhan Omar (D-MN) strongly condemned the targeting of journalists and mentioned the tragic assassination of journalist Arshad Sharif in Kenya in 2022, calling it "a heartbreaking reminder of the threats journalists face simply for doing their job." Omar noted that Pakistan's media has faced "a cli-



mate of fear, censorship, and violence" for the past three years.

Senior PTI leader Zulfi Bukhari gave a damning account of election manipulation and state-sponsored repression. He informed the Commission that the PTI's election symbol was unlawfully withdrawn, elections were delayed without justification, and hundreds of PTI candidates were either disqualified, jailed, or harassed. He said that Form-47s were forged to show false victories for establishment-backed candidates, and the entire process was engineered to keep Imran Khan's party out of power.

Bukhari also stated that Imran Khan has been subjected to the worst forms of torture in prison, and that his wife Bushra Bibi has also been detained under humiliating conditions. He highlighted that PTI workers were shot dead by security forces during peaceful protests in

Islamabad last year and that for the first time in Pakistan's history, civilians are being tried in military courts.

Reps. Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR) and Suhas Subramanyam (D-VA) also expressed grave concern over the human rights violations and pressed for a reassessment of US aid and military cooperation with Pakistan.

Chairman Chris Smith (R-NJ) concluded the hearing by announcing that he would be writing a formal letter to President Donald Trump to inform him of the testimony presented and to request urgent diplomatic engagement on the matter. "The situation demands the immediate attention of the White House," Smith said.

The Commission is expected to issue follow-up recommendations, including visa bans, targeted sanctions, and aid conditionality, as pressure mounts on Pakistan to restore democratic processes and protect civil liberties.

## Child killed in mortar shell attack

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: A child was killed and another sustained injuries when a mortar shell, fired from Afghanistan hit a house in Waragha, Shan Khel village of Bazaar Zakha, Tehsil Landi Kotal on Wednesday, official and local sources said.

The sources said that the mortar shell landed on the house of a local, Haji Daryab and as result one minor child killed and another got wounded. The injured was rushed to the nearest health center for medical aid, sources said.

Provincial Minister for Religious Affairs and Haji Muhammad Adnan Qadri felt his deep grief over the mishap and asked the Federal government to take up the incident with the Afghan government to avoid further happenings in the area. He also extended his condolence to the bereaved family.

## 2 children killed as roof collapses

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Two children were killed and two others sustained injuries when the roof of an under-construction house collapsed in the Shahi Marawaro area of Samarbagh here on Wednesday, rescue officials said.

According to Rescue 1122, the children were playing beneath the roof when it suddenly caved in, burying them under the debris. Locals said that adult male members of the household were placing mud on the roof when it collapsed, trapping the children playing underneath.

The deceased were identified as Islamuddin, 14, and Hasan Ali, 6. The injured, three-year-old Shahab, and nine-year-old Yaseen, were taken to the tehsil headquarters hospital in Samar Bagh and later shifted to the district headquarters hospital in Timergara due to their critical condition.

## Army major martyred in terror attack

F.P. Report

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

During the conduct of operation, own troops effectively engaged the terrorist location and resultantly, three Indian sponsored terrorists were sent to hell. However, during the intense fire exchange, Major Syed Rabnawaz Tariq (age: 34 years, resident of District Muzafarabad), a brave officer who was leading his troops from the front, fought gallantly and paid



the ultimate sacrifice.

Sanitization operation is being conducted to eliminate any other terrorist found in the area, as the security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe out the menace of Indian Sponsored Terrorism from the country, and such sacrifices of our brave men further strengthen our resolve.

## ECP seeks PHC assistance for KP Senate polls

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has formally asked the Peshawar High Court to pave the way for Senate elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The commission's request underscores the urgency of administering oaths to members of the provincial assembly, a prerequisite for the Senate vote. In an official communication to the Peshawar High Court Registrar, the ECP stressed the constitutional mandate for both the Senate elections and the oath-taking ceremony. The electoral body specifically requested the Chief Justice to designate an individual, as per Article 255(2) of the Constitution, to administer the oath to newly elected members on reserved seats. This must happen before the scheduled polling date.

The commission emphasized that fulfilling these constitutional obligations is crucial. The ECP had previously, on July 7, published the final list of candidates for the Senate elections. The roster, finalized on March 27, 2024, includes 16 contenders for seven general seats, four vying for women's seats, and six competing for technocrat seats.

The election timetable, declared by the ECP on July 4, sets polling for July 21 in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly. The ECP's recent action aims to overcome administrative obstacles and ensure the electoral process concludes promptly.

Women reserved seats: PML-N, JUI-F get nine slots each: The Election Commission of Pakistan has released the updated list of reserved seats, with the PML-N and JUI-F each securing nine seats for women.

According to details surfaced on Wednesday, the list was issued following a decision taken by the electoral watchdog a day earlier. As part of the update, the notification confirming the victory of JUI-F's minority member Gurpal Singh has been withdrawn.

## 33 dead as heavy rain lashes Punjab

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Torrential monsoon rains across Punjab, especially in Lahore, have claimed at least 33 lives and left dozens injured in rain-related incidents, with the downpour continuing to disrupt daily life across the province.

In Lahore alone, 12 people have lost their lives due to various rain-induced accidents. Continuous heavy rain overnight turned many of the city's roads into virtual ponds. Rainfall persisted into the day with intervals, causing urban flooding in several neighborhoods. According to WASA, the highest rainfall in the provincial capital was recorded in Pani Wala Talab at 171 mm, followed by Iqbal Town (169 mm), Tajpura (167 mm), Mughalpura (135 mm), and Lakshmi Chowk (133 mm). Islamabad and Rawalpindi also experienced intense rainfall, submerging low-lying areas. The downpour continues with intermittent showers reported.

Meanwhile, several cities across Punjab including Daska, Hafizabad, Wazirabad, Sangla Hill, Gujranwala, Faisalabad, Nankana Sahib, Bahawalnagar, Pakpattan, Arifwala, Kasur, and Farooqabad have reported flooding as monsoon rains battered the region. Azad Kashmir is also witnessing continuous showers.

Tragic incidents unfolded across Punjab. In Lahore's Thokar Niaz Baig area, a roof collapse in the village of Mureed Wala killed five members of a single family. The deceased include 60-year-old Manga, 55-year-old Ishrat, 3-year-old Khadija, 4-year-old Latifa, and 35-year-old Rani. Two others—30-year-old Faisal and 5-year-old Bubby—were injured.

In Raiwind's Mission Colony, three people died when a roof caved in, while another person was rescued. One person was killed and three injured in a similar collapse in Kot Jamal, Raiwind Road. On Mominpura Road in Baghbanpura, another roof collapse claimed three more lives.

## 3 dead, 12 hurt in Kalat bus attack

F.P. Report

QUETTA: At least three people have been killed and 12 others wounded after unidentified gunmen opened fire on a passenger bus in Kalat district of Balochistan. The bus, which was travelling from Karachi to Quetta, came under attack in the early hours of Wednesday.

According to initial reports, the injured were shifted to a nearby hospital, where two remain in critical condition. An emergency has been declared at DHQ Kalat. Shahid Rind, the spokesman for Balochistan Government, confirmed the terror incident. Provincial administration, security forces and rescue officials have reached the site.

Medical teams also rushed to the site and transported the injured to the district hospital. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack yet. Law enforcement agencies are conducting a search operation in the surrounding areas. Further updates are awaited as the situation develops. Provincial government representative Shahid Rind issued a statement confirming the assault near Nemurgh. He stated that security personnel, district officials, and rescue teams promptly

arrived at the location. A search operation has been initiated after security forces secured the area. Mr. Rind confirmed the death toll and the number of individuals injured.

President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday expressed their deep sorrow over the killing of innocent civilians in Kalat district of Balochistan, who were attacked by the Indian-backed terrorist group "Fitna-ul-Hindustan" on a passenger bus traveling from Karachi to Quetta.

The president strongly condemned the incident and said that the act of targeting innocent civilians was highly condemnable and barbaric, adding that terrorists wanted to disrupt peace and stability in the province as they were the enemies of humanity.

The president and the prime minister expressed their condolences to the bereaved families and prayed for their patience and strength. The president and the prime minister also directed for immediate medical assistance to the injured.

"The terrorists who harm the lives and property of innocent and unarmed civilians will have to pay a very heavy price," PM Office Media Wing, in a press release, quoted the prime minister as saying. The president and the prime minister reaffirmed that the government and security forces were fully determined to eliminate terrorism from the country. "With the support of the nation, we will eradicate the cancer of terrorism from the country," President Secretariat Press Wing, in a press release, quoted the president as saying.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi also condemned the attack and described the targeting of innocent passengers as a "cowardly act." He said such attacks are part of a wider conspiracy to destabilise the country, adding, "With the nation's support, we will foil the plots of these Indian-sponsored terrorists."

Balochistan Chief Minister condemned the attack. In a post on X, "The attack on the passenger coach in Kalat is a cowardly and despicable act of terrorism. The loss of precious lives is an irreparable tragedy. The terrorist organisations of Fitna-Al-Hindustan have previously carried out attacks based on identity, but now they are indiscriminately targeting civilians, which clearly shows that this war is against every ordinary Pakistani, and we will defeat it at all costs!."

## Cabinet approves 15 per cent increase in EOBI pensions

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: The federal cabinet on Wednesday approved 15% increase in pensions provided by the Employees' Old-Age Benefits Institution (EOBI), effective from January 1, 2025, on the recommendation of the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development.

This increase will be funded from the institution's own resources. The meeting of the federal cabinet was held here under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. The prime minister directed the formation of a cabinet committee to introduce institutional reforms in EOBI.

The committee will also deliberate on proposals to extend old-age benefits to the informal labor sector, including domestic workers, agricultural laborers, and other marginalized employment categories that have been previously overlooked. These reforms aim to ensure that workers in these neglected sectors receive their due rights. The cabinet also approved the initiation of necessary legal procedures regarding the draft of



the Sea Carriage Shipping Documents Bill, 2025, on the recommendation of the Ministry of Maritime Affairs.

On the recommendation of the Ministry of National Health Services, the cabinet approved a five-year extension of exemption on the import of anti-cancer, cardiac, and life-saving drugs used in hospitals and related healthcare institutions. These medicines are considered vital for saving human lives, and the exemption is intend-

ed to ensure their prompt availability. These drugs will be available only in hospitals and authorized institutions, with a ban on open market sales. Import of these medicines will require prior approval from the relevant licensing authority. The federal cabinet also endorsed the decisions made in the meetings of the Cabinet Committee on Legislative Cases held on July 2, 2025, and July 3, 2025.

Earlier addressing the cabinet,

the prime minister commended the efforts of all provincial governments, the federal administration, as well as authorities in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) for making the best possible arrangements during Muharram.

He also expressed gratitude to the law enforcement agencies and all stakeholders for maintaining law and order during the religious observances. The prime minister also spoke about disaster prepared-

ness amid the ongoing monsoon season. He said he had chaired a high-level meeting with the NDMA and PDMA to ensure best arrangements. He commended the efforts of NDMA for making arrangements to cope with heavy rains in different parts of the country.

He expressed sorrow over the loss of lives due to heavy rainfall in various parts of the country, specifically the tragic incident in Swat. He said it was an

## UK's flights ban lift vindicates Pakistan: PM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday welcomed the UK Air Safety Board's decision to lift the ban on Pakistani flights, saying that the "positive development" would improve Pakistan's international reputation and further strengthen bilateral cooperation. "Alhamdulillah! PIA returns to UK skies. Grateful to Allah Almighty as Pakistan stands vindicated with the restoration of our airlines operations to the United Kingdom," the prime minister wrote on X. He recalled that the ban was imposed on Pakistani flights due to the irresponsible statements by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leaders, also undermining the country's reputation. "The reckless and irresponsible statements made by PTI members caused irreparable reputational damage to Pakistan, grounding our national carrier for years, from key global routes, including the UK and Europe," he said.

He reiterated his government's focus on performance and service delivery, announcing that the performance of ministries would be evaluated every two months.





LAHORE: A view of children playing in accumulated rain water on Taj Pura scheme park. —INP Photo

# JI Chief calls for nationwide protests against sugar cartel

KARACHI (PPI): Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) leader Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman has announced nationwide demonstrations on July 18 and divisional protests on July 20, targeting escalating electricity and fuel costs, and the unchecked "sugar mafia."

Speaking at a press conference in Lahore on Wednesday, Rehman declared the JI is initiating a peaceful movement against the current political leadership and the existing system. He criticized the administration, labeling it a "fake government," and accused it of making life difficult for citizens.

He also took a swipe at the PML-N, alleging their involvement with the sugar industry. He condemned the PML-N and PPP alliance for support-

ing the sugar cartel, which he believes is harmful to the nation.

Following a membership drive and the establishment of community groups, Rehman said the JI is amplifying its opposition to the established political and economic order. He believes true liberty requires dismantling this system.

Rehman expressed support for the JI Balochistan chapter's planned march from Quetta to Islamabad on July 25, protesting resource exploitation and rights denial in the province. He urged party members to join the march and demanded a national assembly to restore peace in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, urging the administration to implement its recommendations.

He emphasized addressing the feeling of marginalization in Balochistan, resolving the issue of missing persons, and ensuring the province's control over its natural resources.

The JI chief accused officials, organizations, and tribal leaders of facilitating smuggling at the Balochistan border. He advocated for legal trade regulation and the completion of the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline.

He demanded an inquiry into the sugar export-import controversy, questioning the rationale behind the policy change. He asserted that powerful groups benefit from official protection, while the public faces heavy taxation, and the leadership is unwilling to relinquish its privileges.

He pointed out that sugar prices have exceeded Rs. 200 per kilogram, and fuel prices have seen multiple increases. He argued that despite agreements with Independent Power Producers (IPPs), electricity rates remain high and should be based on actual cost, with unfair IPP contracts terminated.

Responding to a question, Rehman reiterated his criticism of the Supreme Court's decision on reserved seats, deeming it unlawful and undemocratic. He stated that political and religious groups have accepted these seats without justification.

Rehman condemned the violence in Gaza and U.S. support for Israeli actions. He called on Muslim leaders to act in support of Palestinians.

## WAPDA Workers Protest July 22

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: All Pakistan WAPDA Hydroelectric Workers Union Peshawar Zone Chairman and Provincial Vice Chairman Yasir Kamran has said that according to the unanimous resolution of the Provincial Executive Body of July 11, on July 22, 2025, workers from Peshawar, Shabqadar and Charsadda will participate in the WAPDA House sit-in against the severe shortage of staff in PESCO, TESCO and HAZECO, forcing employees to work 16 hours instead of 8 hours and unusual delay in recruitment. He expressed these views while addressing an emergency meeting of the Peshawar Zone. In the meeting, Zonal Secretary Jan Muhammad, Zonal Vice Chairman Samiullah and Zonal Joint Secretary Malik Qamar Waqas also attended. Meanwhile, the Khyber Zone meeting was held under the chairmanship of Zonal Chairman and Provincial Deputy Chairman Sheikh Shafiullah. Zonal Secretary Dawood Khan, Zonal Vice Chairman Shiraz Khan and Zonal Joint Secretary Jan Syed, besides Divisional officials, attended the meeting. On this occasion, Sheikh Shafiullah clarified that the memory of 1886 is being refreshed in PESCO, TESCO and HAZECO. Workers are being made to work 14 to 16 hours instead of the legal 8 hours. The increasing number of electrical accidents in PESCO is a clear proof of the failure of the Government and the administration. Because the union will no longer remain silent. Because the patience of the union has run out. Therefore, on July 22, 2025, WAPDA workers will protest in all district headquarters across the province. Also, workers of Khyber, Nowshera and Kohat divisions will participate in the WAPDA House Shami Road Peshawar sit-in. The entire responsibility for which will fall on the government, the Chief Executive Officers and the Board of Directors of the three companies. Also, the provincial commanders will respond to the decision taken.

# Kidnapping for ransom eliminated in Larkana division: Lanjar

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Home Minister Zia-ul-Hassan Lanjar on Wednesday praised the efforts of the Inspector General of Police Sindh, DIGP Larkana, and the SSPs of the Larkana Range for their dedication and outstanding performance in combating crime. Most notably, he highlighted their success in bringing kidnapping for ransom cases down to zero across the Larkana Division.

According to a news release, Lanjar stated that the relentless work of the police has not only improved the department's reputation but also restored and strengthened public trust in law enforcement. He warned criminal elements that the police are fully prepared to take firm action against

them, vowing that hide-outs of bandits and their facilitators would be eliminated. He further stressed that strong preventive measures will be taken to deter future crimes.

According to official data, from January 2024 to July 15, 2025, a total of 81 kidnapping for ransom cases were registered in the Larkana Division, involving 141 reported victims. In addition, 151 unreported cases were also identified by the authorities. Through continued police operations against kidnappers and bandits, a total of 292 victims were successfully recovered during this period.

As of now, there are no outstanding kidnapping victims in the entire Larkana Range.

Breaking down the figures, Larkana district reported 4 kidnapping cases, Shikarpur 29, Jacobabad 8, and Kashmore 40. The 141 reported victims included 7 from Larkana, 48 from Shikarpur, 11 from Jacobabad, and 75 from Kashmore. Unreported cases were also found: 1 in Larkana, 68 in Shikarpur, 13 in Jacobabad, 68 in Kashmore, and 1 in Qambar.

The recovered victims include 8 from Larkana, 116 from Shikarpur, 24 from Jacobabad, 143 from Kashmore, and 1 from Qambar. A recent success came on July 15, 2025, when Shikarpur police recovered a person abducted from Rahimabad on June 21, demonstrating the continued vigilance and effectiveness of law enforcement in the region.

# US CG discusses cooperation on minorities' welfare with Minister Arora

LAHORE (APP): US Consul General in Lahore Ms. Kristin Hawkins called on Punjab Minister for Minorities Affairs Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora, here on Wednesday.

Matters related to minority welfare, religious tourism, digital education, and interfaith harmony came under discussion during the meeting.

The meeting took place at the Minister's office and was attended by senior officials from both sides, including US Embassy representatives Ms. Han Nee, Ms. Usmei, and Mr. Nikhil Lakhanpal, as well as Secretary HR Farid Ahmed Tarrar and DS Rizwana Naveed.

During the meeting, the minister highlighted the Punjab government's ongoing efforts under the leadership of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz to promote inclusive governance and protect the rights of religious minorities. He outlined key ini-

tiatives such as employment quotas, educational scholarships, and funding for the preservation and upkeep of religious sites belonging to minority communities.

Emphasizing Punjab's rich religious heritage, the minister underscored the province's potential as a hub for interfaith harmony and religious tourism. He welcomed international cooperation for the conservation and promotion of historical religious landmarks associated with Christian, Sikh, Hindu, and other faiths.

Discussions also focused on expanding digital access and education for minority youth in underserved regions. He shared the provincial government's commitment to bridging the digital divide through e-learning platforms and digital literacy programs, aimed at empowering the next generation.

The meeting further

reaffirmed mutual interest in fostering interfaith dialogue, peaceful coexistence, and cultural exchange. The US Consul General commended the Punjab government's proactive role in advancing minority rights and building a society grounded in diversity, tolerance, and mutual respect.

Minister Arora expressed appreciation for the United States' continued support in strengthening democratic institutions and civil society in Punjab. He conveyed optimism about future cooperation in capacity building, community development, and initiatives aimed at uplifting marginalized segments.

The meeting concluded on a positive and forward-looking note, with both sides expressing a shared resolve to deepen bilateral engagement for inclusive growth and the well-being of all communities in Punjab.

## Faisal Riaz Graduates in Cyber Security from the UK University

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A young Pakistani Faisal Riaz has successfully graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Cyber Security from Leeds Beckett University, United Kingdom. Faisal Riaz belongs to a well-known Syed family.

He is the grandson of the late senior Pakistani journalist Mian Saif-ul-Islam Kakakhel and the nephew of young journalist Muhammad Fakhar Kakakhel.

Faisal attributes his academic success to the prayers of his parents, the guidance of his teachers, and his own hard work. He expressed his determination to serve in the field of cyber security in the future to help protect the public from digital threats.

His family, teachers, and friends have congratulated him on this notable achievement, which is being seen as an inspiring example for the younger generation.

## PHA plants 100,000 rose plants along canal

LAHORE (APP): In an effort to enhance urban beauty and promote environmental well-being, the Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) Lahore has successfully completed a large-scale rose plantation campaign along key stretches of the Lahore Canal.

A total of 100,000 rose plants have been planted from Thokar Niaz Baig to Doctors Hospital and from Shah Jamal to Jail Road.

PHA Director General Mansoor Ahmad said that the initiative is aimed at enriching the visual and environmental landscape of the city. "This extensive rose plantation will not only beautify the canal corridor but also fill the surrounding areas with natural fragrance and freshness," he said.

The DG noted that the ongoing monsoon season offers ideal conditions for the healthy growth of roses, helping to ensure long-term sustainability of the plantation. In addition to the roses, decorative floating flower boats have been placed in the canal, adding further charm to Lahore's urban aesthetic.

The DG added that this initiative is part of PHA's broader citywide plantation campaign, which includes the planting of shade trees across various localities in Lahore. "Our goal is to create a greener, healthier, and more vibrant environment for all residents," he emphasized.

## Railway officials transferred to Quetta on corruption charges

LAHORE (APP): In a major disciplinary move, Inspector General Railways Police Rai Tahir (Hilal-e-Shujaat, Sitara-e-Imtiaz) has transferred seven officials of the Lahore Division, including the Muharrar of Faisalabad Railways Police Station, to Quetta over serious allegations of corruption, incompetence, and facilitating ticketless travel.

The action follows growing complaints regarding misconduct within the division. According to official sources on Wednesday, a departmental inquiry is underway against the transferred personnel, and they are expected to face termination from service upon the conclusion of the investigation and subsequent disciplinary proceedings in Quetta.

The transferred employees include Head Constables Qadeer Hussain, Muhammad Shafiq, and Abid Ali, along with Constables Muhammad Shehbaz, Muhammad Ajmal, Muhammad Khalid, and Fayaz Ahmad.

This move is part of a broader initiative led by IG Rai Tahir to root out corruption and inefficiency within the Railways Police. Under his leadership, the department has intensified efforts to hold delinquent officers accountable and enforce professional standards across the force.

Sources within the department state that a zero-tolerance policy is being implemented against negligence and misconduct, signaling a shift towards a more accountable and professional policing culture within Pakistan Railways.

# Govt announces interest-free Punjab E-Taxi Scheme

LAHORE (INP): The provincial government has finalised plans to announce interest-free electric vehicles in the name of the Punjab E-Taxi Scheme, focused on promoting sustainable transport and as an innovative step towards empowering unemployed youth.

The Punjab Transport Minister, Bilal Akbar Khan, chaired an executive committee meeting. He, along with officials, reviewed the technical specifications, pricing, and infrastructure requirements for the upcoming Punjab E-Taxi Scheme.

Bilal Akbar Khan mentioned that 1100 electric vehicles will be given in the first phase through interest-free instalment plans. It will help eligible applicants to own and operate eco-friendly taxis without any financial burdens. The Punjab E-Taxi Scheme is part of the broader CM Punjab

Maryam Nawaz's E-Taxi Program 2025, which aims to displace conventional fuel-based taxicabs with electric alternatives.

Dewan Motors is the government's partner in this initiative to offer locally assembled models such as the Honri VC20 and VC30, including ranges of 200 km and 300 km per charge, respectively.

The initiative concentrates on 100% electric vehicles, precisely zero-emission taxis designed to fight regional pollution.

To make this more available, there are interest-free installment plans that permit for affordable monthly payments without any markup. Additionally, a powerful charging infrastructure is being established, with stations located every 3 kilometres in Lahore and plans for development throughout the province.

This project also plans to create thousands of new job opportunities, mainly promoting youth and women in the community.

Bilal Akbar Khan highlighted that in the coming weeks, the scheme will be launched to the public via public advertisements officially. He mentioned that the application criteria will be kept simple to ensure maximum participation, especially from marginalised groups, including women, disabled individuals, and rural residents.

The Punjab E-Taxi Scheme is expected to transform the province's transportation landscape by offering a cleaner, quieter, and more cost-effective alternative to traditional taxis. With over 60,000 applications already received, the program is poised to become a model for green mobility across Pakistan.

# Sindh Govt rejects MQM's claims on staff transfers

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh government spokesperson Sumaita Afzal Syed today sharply rebuked members of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) in the Sindh Assembly for allegedly misrepresenting the transfer of 38 employees from the Sehwan Development Authority (SDA) to the Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA).

Syed countered claims of bias, asserting that the personnel were originally part of a building control section within the SDA that was integrated into the SBCA years ago. The employees, she explained,

were simply formally reassigned within the SBCA to areas under SDA's jurisdiction, based on decisions made by the SDA's governing body.

Syed dismissed MQM's accusations as "propaganda" aimed at creating a rift between urban and rural populations. She insisted the transfer neither violates the rights of Karachi's residents nor constitutes a rural intrusion into urban bodies. Syed urged the MQM to abandon its "divisive politics," arguing that such strategies have proven unsuccessful in the past.

The provincial

spokesperson clarified that the SBCA's jurisdiction extends beyond Karachi, encompassing the entire province. She underscored that the transferred personnel are still working within the SDA's territorial limits. Syed accused the MQM of distorting provincial administrative choices and manipulating the quota system for political mileage. She advised MQM representatives to confirm details before making pronouncements, cautioning that their current course of action misinforms the citizenry and risks undermining their credibility.

# Panel discussion highlights country's strategy for peace

LAHORE (APP): Strengthening national unity, promoting informed dialogue, and countering hostile narratives with facts and clarity are essential for Pakistan's peace, progress, and prosperity, according to speakers at a panel discussion, organised by the Press Information Department (PID) Lahore.

The event, held on Wednesday, was themed "Fitna-tul-Hind and TTP: Pakistan's Response for Peace, Progress and

Prosperity", and focused on addressing the challenges, posed by hostile propaganda and terrorism, alongside Pakistan's strategies for a stable future.

The session was inaugurated by Shafqat Abbas, Director General PID Lahore, who welcomed the distinguished panelists and emphasised the need for open, fact-based dialogue to combat disinformation and internal threats undermining Pakistan's unity.

The panel featured prominent analysts, journal-

ists, and experts, including Salman Malik, Salman Ghani, Noor Ullah, Mehdi Hassan, Ayesha Jami, Mubej-ur-Rehman Shami, Khalid Qayyum, Dr Ahmad Basra, and Qaisar Sharif. Each speaker offered insight into countering propaganda and fostering national resilience.

Khalid Qayyum, a senior journalist, highlighted how recent tensions with India have exposed the aggressor in the region, bolstering Pakistan's international standing.

GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA  
COMMUNICATION & WORKS DEPARTMENT

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

(Single Stage Two Envelope) (E-PAD System)

The C&W Division Lower Chitral Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa invites Electronic Bids through E-PADS from eligible firms/contractors in accordance with **KPPRA Procurement Rules 2014**, amended up to **10.05.2022 on Single Stage Two Envelope** procedure for the following work(s).

#/	Name of Work	Required PEC category	Bid Security Security Ilc Stamp Duty Rs. (M)	Tender Fee @0.03%	Period of completion	Last date and time of submission of E-Bids	Date & Time of Opening of Technical Bid	Date and time of opening of Financial Bids
1.	CONSTRUCTION OF JEEPABLE TRACKS FOR TOURIST BEARING AREAS.ADP No 1639/210558(2024-25) SH/ CONSTRUCTION OF AYUN BAMBURETE TRACK VIA GOSHARKO ROAD DISTRICT LOWER CHITRAL (PK-02) (15 KM SHINGLE ROAD.)	C-4 & Above	Rs.3291000/-	Rs.49100	As Per Work Order	20/08/2025 at 2:00 PM	20/08/2025 at 12:30PM	Within 7 Days of after approval of Technical Bids

1. Bid Solicitation Documents and Instructions to Bidders can be obtained from the office on any working day or downloaded from C&W website (**www.cwd.gkp.pk**) before the submission date/time

2. The bidders should submit their E-bids as per **KPPRA Notification No. SOR (14)/Vol: 1-24/2021-22 dated 10/05/2022**

3. A copy of the technical proposal in the required format is mandatory and to be uploaded as a part of E-bid before submitting Financial Bid.

4. **Original Copies of Call Deposit for Bid security and Tender Fee should be enclosed in the Technical Proposal and shall reach to the Office before closing date/time.**

5. Legible Scanned copy of bid security shall be submitted electronically along with the bid on E-PAD system.

6. All bidders are required to be registered with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority under Finance **Act, 2013 Act No. XXI of 2013.**

7. Venue of Bid opening is the office of the Executive Engineer C&W Division Lower Chitral.

8. The Bidder shall in addition, place on affidavit in the technical proposal stating. A bid security amounting to **Rs. 2%** has been placed in the financial proposal or bid, if not provided the bid shall be considered as non-responsible

9. Affidavit on stamp paper that the firm/bidder/contractor is not blacklisted firm any Government, Semi Government in accordance with **KPPRA Rules.**

10. Affidavit on stamp paper that the firm/contractor is not involved in litigation cases with C&W Division Lower Chitral.

INF(P)3067/25

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER

C&W DIVISION LOWER CHITRAL

Zero Tolerance To Corruption



## Meeting discusses potential impacts of proposed bill

Creating new South Punjab province

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A meeting of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) cabinet-formed committee was held at Peshawar to discuss the potential impacts of a proposed constitutional amendment bill for the creation of a new South Punjab province.

The meeting, chaired by Provincial Law Minister Aftab Alam Advocate, included Agriculture Minister Major (R) Sajjad Barakwal and senior officials from the law, finance, and revenue departments.

The committee deliberated on a constitutional amendment bill introduced by Senator Aoun Abbas Buppi in the Upper House. The bill aims to create a new province in southern Punjab.

The officials provided a detailed briefing on the draft bill, including proposed amendments to several articles of the constitution, such as Articles 1, 51, 59, 106, 154, and 175A. They also discussed the possible effects on the electoral process in both the Upper and Lower Houses.

The meeting also addressed the financial implications of the pro-

posed province, particularly its effect on the National Finance Commission (NFC) Award and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's share.

Agriculture Minister Major (R) Sajjad Barakwal raised concerns that the new province would gain 23 seats in the Senate, which would negatively impact smaller provinces.

While acknowledging that the proposed geographical change in Punjab could be an opportunity for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to reclaim its historic territories, the committee emphasized the need to consider the

other negative consequences.

Law Minister Aftab Alam also highlighted the importance of restoring the eight seats in the Senate for the newly merged districts, which he referred to as an act of animosity.

He stressed the need to restore these seats and also reiterated the demand for an additional 4.84% share in the NFC Award for the merged districts following their merger into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The participants agreed to hold further consultations on the proposed bill in an upcoming meeting.



PESHAWAR: Minister for Higher Education Meena Khan Afridi chairing UET Peshawar's Senate meeting at Civil Secretariate.

## Shandana Gulzar approaches court against SHO Badh Bhir

### Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader and Member National Assembly Shandana Gulzar claimed to have submitted multiple applications to the Inspector General (IG) and other police officials against the Station House Officer (SHO) Abdul Ali Khan of Badh Bhir Police Station. However, none of them took actions against the SHO. She alleged that an inquiry was initiated only after she protested.

PTI leader accused the SHO Abdul Ali Khan of being involved with extortionists and land grabbers and supporting them, while humiliating innocent people. She claimed that despite being a provincial department, the police department has come under federal control. She also alleged that the SHO

enters homes and opens women's almshouses, and that the local people are against the SHO.

MNA Shandana Gulzar stated that she has filed a petition in court and is now determined to fight the case to its conclusion. She emphasized that she will not allow action against innocent people and will support action against extortionists and land grabbers.

PTI leader Shandana Gulzar said that the IG claimed to have initiated an inquiry, but she was not given notice or heard during the inquiry. She emphasized that she stands with the people and will fight the case to its conclusion.

**PHC directs appointment of permanent Director E&SED within a month**

A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court

(PHC) comprising of Justice Sahibzada Asadullah and Justice Farah Jamshed ordered government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to appoint permanent Director Elementary and Secondary Education within a month otherwise court will issue verdict in this regard, on Wednesday.

During hearing Justice Sahebzada Asadullah has annulled appointment of a Grade 19 officer as the Director of the Education Department, despite the presence of senior officers eligible for the post. He questioned how the department could assign additional charge to a junior officer when senior officers are available.

PHC heard a petition filed by Khalid Mahmood Sagar Advocate while Justice Sahibzada Asadullah directed the Additional Advocate

General Muzammal Khan, to inform the court about the government's plan for appointing a permanent Director. He emphasized that if the government fails to appoint a permanent Director within a month, the court will issue directions.

The petitioner had challenged the appointment of Naheed Anjum, a Grade 19 officer, as the Director of Elementary and Secondary Education, alleging that she is making transfers and appointments beyond her authority.

PHC adjourned the hearing and directed the representative of the Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education to contact the officers and inform the court about the timeline for appointing a permanent Director. If the government fails to do so, the court will issue directions.

## Authorities directed to take steps against floods

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In light of the prevailing weather conditions across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) have warned of an increased risk of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs) and flash

flood events in the province's vulnerable glaciated regions - Chitral Upper & Lower, Dir Upper, Swat and Kohistan Upper.

Through a letter to Deputy Commissioners concerned, PDMA has urged to take all necessary precautionary measures to avoid any potential loss of

life, livestock, and damage to infrastructure or crops.

Key safety directives include enhanced monitoring and surveillance of vulnerable GLOF sites to ensure timely early warning, improved coordination among relevant authorities, and raising awareness within local communities.

## Minister chairs meeting on financial integrated management system

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Local Government and Rural Development Arshad Ayub chaired a high-level meeting on Wednesday regarding the implementation of the Financial Integrated Management System (FIMS) in the province.

The meeting, held in Peshawar, was attended by the Secretary Local Government, relevant officials, and representatives of the World Bank. During the session, the Secretary Local Government presented a progress report reviewing the decisions made in the previous meeting.

Following its successful implementation in Punjab, the FIMS is now being introduced in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as a pilot project. On this occasion, the Minister directed the concerned authorities to form a team that would visit Punjab and finalize all essential matters related to the system. He stressed that efforts should be made to implement the system across all districts in collaboration with the Finance Department.

Minister Ayub further directed that the system should be fully operational by June 2026. He noted that the system would not only result in cost savings on human resources but would also enhance transparency and reduce time wastage.

Providing a detailed briefing, the Secretary Local Government informed the participants that the system is currently in its initial phase and that work on its various stages is progressing swiftly. Once implemented, it will help safeguard departmental data and fully digitize the Local Government Department, marking a major milestone for the province's development.

The Minister expressed satisfaction over the progress made so far and thanked the World Bank representatives for their continued support in the implementation of the system.

## Monsoon season most suitable for plantation: Musavir

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister on Forests, Environment, Wildlife, and Climate Change, Pir Musavir Khan has stated that the monsoon season is the most suitable time for tree plantation. The Forest Department is launching a large-scale plantation drive across the province during this season, with the aim not only to plant trees but also to involve the public in this national duty so that an environment-friendly mindset can be promoted.

In his message regarding the Monsoon Plantation Campaign, Pir Musavir Khan said that trees help improve the environment, reduce pollution, combat global warming, and secure the future of upcoming generations.

## Governor condemns Kulachi attack

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi has strongly condemned the firing incident in Kulachi, Dera Ismail Khan, in which two police personnel were martyred by unidentified assailants.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, the Governor expressed deep sorrow over the tragic loss of lives and paid glowing tribute to the martyred officers.

He said the sacrifices of police personnel in the line of duty are a beacon of courage and dedication, and their role in maintaining peace and order will never be forgotten.

Governor Kundi extended heartfelt condolences and solidarity to the families of the martyred police officers, praying for the elevation of their ranks in Jannat and patience for their grieving families.

"The sacrifices of

police martyrs in the war against terrorism are countless and invaluable," he remarked. "We share the grief of the bereaved families and stand with them in this difficult time."

He emphasized that the sacrifices made by the police force will not go in vain and reaffirmed the government's resolve to continue the fight against terrorism with unwavering determination.

## Registration Begins for Jwandoon OPD Card

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: On the special directives of Health Advisor Itisham Ali, registration has officially begun for the Jwandoon OPD Card to provide free outpatient services to deserving families. Awareness campaigns have been launched across all tehsils of District Mardan to ensure these essential health services reach those

in need.

In a statement issued here, the Health Advisor said that providing free OPD services has long been the vision of PTI founder Imran Khan, and Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has turned this vision into reality through the launch of the Jwandoon Card.

He further informed that under the Jwandoon OPD

Card initiative, 60 public and private health facilities in District Mardan are being registered to provide free OPD services.

Over 60,000 deserving families in Mardan will benefit from this scheme. "Our teams are actively conducting awareness and registration campaigns in every tehsil to ensure maximum outreach to the eligible families," said Itisham Ali.

## Professor Arif Ali assumes charge as Director WWB



### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Professor Arif Ali has assumed the charge of Director Education at the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Workers Welfare Board, on Wednesday. Upon taking charge, Younas Marwat, President of the Workers Welfare Board Employees Association, met with him

to extend congratulations and presented a bouquet. Younas Marwat hopes that the new director's appointment would lead to the swift resolution of issues within the educational institutions managed by the Workers Welfare Board.

He assured the director of the association's full cooperation and support. Marwat further expressed confi-

dence that the new director would utilize his skills to enhance the standards of the board's educational institutions. The association's positive outlook on the new director's potential to improve the board's performance reflects the importance of effective leadership in addressing challenges and achieving organizational goals.

## Free medical camps organized by Population Welfare Department

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Under the supervision of the Family Planning Department, the series of free medical camps continues at the Union Council level in District Peshawar. In this regard, on the instructions of District Population Welfare Officer Peshawar, Samiullah Khan Khalil, a free medical camp was held at the Welfare Center in Bakhshu Pul to provide medical and family planning facilities to poor residents of remote areas. Field Technical Officer Shazia Hamid, lady doctors, and female Family Welfare Assistants examined hundreds of poor and underprivileged patients and provided them with free medicines. Additionally, those in need were given information and medication related to family planning. District Officer Samiullah Khan Khalil stated that efforts are ongoing to deliver both medical and family planning services to people at their doorsteps in the underdeveloped villages of Peshawar. He also mentioned that with the cooperation of elected public representatives, religious scholars, and people from various walks of life, the message of family planning is being widely disseminated. Civil society and local government representatives appreciated the organization of the medical camp and termed it a commendable initiative.

## KMU and UNFPA sign MoU to launch BS Midwifery program

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Medical University (KMU), Peshawar, and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to formally launch the Bachelor of Science in Midwifery (BSM) program.

The primary aim of this strategic partnership is to address the challenges in the field of maternal and child health through a comprehensive approach and to develop a well-trained midwifery workforce.

The MoU was signed by Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq, Vice Chancellor of KMU, and

Dr. Luay Shabaneh, Country Representative of UNFPA Pakistan.

Under the agreement, UNFPA will support the professional development of KMU faculty through specialized training sessions conducted under the supervision of international experts. In addition, UNFPA will assist in the establishment of a state-of-the-art Clinical Simulation Laboratory at KMU's Institute of Nursing Sciences in Peshawar to provide practical training to midwifery students.

Speaking on the occasion, Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq stated that this partnership is a positive step towards improving maternal and

child health. It will not only enhance KMU's academic capacity but also contribute to aligning midwifery education in Pakistan with global standards.

He further emphasized that KMU's unique model of integrating various health disciplines under one roof is yielding meaningful

results, leading to the development of a more effective and comprehensive healthcare system. The ultimate beneficiaries of this effort, he added, will be the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, who will receive improved and accessible medical services.







## In brief

### Residents hold protest F.P. Report

SHAHDADKOT: The residents held a protest demonstration against the increasing unrest in Shahdadt city by holding a protest demonstration at the main square of the city, Koto Moto Chowk. Citizens and representatives of civil society also participated in the protest. On this occasion, SUP leaders Allahdad Khushk, Muhammad Qasim Soomro, and others protested and said that unrest has increased in Shahdadt city and surrounding areas. In the past, armed men raided the shops of Councillor Tariq Brohi and Muhammad Yaqub Kamboh and looted lakhs of rupees. Muhammad Ismail Kamboh was injured and fled when he resisted. They said that due to the unrest, Shahdadt and surrounding areas have become unsafe, while the business class has also been forced to migrate from here, while the police is not taking any action against the robbers, which has created a situation of fear among the citizens.

### RPO reviews security situation F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Regional Police Officer (RPO), Dera Ismail Khan, Syed Ashfaq Anwar on Wednesday conducted a detailed inspection of security arrangements along the CPEC motorway route from Abdul Khel to Yarik Interchange. Accompanied by District Police Officer Sajjad Ahmed Sahibzada, SP Paharpur Asad Ali Shah, and SP Motorway Atiq-ur-Rehman, the RPO reviewed measures in place to ensure the safety of commuters. During the visit, he met with officers of the Motorway Police and District Elite Force at the Yarik Interchange and presided over a high-level meeting focused on strengthening security protocols. The Motorway Police provided a comprehensive briefing on current arrangements, after which key decisions were made to enhance coordination and response capacity. RPO Anwar emphasized that ensuring public safety and securing the CPEC route is a top priority, directing joint patrols and full utilization of available resources. He further instructed the DPO Dera to intensify search and strike operations in surrounding areas, monitor suspicious activity, and neutralize any potential threats through coordinated action with allied forces.

### Heavy rainfall alert issued F.P. Report

QUETTA: A weather advisory issued by the Meteorological Department Quetta Regional Center today warned of heavy rainfall and thunderstorms in northeastern and southern Balochistan from July 17th to 19th. The alert specifies that a westerly wave interacting with humid airmass will impact districts including Labella, Awaran, Khuzdar, Sibbi, Zhob, Musakhel, Ziarat, Harnai, Loralai, and Barkhan. The forecast predicts partly cloudy to cloudy conditions with humidity across most of the province. Rain and thunderstorms are anticipated in scattered locations, particularly Loralai, Barkhan, Kohlu, Musakhel, Zhob, Ziarat, Harnai, Dera Bugti, Sibbi, and Khuzdar. Nokkundi, Chaghai, Panjgur, Kharan, and Washuk districts can expect dust and strong winds over the next 24 hours.

# Commissioner launches monsoon plantation drive

## F.P. Report

KOHAT: Commissioner Syed Motasim Billah launched monsoon tree plantation campaign 2025 in Kohat by planting fruit saplings at Commissioner House Kohat. Deputy Commissioner Kohat was also planted saplings on this occasion.

Commissioner Kohat, on this occasion, also distributed 15,000 fruit saplings in the 4 districts of Kohat Division. A grand ceremony of monsoon tree plantation will be held in the Kohat University where 2,500 fruit plants will be planted. He after launching the monsoon tree plantation, said that around 30,000 fruit trees will be planted at various government places this week. He further said that climate change and indiscriminate cutting of trees have had a dangerous impact on the environment, due to which not only has there been a decrease in rainfall but also the groundwater level is falling rapidly. In these circumstances, tree plantation has become very important, he stressed.

Commissioner Kohat appealed the public to actively participate in the tree plantation campaign and plant as many trees as possible to provide a clean and green environment for the coming generations. He added that everyone must plant at least one plant and ensure its protection. Later, he formally inaugurated the monsoon tree plantation campaign by planting a fruit sapling at the Commissioner House Kohat.

**RTS steering committee meeting held:** An important meeting of the District Steering Committee on Right to Public Services (RTPS) Commission Kohat was held with the Deputy Commissioner Kohat Abdul Akram Chitrali in the chair at his office today. The meeting beside others, was also attended by the District Monitoring Officer (DMO) RTPS Commission Tashfeen Israr and authorities concerned.

The DMO informed the meeting that a total of 63,730 applications were received from various departments from January

2025 to June 2025, out of which 59,406 were submitted within the time frame set by the RTPS Commission, with a compliance rate of about 93.22 %. Similarly, the meeting was also briefed in detail about the comprehensive report of services provided by the RTPS Commission, issues of non-compliance, awareness campaign and other initiatives.

Deputy Commissioner Kohat, who is also the Chairman of the District Steering Committee, said that the establishment of the Right to Public Services Commission was meant to ensure easy and timely delivery of government services to the people. He directed all tehsil and district offices to focus on measures to simplify the process of service delivery and ensure easy access of the public to services at the grassroots level. Appreciating the good performance of the RTPS Commission, the Deputy Commissioner urged the concerned departments to further improve their performance.

# Minor girl swept away in flash flood

## F.P. Report

JAMRUD: A 7-year-old girl named Fazeela remains missing after being swept away by a flash flood in the Chora area of Jamrud Tehsil, District Khyber. Rescue 1122 teams are continuing their search operations, but so far, no trace of the girl has been found.

According to local residents, the water flow has now completely subsided, which has made the search efforts easier. However, they expressed deep disappointment over the local

administration's negligence, claiming that officials have failed to take any serious action and have left the entire responsibility to Rescue 1122 teams.

The incident has left the community in a state of grief and concern. Locals have demanded that higher authorities immediately mobilize the administration and utilize all available resources to recover the missing child. Rescue sources confirmed that the operation is ongoing and additional teams have been called in to expedite the search.



# Behind closed doors

## Kinza Sualiha

**I**N a country of over 240 million people with fewer than 500 registered psychiatrists, Pakistan's mental health system is on the brink of collapse—we continue to dismiss psychological issues as "drama," attention-seeking, or outright madness. The recent case of DJ Lazawal, a Pakistani model arrested in Lahore for brutally torturing and killing animals, is not just about cruelty—it is a tragic reflection of how untreated mental illness can manifest in horrifying ways when society repeatedly turns a blind eye.

Lazawal, whose real name is Khansa Hussain, posted disturbing videos on Instagram showing rabbits, cats, and exotic birds either confined in filthy cages or lifeless after being smashed or mutilated, often with an eerie sense of pride. The



case was reported by JFK Animal Rescue and Shelter, leading to swift action by ASP Syeda Shehrbano Naqvi, known for her work in youth and women protection, who conducted a raid at Lazawal's DHA residence.

What police officers found was appalling—even for those experienced in the field—animals kept in extremely disturbing conditions and clear signs of mental instability. Lazawal, who had a history of fleeing rehab centers, was immediately transferred to a mental asylum, and FIR was registered under Pakistan Penal Code Section 289, along

with relevant sections of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1890) and Punjab Wildlife Act (1974). But this case cannot be viewed in isolation.

It is part of a larger pattern where we, as a society, continuously ignore early signs of psychological breakdowns, and only respond when the damage becomes public and irreversible. The outrage over this incident is justified, but it also reflects collective guilt—we allowed someone unwell to become a threat, not only to animals but potentially to society at large, by labeling mental illness as shameful rather than treatable.

This tragedy is a wake-up call: we must stop viewing mental health as an afterthought and start treating it with urgency, compassion, and systemic support—because without that shift, such horrors will not only continue, they will multiply.

# Three youth kidnapped

## F.P. Report

SAHIWAL: The incident of kidnapping of youths by honey trap by Indian girls, three people including two youths residents of Sahiwal were sent to Thailand and kidnapped.

According to the details, the youths were in telephonic contact with the Indian girl. The parents of the kidnapped youths said that their children reached Thailand on May 26, 2025 with a friend from Faisalabad and contacted him on that day.

Later, they were taken across the border and taken to Myanmar, where the kidnappers informed us about the kidnapping of their children over a phone call and demanded a ransom of Rs 10 million. The parents of the kidnapped citizens say that their children had telephonic contact with the Indian girl and the same girl sent their children tickets to Thailand through her mobile phone and unknown persons sent the kidnapped Usman Amin, Muhammad Ahmed and Tajamul Shahzad from the airport at Lahore airport.

The parents further say

that they informed the Pakistani embassy in Thailand about the kidnapping of their children and also contacted the relevant authorities in Islamabad. Requests for help in recovering abducted children have been made to institutions and the Pakistan Citizen Portal.

Meanwhile, as part of the Punjab government's comprehensive plan to extend the scope of rescue services to the towns, it has been decided to construct two new rescue stations in Sahiwal district.

These stations will be constructed in Yousafwala and Noor Shah, for which Rs 6.6 crore has been allocated in the budget of the new financial year 2025-26. This was stated by Deputy Director Development Muhammad Akram Wattoo.

It should be noted that these stations are already functional in Sahiwal, Chichawatni, Harpa and Kamir in Sahiwal district, which are providing immediate rescue services to the citizens of these areas. After the establishment of these two new stations, the services of Emergency Services

1122 will be easily available to all areas of Sahiwal district.

**Agriculture dept seizes 1060 unauthorized seed bags:** Deputy Director Agriculture Dr. Tahir Javed and Assistant Director/Seed Inspector Dr. Muhammad Aslam took action against those illegally packing unapproved varieties of pea seeds, 20 empty bags and 20 label stickers were seized, while 1060 bags (15 kg each) were sealed on the spot.

Legal action has been initiated against the accused. According to the details, Deputy Director Agriculture Dr. Tahir Javed and Assistant Director/Seed Inspector Dr. Muhammad Aslam raided the warehouse of Saman Agro Seed Gujranwala on Multan Road on a tip-off.

During the checking, 20 empty bags and 20 label stickers kept for packing unapproved varieties of pea seeds were seized, while 1060 bags (15 kg each) were sealed on the spot. The case against the accused was submitted to the court of Special Judicial Magistrate Sahiwal.

## Light rain shower exposes admn preparedness Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: The intermittent rains in Nowshera have exposed the inefficiencies of the district administration and the Cantonment Board. Even a slight downpour turned the streets, markets, and bazaars into rivulets, while the responsible authorities are limited to issuing warnings and statements.

In the sensitive and important area of Nowshera Cantonment, even a light rain shower causes the drains to overflow, flooding the markets and bazaars. Local shopkeepers claim that despite collecting millions of rupees in taxes, the authorities fail to ensure proper drain cleaning, water drainage, and sanitation arrangements.

The markets are plagued by foul odors, heaps of garbage, and polluted water overflowing from the drains, posing a significant threat to public health. Citizens allege that the Cantonment Board officials focus solely on harassing poor laborers and shutting down their businesses under the pretext of encroachments and illegal activities, while turning a blind eye to sanitation issues.

The public circles have demanded that the Army Chief, Corps Commander Peshawar, and other high-ranking officials take immediate notice of the Cantonment Board's poor performance in Nowshera Cantonment and provide relief to the citizens from this distressing situation.

## 14,923 Kissan cards issued F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: On the instructions of Chief Minister Punjab, large-scale agricultural reforms and financial support initiatives are being rapidly implemented across the province to ensure the prosperity of farmers. Under the Agriculture Transformation Vision, farmers in Toba Tek Singh and throughout Punjab are being provided with direct financial assistance and modern agricultural facilities.

So far, 14,923 Kissan Cards have been issued in Toba Tek Singh, enabling the disbursement of interest-free loans. Under the Kissan Card Scheme, PKR 100 billion in loans are being provided to farmers across Punjab. Under the Wheat Support Programme, 1,891 farmers in Toba Tek Singh have received subsidies ranging from Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 60,000, while a total of Rs. 12 billion has been distributed across the province.

To address energy issues, 8,000 farmers are being provided subsidies for the solarisation of agricultural tube wells. Through the Green Tractor Scheme, 10,000 farmers have received subsidies of Rs. 500,000 to Rs. 1 million per tractor. In Toba Tek Singh, 228 farmers have already been provided tractors under this initiative. As part of the Wheat Sowing Campaign, 1,000 free tractors have been distributed to high-performing farmers, including 12 from Toba Tek Singh.

The High-Tech Financing Programme is also underway, providing 11 types of modern agricultural machinery on subsidised rates to promote mechanised farming. Agricultural research is progressing steadily. At the Ayub Agricultural Research Institute, work is ongoing on 50 new crop varieties, while 106 new varieties have been introduced between 2021 and 2025.

Additionally, 22 young agricultural graduates have been selected for internships to gain hands-on field experience under the Agriculture Transformation Programme. All departments of the agriculture sector are actively working to promote mechanised farming, increase productivity and ensure farmer welfare. The Punjab government remains committed to its vision: "A prosperous farmer means a prosperous Punjab."

# 3-day Shaqlashat festival concludes in Upper Chitral



## F.P. Report

CHITRAL: The three-day Shaqlashat Festival held in the Torkhow Valley of Upper Chitral under the supervision of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) concluded on Wednesday.

Speaking as chief guest at the concluding ceremony, KPCTA General Muhammad Ali Syed said that the Shaqlashat Festival was organised on the directives of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Deputy Speaker Suraiya Bibi to boost tourism and cultural activities in the region.

He said that the Shaqlashat Festival was similar to a mini-Shandur Festival, adding that next year, the festival would be celebrated with great pomp and show with the inclusion of polo as one of the main attractions. The festival featured various sports competitions and cultural activities to promote tourism in Upper Chitral and attract more visitors to this scenic valley.

In the football final, Al-Shabab FC (Madak) defeated Felly FC (Kosht) through a penalty shootout while in the cricket final, Star Eleven Tirich triumphed over Headquarters Booni to claim the trophy. In volleyball, Shokhar Volleyball

Team beat Khot Volleyball Team to win the final while in the traditional Patik Dekh contest, renowned local figure Ghulam Hussain of Phur Khot emerged victorious.

Al-Shabab FC's young player, Mustansir from Booni, was declared the best player of the tournament. It may be mentioned that this year's Shaqlashat Festival was held under the supervision of the KPCTA. Also, several teams are currently heading towards Tirich Mir this season, and these activities would continue until the end of August. The aim of these initiatives is to lure tourists towards these breathtaking valleys, thereby promoting tourism and creating employment opportunities for the local population.

The closing ceremony concluded with the distribution of prizes among the winner and runner-up teams. Torkhow-Morkhow Tehsil Chairman Jamshed Mir also addressed the gathering. Shaqlasht, a peaceful mountainous beautiful site located at the far end of Khot Valley in Upper Chitral. Every year in July this hidden gem hosts the Shaqlashat Festival, where nature and culture come together in perfect harmony. With cool breezes, green meadows, flowing streams, traditional music and dance, the festival beautifully reflects Chitral's rich heritage.

# UoM's senate approves surplus budget

## Haleem Asad

LOWER DIR: The Senate of the University of Malakand (UoM) has approved the university's annual budget for the fiscal year 2025-26, amounting to Rs1.78 billion, with a surplus of Rs21.563 million. The approval came during the 8th Senate meeting held at the Higher Education Department (HED) Conference Room in Peshawar, said a press release issued by the UoM.

The meeting, chaired by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Higher Education and Pro-Chancellor Mr. Meena Khan Afridi, also saw the announcement of a special grant of Rs74.9 million for the university. During the

session, members reviewed and discussed the proposed budget in detail. Following a thorough analysis and some key recommendations, the budget was unanimously approved by the forum.

The Senate commended the university administration for its sound financial management, academic progress, and rising student enrollment. The efforts of the faculty and staff in maintaining high academic standards were widely acknowledged.

The meeting was attended by MPA from Lower Dir Humayun Khan, Javed Iqbal (Additional Secretary HED), Arshad Ali Afridi, also saw the announcement of a special grant of Rs74.9 million for the university. During the

Naveed Hussain Shah (nominee of HEC Chairman), and several academic leaders including Prof. Dr. Sardar Khan (VC University of Shangla), Prof. Dr. Syed Salim Shah, Prof. Dr. Iftikhar Hussain Khalil, Prof. Dr. Atta ur Rahman, Prof. Dr. Arab Naz, Mr. Israrullah, Dr. Altaf Hussain, Mr. Naveed ur Rahman, Dr. Raham Badshah, and Mr. Hayatullah Yousafzai.

Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Rashid Ahmad expressed gratitude to the Pro-Chancellor for his guidance and for recognizing the university's performance. He reaffirmed the institution's commitment to excellence in academics, administration, and financial sustainability.

# Coastal Highway construction gains momentum

## F.P. Report

THATTA: After remaining dormant for two decades, the ambitious 350-kilometer Coastal Highway project along Sindh's southern shoreline is finally gaining momentum. A renewed partnership between the federal and Sindh governments has led to a breakthrough agreement to resume work on the long-delayed project, with support from the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

The first phase of the project, spanning 91 kilometers from Bhambhore Creek to Keti Bunder, will be completed under a 50:50 cost-sharing arrangement. The Sindh government has already initiated repair and widening work on the previously constructed 39-kilometer stretch near Bhambhore Creek.

Originally envisioned during the Perviz Musharraf era, the Coastal Highway was designed to provide vital connectivity across Sindh's underdeveloped coastal belt and to act as a barrier against sea intrusion, which continues to threaten fertile agricultural lands and displace local communities. Once completed, the highway will link Karachi, Thatta, Sujawal, Badin, and Tharparkar districts, directly benefiting an estimated 35 million people.

Despite its strategic importance, progress on the project remained limited.

During the tenure of former Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah, only 11% of the planned road (approximately 39 kilometers) was constructed. The project was later merged with the Ghoraketi Bunder road, leading to its suspension.

However, on March 6, 2013, the Sindh government reignited interest in the initiative. It began rehabilitation and expansion of a 20-kilometer stretch from Zero Point (Bhambhore) under the Public Works Department's Scheme 1826, for which Rs. 9.31 billion was allocated. The provincial government also succeeded in securing federal cooperation for the remaining 82 kilometers up to Keti Bunder. The federal government has since approved an additional Rs. 9 billion in funding.

The remaining 259 kilometers from Keti Bunder to Ali Bunder is expected to be financed through a loan from the Asian Development Bank. ADB has commenced preliminary studies and environmental surveys. However, a significant engineering challenge has emerged in navigating the highway over several creeks and the Indus River, particularly between Keti Bunder, Kharochhan, Shah Bunder, Jati, and Ali Bunder.

To address this, officials from ADB and the Coastal Highway project recently met with Sindh Minister for Works Haji Ali Hassan

Zardari and Federal Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal. During the meeting, it was decided to engage technical experts to assess and construct bridges, including one over an old British-era structure and several others across creek crossings.

"This project is a game-changer for the entire region," said Minister Zardari. "Not only will it offer vital transport infrastructure to millions living in coastal Sindh, but it will also shield hundreds of villages and vast stretches of farmland from devastating sea intrusion."

Environmental experts and local residents echo this sentiment. Due to the lack of freshwater flow downstream from the Kotri Barrage, the Arabian Sea has steadily pushed inland, submerging villages and turning fertile lands saline.

"The Coastal Highway will act as both a transport corridor and a protective wall," said environmental activist Gulab Shah. Other community leaders, including Yaqub Samoon, UC Keti Bunder Chairman Abdul Wahid Memon, and social activist Ayaz Lashari, have called for the immediate completion of the first phase, followed by rapid development of the second phase to Ali Bunder. Minister Zardari also acknowledged the role of former President Asif Ali Zardari in reviving federal interest in the project.





## EU sets stage for big battle over long-term budget

BRUSSELS (AFP): The European Commission will kickstart two years of tense negotiations when it unveils its proposal for the EU's long-term budget including funding reforms that risk renewed confrontation with farmers. EU chief Ursula von der Leyen has to balance a growing list of priorities including bolstering the bloc's security, ramping up Europe's competitiveness to keep up with US and Chinese companies, countering climate change and paying debts due from 2028.

And all of this against a backdrop of soaring trade tensions with the European Union's biggest commercial partner, the United States. The previous 2021-2027 budget was worth around 1.2 trillion euros (\$1.4 trillion) and made up from national contributions -- around one percent of the member states' gross national income -- and money collected by the EU such as customs duties. One of the biggest challenges ahead will be over the size of the budget, as the EU's biggest -- and richest -- countries want to avoid paying more.

But unlike in the previous budget, the EU has debts due from the Covid pandemic, when the bloc teamed up to borrow 800 billion euros to support the continent's economy. These are estimated to cost 25-30 billion euros a year from 2028. The European Parliament has made it clear that an increase will be neces-

sary. "We believe that the union cannot do more with the same amount or less. So we believe that in the end, an increase of the budget will be unavoidable," said Siegfried Muresan, the EU lawmaker who will lead negotiations on behalf of parliament. The commission plans to propose new ways of raising money including taxes on large companies in Europe with annual net turnover of more than 50 million euros, according to a draft document seen by AFP.

Another area of fierce debate will be the large farming subsidies that make up the biggest share of the budget, known as the common agricultural policy (CAP). Brussels plans to integrate it into a new major "national and regional partnership" fund, according to another document -- which farmers fear will mean less support. The CAP accounts for almost a third of the current multi-year budget -- around 387 billion euros, of which 270 billion euros are directly paid to farmers. Centralising "funding into a single fund may offer some budgetary flexibility, but it risks dissolving" the CAP with "fewer guarantees", pan-European farmers' group Copa-Cogeca has said.

Farmers will put pressure on the commission with hundreds expected to protest outside the building in Brussels. That will raise fears in Brussels after protests

broke out last year across Europe by farmers angry over cheap imports, low margins and the burden of environmental rules. Muresan, who belongs to the biggest parliamentary group, the centre-right EPP, urged the same level of funding for the CAP, "adjusted for inflation". The commission has, however, stressed the CAP will continue with its own rules and financial resources, especially direct aid to farmers.

Brussels could also propose reviewing how CAP payments are calculated to better target beneficiaries. For example, the commission wants to cap aid per hectare at 100,000 euros but this would be a thorny issue unlikely to garner much support. Facing new costs and competing challenges, the EU wants to tap new sources of funding -- fast. In one document, the commission suggests the bloc take a share from higher tobacco excise duties and a new tax on non-recycled electronic waste. Such a move, however, is "neither stable nor sufficient", according to centrist EU lawmaker Fabienne Keller, critical of giving new tasks to Brussels "without the necessary means to accomplish them". Proposal will launch difficult talks over the budget and is expected to "as usual, end with five days of negotiations" between EU capitals, an official said.

## Cuban minister resigns after downplaying poverty

HAVANA (AFP): The labor minister in economically depressed Cuba resigned amid an uproar over her claim that people rummaging through garbage cans were only pretending to be poor and not truly desperate. Such scenes of acute need are common in Cuba, especially in Havana, as people in the communist run country grapple with runaway inflation, meager wages and food shortages, causing some to resort to panhandling or eating out of the trash.

The labor minister who denied this, Marta Elena Feito, who also oversees the social security system, "acknowledged her mistake and tendered her resignation," Cuban state media said, adding that she had shown a "lack of objectivity and sensitivity." Feito told a parliamentary committee meeting about measures to address poverty that people rummaging for food in garbage bins are in fact

dressed up to look like beggars. "When you look at their hands, when you look at the clothes those people are wearing, they are disguised as beggars. They are not beggars. In Cuba, there are no beggars," she said in statements broadcast live on state television.

Social media users in the communist nation reacted with outrage, posting photos of people eating out of trash cans, while economist Pedro Monreal commented on X that there are "people disguised as 'ministers'" in Cuba. President Miguel Diaz-Canel entered the fray on X to lambast Feito's "lack of sensitivity." He later told a parliamentary session that "none of us can act with arrogance, act with pretense, disconnected from the realities we live in." Beggars, added Diaz-Canel, are "concrete expressions of social inequalities and the problems" Cuba faces. Poverty

levels have increased sharply as the Caribbean country reckons with its worst economic crisis in three decades, marked by shortages of food, medicine and fuel and daily power blackouts.

Observers blame a combination of US sanctions, domestic mismanagement of the economy, and the Covid-19 pandemic tanking the nation's vital tourist industry. Last year, the government said there were 189,000 families and 350,000 individuals out of a population of 9.7 million living in "vulnerable" conditions and benefiting from social assistance programs. AFP has observed a marked increase in the last two years of homeless people and beggars on the streets of a country where the average monthly salary is less than \$20 at the unofficial exchange rate. Cuba's economy shrunk for the second consecutive year in 2024, contracting 1.1 percent compared to 1.9 percent in 2023.

## Moroccan community calls for calm after clashes

TORRE PACHECO, Spain (Reuters): Moroccan community leaders in the Spanish town of Torre Pacheco called for calm following four nights of clashes between North African migrants and the far-right, in some of the worst such unrest in the country in recent times. Police have detained at least 14 people so far over the clashes that flared up after an attack last week on a local man in his 60s.

Far-right groups have called for anti-migrant protests and over 120 Civil Guard officers have been deployed to maintain security in the town, a government spokesperson for the region said. Authorities said three Moroccan citizens suspected of involvement in the assault have been apprehended, including a 19-year-old alleged to be the main perpetrator. He was detained in northern Spain on assault and battery charges. A spokesperson for the central government's office in the Murcia region said none of the suspects lived in Torre Pacheco.

After xenophobic messages on social media to

"hunt down" residents of North African origin, leaders of the local Moroccan community urged calm and advised younger members to remain in their homes after dozens took to the streets over the weekend and, clashing with far-right groups and police. "We want peace ... We don't want criminals, we don't want violence or people who come from outside to make trouble here," Abdelali, an informal spokesperson for the Moroccan community who has lived in the town for 25 years, told reporters. Police arrested three people overnight after a confrontation with dozens of young men in the San Antonio neighbourhood, home to a majority of the town's first- and second-generation migrants who represent nearly a third of the town's population of 40,000, according to local government data.

Reuters footage showed some of the protesters, mostly masked, lobbing fireworks at officers clad in riot gear, who responded by firing rubber bullets.

Spain's top hate crimes prosecutor, Miguel Angel Aguilar, told SER radio that his office was investigating the events in Torre Pacheco, as well as social media messages inciting violence towards migrants. He also confirmed regional prosecutors were looking at statements by the leader of far-right party Vox in Murcia, Jose Angel Antelo, who is accused by Spain's ruling Socialist Party of linking immigration to criminality in speeches, media appearances and posts on X.

The messaging app Telegram shuttered a channel named "DeportThemNowSpain" for "inciting violence". Reuters reviewed dozens of messages in the channel that included expletive-laden calls to attack Moroccans residing in Torre Pacheco or set fire to their homes. The Spanish Interior Ministry said police in Mataro, near Barcelona, had arrested an unnamed leader of supremacist movement "Deport Them Now Europe" suspected of inciting hatred and seized two computers.

## Lebanon's worst drought on record drains largest reservoir

QARAOUN, Lebanon (Reuters): Water levels at Lebanon's largest reservoir on the Litani River have fallen to historic lows amid what experts describe as the country's worst drought on record, threatening agriculture, electricity production, and domestic water supplies.

The Litani River National Authority said inflows to Lake Qaraoun during this year's wet season did not exceed 45 million cubic metres, a fraction of the 350 million cubic metres annual average. Last year, the figure stood at 230 million. The water currently available in Lake Qaraoun - around 61 million cubic meters - was unusable due to severe pollution, the authority said.

"There were dry years in 1989, 1990 and 1991, but this year is the driest," said Sami Alawieh, head of the river authority. "We are facing a water scarcity problem across all Lebanese territories and water basins." Drone footage of Lake Qaraoun shows a dramatically receded shoreline, exposing cracked earth and dead vegetation. Lebanon's hydroelectric plants tied to the Litani basin have been shut down. Alawieh said, causing financial losses and intensifying electricity rationing by Electricite du Liban.

"We have two factors: the decline in rainfall and the pressure on groundwater," he said. A study by the authority found climate warming and shifting weather patterns have contributed to more frequent dry seasons and higher temperatures, exacerbating soil moisture loss and reducing the recharging of groundwater reservoirs. The state utility has slashed supply in some areas from 20 hours a day to as little as 10. In the fertile area around Qaraoun village, in the Bekaa Valley, farmers were already feeling the impact.

"I have never seen such drought or scarcity of rain as this year," said Safa Issa. "We used to get snow up to a metre high. Now, it's been 10 years since we've seen any." The strain has been compounded by erratic supply of electricity needed to run irrigation systems. "You irrigate for three hours, then stop for three," said Fayeze Omais, another local farmer. Suzy Hoayek, an adviser to the Ministry of Energy and Water in Beirut, said a nationwide awareness campaign to reduce consumption would be launched within 10 days. "The most important thing is to manage demand," she said.

## Men jailed for felling Britain's iconic tree

LONDON (Reuters): Two men were each jailed for over four years for cutting down Britain's 'Sycamore Gap' tree, a much-loved and well-known global landmark whose dramatic silhouette had featured in a Hollywood movie.

The sycamore, estimated to be almost 200 years old, stood at the centre of a dramatic dip in the landscape alongside the historic Hadrian's Wall in northern England, making it a popular spot for photographers, hikers and even marriage proposals. Daniel Graham, 39, and Adam Carruthers, 32, were found guilty last month of travelling from their homes in the middle of the night in September 2023 to deliberately cut it down with a chainsaw.

They filmed what prosecutors described as a "moronic mission" on Graham's mobile phone and later bragged about it, before the pair's friendship descended into acrimony as the widespread anger at their actions became clear. Both had denied any involvement in the felling of the tree, which featured in the 1991 film "Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves" and also damaged part of Hadrian's Wall, built by the Romans almost 2,000 years ago and now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Graham and Carruthers did, however, accept their responsibility when speaking to probation officers, their lawyers said. Carruthers' lawyer Andrew Gurney described it as "drunken stupidity".

## UN agency sounds alarm as 1 in 10 children in Gaza now malnourished

GAZA: One in every 10 children screened in clinics in Gaza run by the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, is malnourished, as child hunger surges across the territory amid the continuing Israeli blockade on humanitarian aid.

Israel's punishing prevention of aid entering Gaza has led to "severe shortages of nutrition supplies", UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini said, describing the situation for starving children as "engineered and man-made". Lazzarini said the UN must be allowed to do its work in Gaza, particularly bringing in "humanitarian assistance at scale, including for children".

"Any additional delay to a ceasefire will cause more deaths," he said, noting that more than 870 starving Palestinians had been killed so far while trying to access food from the highly criticised distribution system run by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), which is backed by Israel and the United States. UNRWA's communications director, Juliette Touma, told reporters in Geneva via a videolink from Amman, Jordan, that "medicine, nutrition supplies, hygiene material, fuel are all rapidly running out". "Our health teams are confirming that malnutrition rates are increasing in Gaza, especially since the siege was tightened more than four months ago on the second of March," Touma said.

"One nurse that we spoke to told us that in the past, he only saw these cases of malnutrition in textbooks and documentaries," she said. "As malnutrition among children spreads



across the war-torn enclave, UNRWA has over 6,000 trucks of food, hygiene supplies, medicine, medical supplies outside of Gaza. They are all waiting to go in," Touma added. "The world cannot continue to look away." Since January 2024, UNRWA said it had screened more than 240,000 boys and girls under the age of five in its clinics, adding that before the war, acute malnutrition was rare in Gaza. Andee Clark Vaughan, an emergency nurse with the Palestinian Australian New Zealand Medical Association (PANZMA) based in Gaza, told Al Jazeera how Israeli authorities had confiscated baby formula from medical workers entering the territory. "Immune systems are so compro-

mised here because of the malnutrition," Vaughan said, describing how Palestinian mothers are so malnourished that they are unable to produce breast milk to feed their infants and forced to make difficult decisions to keep their children alive. "What we've been seeing here is moms trying to do their utmost best, mixing water - which is often contaminated - with beans or lentils just to make something of sustenance to get these kids fed and get them nutrients," Vaughan added. UNICEF said that last month, more than 5,800 children were diagnosed with malnutrition in Gaza, including more than 1,000 children with severe, acute malnutrition. It said it was an increase for the fourth month in a row. — Al Jazeera

## UN expert on Palestinians says US sanctions are a 'violation' of immunity

WASHINGTON (AFP): The UN's unflinching expert on Palestinian affairs Francesca Albanese said that Washington's sanctions following her criticism of the White House's stance on Gaza are a "violation" of her immunity. The United Nations' Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories made the comments while visiting Bogota, nearly a week after US Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced the sanctions, calling her work "biased and malicious."

"It's a very serious measure. It's unprecedented. And I take it very seriously," Albanese told an audience in the Colombian capital. Albanese was in Bogota to attend an international summit initiated by leftist President Gustavo Petro to find solutions to the Gaza conflict. The Italian legal scholar and

human rights expert has faced harsh criticism for her long-standing accusations that Israel is committing "genocide" in Gaza.

"It's clear violation of the UN Convention on Privileges and Immunities that protect UN officials, including independent experts, from words and actions taken in the exercise of their functions," Albanese said. Rubio on July 9 announced that Washington was sanctioning Albanese "for her illegitimate and shameful efforts to prompt (ICC) action against US and Israeli officials, companies, and executives." The sanctions are "a warning to anyone who dares to defend international law and human rights, justice and freedom," Albanese said. The UN urged the United States to reverse the sanctions against Albanese, along with sanctions

against judges of the International Criminal Court, with UN chief Antonio Guterres's spokesman calling the move "a dangerous precedent."

The European Union also spoke out against the sanctions facing Albanese, adding that it "strongly supports the United Nations human rights system." Albanese, who assumed her mandate in 2022, released a damning report this month denouncing companies -- many of them American -- that she said "profited from the Israeli economy of illegal occupation, apartheid, and now genocide" in the occupied Palestinian territories. The report provoked a furious Israeli response, while some of the companies also raised objections. Washington last month slapped sanctions on four ICC judges, in part over the

court's arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, barring them from the United States.

UN special rapporteurs like Albanese are independent experts who are appointed by the UN human rights council but do not speak on behalf of the United Nations. The war in Gaza was triggered on October 7, 2023 after Hamas militants killed 1,219 people in Israel and took hostages, according to an AFP tally based on official figures. More than 58,479 Palestinians have been killed in ongoing retaliation operations, according to data from the Health Ministry of the Hamas government, considered reliable by the UN. Israel has occupied the West Bank since 1967 and violence has surged in the territory since October 2023.

## French PM proposes cutting national holidays to cut debt

PARIS (AFP): Prime Minister Francois Bayrou said he wanted to reduce the number of public holidays in France as part of a bid to tackle what he called the "curse" of his country's debt. Presenting 2026 budget proposals, Bayrou said two out of France's 11 national holidays could go, suggesting Easter and May 8, a day that commemorates the end of World War II in Europe.

Such a measure would bring France into line with Germany's nine national holidays -- although federal states can add their own -- and take it well below Italy's 12 days. After years of overspending, France is on notice to control its public deficit and cut its sprawling debt, as required under EU rules. Bayrou said France had to borrow each month to pay pensions and the salaries of civil servants, a state of affairs he called "a curse with no way out". Losing two public holidays, meanwhile, would add "several billions of euros" to the state's coffers, Bayrou said.

But the proposed measure sparked an immediate protest from Jordan Bardella, leader of the far-right National Rally. He said abolishing two holidays, "especially ones as filled with meaning as Easter and May 8 is a direct attack on our history, our roots and on labour in France". The party's parliamentary leader, Marine Le Pen, warned that "if Francois Bayrou does not revise his plan, we will vote for a no-confidence motion". Leftist firebrand Jean-Luc Melenchon of the France Unbowed party called for Bayrou's resignation, saying "these injustices cannot be tolerated any longer".

His party colleague Mathilde Panot accused Bayrou of starting "a social

war". Bayrou had said previously that France's budgetary position needed to be improved by 40 billion euros (\$46.5 billion) next year. But this figure has risen after President Emmanuel Macron said at the weekend he wanted 3.5 billion euros of extra military spending next year because of rising international tensions. France has a defence budget of 50.5 billion euros for 2025. Bayrou said the budget deficit would be cut to 4.6 percent next year, from an estimated 5.4 percent this year, and would fall below the three percent required by EU rules by 2029. To achieve this, other measures would include a general freeze on spending increases -- including on pensions and health -- except for debt servicing and the defence sector, Bayrou said.

"We have become addicted to public spending," Bayrou said. "We are

at a critical juncture in our history". The prime minister even held up Greece as a cautionary tale, an EU member whose spiralling debt and deficits pushed it to the brink of dropping out of the eurozone after the 2008 financial crisis. "We must never forget the story of Greece," he said. France's debt stands at 114 percent of GDP -- compared to 60 percent allowed under EU rules -- the biggest debt mountain in the EU after Greece and Italy.

The government hopes to cut the number of civil servants by 3,000 next year, and close down "unproductive agencies working on behalf of the state", the premier said. Bayrou said wealthy residents would be made to contribute to the financial effort. "The nation's effort must be equitable," Bayrou said. "We will ask little of those who have little, and more of those who have more."

## Prosecutor asks Brazil Supreme Court to find Bolsonaro guilty of coup

BRASILIA (AFP): A prosecutor asked Brazil's Supreme Court to find ex-president Jair Bolsonaro guilty of plotting a coup, in closing arguments after a trial that saw US President Donald Trump try to intervene on behalf of his right-wing ally.

Bolsonaro is accused of seeking to overturn the 2022 election won by his left-wing opponent, current President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. The prosecution told the court that former

army officer Bolsonaro and seven others were guilty of participating in "armed criminal association" and had sought to "violently overthrow the democratic order." After the defense presents its closing arguments, a five-justice panel will decide the fate of the former president. If found guilty, Bolsonaro and his co-defendants could face up to 40 years in prison.

Bolsonaro says he is the victim of political persecution, echoing Trump's

defense when the US president faced criminal charges before his White House return. "It's not about imprisoning me; they want to eliminate me," he told news site Poder360. Prosecutors say Bolsonaro tried to overturn his 2022 loss in a plot that only failed because the military did not side with him. Violent supporters then rioted, rampaging through government buildings in the capital Brasilia in scenes that echoed the assault on the US

Capitol by Trump's supporters after the Republican lost to Democrat Joe Biden in 2020. The trial has attracted attention from Trump, who returned to power in the 2024 election and continues to claim -- despite this being rejected repeatedly by the courts -- that he won in 2020. Trump has repeatedly called on social media for Bolsonaro's trial to be stopped, accusing the authorities in Brazil of mounting a "witch hunt" and a "disgrace."



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## How realistic is Macron's perception of threat?

**F**RENCH President Emmanuel Macron announced on July 14, the Bastille Day, marking the outbreak of the 1789 French Revolution, that France will increase its defence spending in the next two years by 6.5 billion euros (3 billion euros in 2026 and 3.5 billion euros in 2027), and in 2027 France's total defence spending would be 64 billion euros, double the amount that it was in 2017.

Macron declared in his Bastille Day speech: "Since 1945, freedom has never been so threatened, and never so seriously. To be free in this world, we must be feared. To be feared, we must be powerful." He appealed to the people: "The nation needs you. Every French man and woman must be cognizant of the threat around us. We all need to make sacrifices. Freedom has a price tag."

It is an aggressive speech from the leader of one of the leading democratic countries in Europe. And he is proposing to arm the country because Macron thinks that France is threatened. He has identifies the sources of threat as Russia, terrorism and online attacks. Russian attack on Ukraine is seen by western European democracies like France as a threat to democracy in Europe. It seems to be a rhetorical stance, to justify defence spending.

France is not directly threatened by Russia. France chooses to back Ukraine along with other NATO and European Union (EU) countries, and the threat to Ukrainian independence is considered a threat to the rest of Europe of Europe. It is this mindset of collective security that has drawn Europe into two world wars. And the sense of collective security has reappeared on the political horizon of Europe for the first time since the 1930s.

The serious question to be asked is whether the perceived Russian threat to Europe is an ideological one or is it a military threat. Russia is not interested in, nor capable of, threatening Europe militarily. Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2024 was unjustified but the situation was complex. Russia was feeling threatened by the idea of Ukraine becoming a member of the Western military alliance, NATO. Russian President Vladimir Putin should have handled it with tact instead of going to war with Russia.

Is France's decision to step up its defence spending massively a response to Russia, or is it a response to the pressure exerted by US President Donald Trump that European members of NATO must spend at least 5 per cent of their national GDP on defence because he felt that America was bearing the financial burden of NATO alone on its shoulders? It seems to be the case that Macron is responding to Trump's pressure, and he has turned it into a grand statement against Russia.

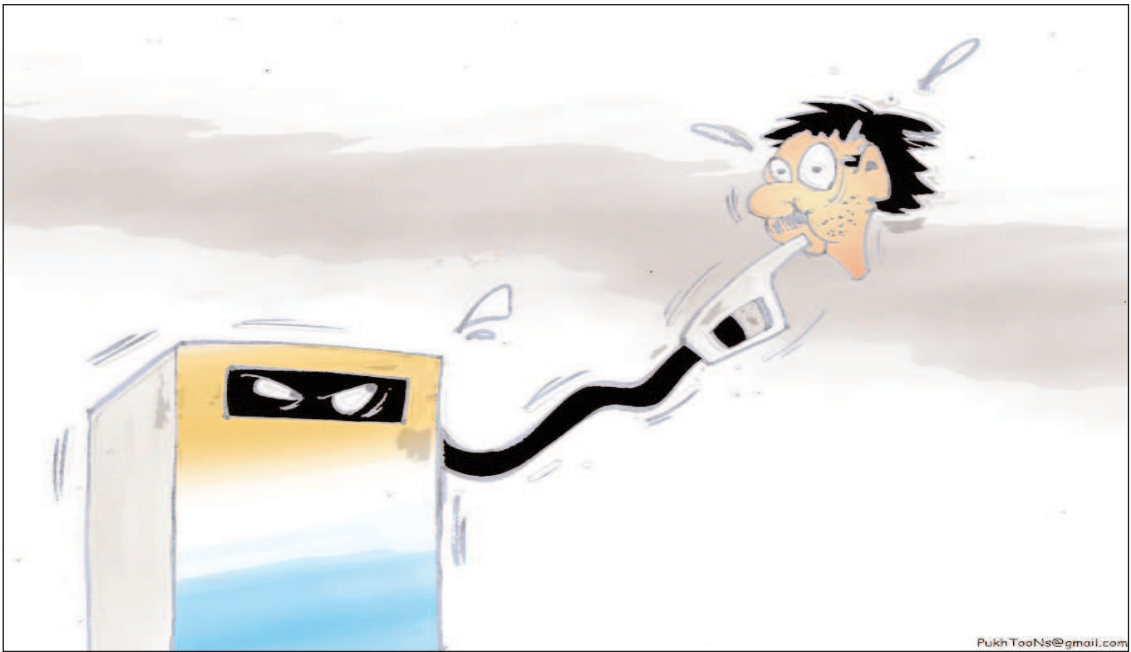
The other two sources of threat that Macron has identified are terrorism and online attacks. There have been sporadic terrorist attacks in France by Islamic extremists. But the way to respond to terrorism is not an increase in defence expenditure but to formulate a strategy of isolating the extremist elements in the Muslim expat community in France, most of whom are from north African countries like Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia.

Macron does not recognise the fact that the religious extremists from these communities pose a threat to the communities themselves. There is a need to protect the North African communities, majority of whom are Muslims. This needs a social strategy. It would require that these communities should be integrated into French society. The subtle and the not-so-subtle discrimination that exists against the migrants, especially the Muslims, will need to end.

It is indeed puzzling that President Macron wants to counter online attacks through billions of euros on defence preparedness. Cyber-attacks have to be countered through technological upgradation and not through guns, tanks and fighter planes.

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## Travel restrictions highlight Palestinians' conditional freedom

Daoud Kuttab

**R**ESTRICTIONS on travel for Palestinians, inside their own country and on leaving and returning to their homes, have been a constant problem, with various degrees of excruciating trouble, humiliation and frustration. While Gazans, including those with medical emergencies, are not generally allowed to travel or return, the West Bank has seen an uptick in checkpoints, making travel between, say, Ramallah and Jenin or Hebron and Nablus a nightmare that sometimes ends with people being stuck for hours.

As well as such internal restrictions, Palestinians, especially those with families, also face nightmares when they must travel outside of Palestine and then return. Many Palestinians working in the Gulf or other countries often use the summer break to return home and spend time with friends and family, as well as take some downtime in their homeland.

The only airport in Palestine is in Gaza. US President Bill Clinton landed there in December 2018, but Israel has since bombed the airport and ended the free passage between the West Bank and Gaza it agreed to in the Oslo Accords. For the 3 million Palestinians in the West Bank, the King Hussein Bridge to Jordan is the only way to leave and return. Jerusalem's Palestinians are allowed to use the Lod (Ben Gurion) airport, but many choose to travel via

Jordan.

Although travel on this only artery is supposed to be regulated by Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian government, Tel Aviv has veto power, largely by deciding (i.e., restricting) its working hours. Whereas most border crossings worldwide are open 24/7, Israel applies much more restrictive hours, often insisting on closing it on Saturdays and keeping access limited despite the extreme heat in the Jordan Valley and the huge number of Palestinians using this sole crossing point.

Former US President Joe Biden pushed Israel hard to open the bridge 24/7 and, after a three-month trial in October 2022, Israel agreed to the round-the-clock opening. But this lasted less than a year. After the Oct. 7, 2023, attacks occurred, Israel returned to the much more limited opening hours. Its justification was that some staff had been called up for duty in Gaza. So, there is a limited number of staff, even though the Israelis collect a hefty 200 shekels (\$59) fee per person, including children, for everyone leaving the bridge.

While many people had delayed traveling due to the war, this summer the number of people trying to cross the bridge has been much higher. Yet Israel has refused to extend the opening hours to accommodate the increase in travelers.

According to official sources, Israeli authorities

are currently allowing only 2,500 passengers per day across the bridge — half the number that generally cross during the summer months and a fraction of the 13,000 to 18,000 that have been handled daily during Hajj and Umrah seasons in the past. Even though some people are willing to pay the high price of VIP transport (\$121 per adult for a 3km ride), the numbers are restricted to 200 per day.

Desperate to manage the chaos, the authorities rolled out a digital reservation system. But the system quickly collapsed under its own poor design. Without requiring passport numbers at the time of purchase, the ticketing app became a goldmine for scalpers, who bought up passes under fake names and resold them at inflated prices.

One traveler, unaware of the new system and desperate to get home, paid 50 Jordanian dinars (\$70) for a ticket with a face value of 7 dinars. The story went viral, prompting both Palestinian and Jordanian authorities to belatedly crack down on the black market.

The government of Jordan has since dealt with this problem by insisting on passport numbers being attached to the tickets; however, the overcrowding has not eased.

The core issues remain unresolved: the hours are too short, the processing too slow and the demand far outstrips the artificial caps imposed by Israel.

Suggestions of adding more Israeli staff and expanding the operating hours have fallen on deaf ears.

Freedom of movement is a basic human right, enshrined in international law. And yet, for Palestinians, that right is continually denied in the most routine and dehumanizing ways. The bridge has become a chokepoint as a result of Israel's occupation, meaning families miss weddings, students lose scholarships, patients forgo medical treatment and workers risk losing jobs — all because of arbitrary, politically motivated delays.

The current restrictions are not due to capacity, infrastructure or security. They are a political decision — an extension of a policy of control, meant to remind Palestinians that their freedom is conditional, fragile and subject to revocation at any moment.

Jordanian officials privately complain that the closures are meant to punish Amman for its outspoken opposition to the Gaza war and its pro-Palestinian stance. With no Jordanian ambassador in Tel Aviv and Israel's ambassador still absent from Amman, the diplomatic channels needed to resolve the crisis remain paralyzed.

King Hussein Bridge is more than just a road. It is a lifeline. Every day that access to it remains limited, it stands as a monument to how the world treats Palestinian lives — as expendable, as negotiable, as optional.

## A glaring mismatch between demand and supply of skilled manpower

Raja Saad

**P**UNJAB stands on the edge of an economic paradox, industries are facing serious challenge because of non-availability of skilled manpower, despite high unemployment rate among the youth. According to the latest projections, Punjab's total population in 2025 is approximately 127.7 million. Based on national demographic trends, around 42% of this population falls between the ages of 16 and 35, placing the province's working-age youth at roughly 53.6 million. This group holds key to driving industrial growth, yet it remains severely underutilized. Without meaningful engagement and opportunities, this demographic is increasingly vulnerable to unemployment, social unrest, extremism, and crime, a dangerous consequence of neglect.

Despite a projected demand of 503,720 skilled workers in 2025, only 119,704 graduates entered the workforce in 2024, just 24% of the required number. In many cases, the distribution of graduates across trades bears little relevance to actual market needs. This mismatch is not merely about numbers; it reflects a deeper structural and institutional problem that demands urgent attention.

This disparity becomes even more evident when analyzing institutional dynamics. Although 213,410 students are currently enrolled in Technical and Vocational Programs (with roughly 41% being female), it remains unclear how many of them will successfully graduate, let alone match the exact skill requirements of the industry. With a network of 3,289 training institutes, ranging from male-only to female-

only to co-educational institutions, the infrastructure exists, but output and alignment with industrial needs are lagging behind.

The recently conducted industrial demand survey by NAVTTC with support from GIZ, and funding from Germany and EU, further underlines this gap. The manufacturing sector alone demands approximately 227,000 skilled workers, dwarfing current graduation figures. Other sectors such as textiles and garments (60,000), construction (47,000), tourism and hospitality (45,000), allied health (33,000), and agriculture (30,000) all reflect high unmet demand. Even emerging and specialized fields like renewable energy (20,000), printing and packaging (9,000), and professional scientific roles (571) show significant gaps.

The issue isn't just sectoral, it's occupational too. Among high-demand trades, machine operators (44,000), stitching machine operators (30,000), quality assurance technicians (11,500), and computer operators (10,000) are at the forefront.

These figures point to a demand structure that is skewed toward precision, process, and productivity roles, areas that require focused training and experience.

The numbers speak for themselves and they paint a picture of deep systemic failure.

Take Sialkot: the manufacturing sector alone needs over 70,000 skilled workers. Supply? Just 1,157. That's a gap of nearly 69,000. This isn't a shortfall. It's a crisis.

Lahore isn't any better. Annual demand sits at 92,500, with 55,250 in manufacturing. But only 2,878 are

available to fill those jobs. Over 52,000 roles go unfilled while 29,000 students are enrolled in programs that hardly match market needs.

Gujrat shows more of the same. Manufacturing demands 22,860. Supply is 1,174.

Over 21,000 workers needed, gone unmet. In textiles and hospitality, the gaps are just as staggering.

Faisalabad, our textile hub, needs 71,424 workers. Only 14,600 are enrolled across institutions. In manufacturing alone, the demand is 37,242 and supply is a dismal 1,677. The disconnect is glaring.

Money is being spent. Institutes are operating. But no one seems to know whether the training leads anywhere. Sector after sector, city after city, we're training in the dark, totally blind to real market demand.

This isn't inefficiency. It's neglect. And the longer we ignore it, the wider the gap grows.

Addressing this mismatch calls for more than just increasing enrolments, it demands strategic realignment of curricula, stronger industry-institute linkages, and incentives for female participation to tap into an underutilized segment of the population. Without immediate and targeted intervention, the skilled labor shortage may become a bottleneck to the country's socio-economic progress.

**P o l i c y R e c o m m e n d a t i o n s : Tackling Punjab's Skills Mismatch**

1. Train for the Market: Align skills training with actual job demand across sectors and districts. Move away from generic, one-size-fits-all programs.
2. Scale Up



**Apprenticeships:** Launch large-scale apprenticeship programs. Trainees should split time between classrooms and shop floors, with top performers absorbed directly into industry.

**3. Industry-Led Curriculum:** Involve employers in setting standards, designing curricula, and participating in assessments to ensure training reflects real-world needs.

**4. Enforce NVQF in Full Spirit:** Implement Competency-Based Training and Assessment (CBT&A) under the National Vocational Qualification Framework (NVQF) across all institutions in the province, in all trades.

**5. Institutionalize Skills Data:** Conduct annual skills demand surveys and establish a centralized, government-funded Skills Information System through NAVTTC and TEVTAs for continuous labor market insight.

**6. Track Outcomes, Not Just Inputs:** Introduce nationwide tracer studies to monitor graduate employment. Develop a public dashboard showing demand, supply, and job placement outcomes in real time. Develop policies-based demand data and make informed decisions.

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## Build regional stability from the ashes of Netanyahu's war on JCPOA

Javad Zarif

**T**EN years ago, on July 14, I joined my counterparts from China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union to announce the conclusion of a unique achievement of diplomacy, bringing a peaceful end to an unnecessary crisis founded on lies and a blatant policy of securitisation to divert global attention from the real nuclear threat to peace in West Asia. The entire world celebrated the conclusion of the Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), except for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other leaders in the Israeli nuclear apartheid regime, who saw – and continue to see – peace and stability as the only real “existential threat”, and who publicly pledged to destroy the deal.

Today, some of our successors are clamouring to deal with the aftermath of an aggression against Iran, right in the middle of new nuclear negotiations. This aggression came from the rogue, non-NPT (the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons) possessor of nuclear weapons in West Asia – Israel. It targeted safeguarded nuclear facilities of an NPT member and coupled the act with other war crimes by targeting civilian quarters, child-care centres, scientists, and off-duty military commanders. The butcher of Gaza went even further with Israel's latest aggression and broke a millennia-old tradition by targeting national leaders. This indicated a clear and publicly stated attempt to bring chaos and instability to the entire region.

The only power to have ever used nuclear weapons – the US – rushed to the aid of this rogue aggressor as its campaign began to falter. In a reckless and unlawful move, it targeted Iran's nuclear facilities in a futile attempt to halt the country's peaceful nuclear progress – much of which, ironically, was achieved after the US unilaterally withdrew from the JCPOA.

At the same time, the successors of my E3/EU counterparts – the representatives of France, Germany, and the UK, along with the EU, have been simultaneously boasting about “Netanyahu doing their dirty work”, and threatening, in absolute bad faith, to invoke the “dispute resolution mechanism” in the JCPOA and United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2231, which legally endorsed the nuclear deal. They do so while they have, in words and deeds, terminated their status as JCPOA participants by disavowing the most fundamental pillar of the JCPOA, in calling for the dismantlement of Iran's peaceful enrichment program – while embarrassingly failing to fulfil, even minimally, their own economic and financial obligations towards Iran through at least seven of the past 10 years.

On July 20, 2021, I argued against the ability of the E3/EU to invoke the JCPOA “dispute resolution mechanism” – erroneously and self-servingly called “snapback”, a term that was never used in the JCPOA or UNSC Resolution 2231 – in my 140-page letter to the Secretary-General of the UN, which was circulated as UN General Assembly (UNGA) document A/75/968 and Security Council document S/2021/669. My well-documented legal arguments have now been further strengthened by the more recent statements and actions of the E3/EU, in which they have clearly terminated their status as “JCPOA Participants”.

The Iranian armed forces, relying on home-grown military capability, have once again destroyed the myth of Israeli invincibility, exposing the thin skin of the bully. At the same time, the brave and proud Iranian people thwarted the delusion of Netanyahu and his cohorts to dismember Iran. Once again, Iran proved that even two nuclear powers, combined, cannot bring a millennia-old civilisation state to its knees.

Nevertheless, it is now evident that Israel's illusion of regional supremacy and “aggression at will” is founded on destabilising Iran, followed by other regional powers – resulting in instability, division, and chaos in Muslim West Asia. This is neither in the interest of the countries in the region nor of our friends in China and Russia, whose national interests are founded on stability; nor is it compatible with the US and Europe's global pivot agenda. Yet Netanyahu and his hypocritical “Bibi-Firsters” in the West have shown that they are callous enough to engulf the world in “forever wars” to prolong their corrupt political careers and expansionist delusions – founded on apartheid, genocide, and aggression against Arab neighbours in the region – coupled with blackmail, never-ending scandals, and extortion in the West.

The international community needs to immediately address this fundamental threat to regional and global peace and security, which also endangers the national interests of almost all countries and the prosperity and welfare of the people of the region and beyond. I have personally witnessed, in more than four decades of diplomacy – including well-documented Israeli obstructions in the negotiations for the exchange of American hostages in Lebanon with Lebanese and Palestinian hostages in Israel in 1991 – that the Israeli political establishment has been, and always will be, willing to sacrifice the treasure, freedom, and blood of its closest allies for even the most trivial gains. Anyone harbouring the illusion that Israel will provide them with help and security will one day wake up to the ugly reality that they have been ruthlessly erected as Israel's first line of defence, without any reciprocity.

The essential pillar of Netanyahu's policy is chaos, discord, and instability. The only real “existential threat” – to him – is regional cooperation: Be it the establishment of a zone free from nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East – called for by the UNGA consistently since 1974 – or the establishment of a regional security and cooperation scheme in the Strait of Hormuz region, called for in paragraph 8 of Security Council Resolution 598 in 1987.

As Hamad bin Jassim bin Jaber Al Thani, the former prime minister of Qatar, has warned, our region – and indeed the entire world, including the permanent members of the Security Council – cannot prosper under the persistent shadow of Israeli domestic politics driving regional adventurism. It is high time for the UNSC to take practical measures to create a regional framework for dialogue, confidence-building, and cooperation among countries of the Hormuz region or Muslim West Asia, with a proper umbrella of global guarantees from the UNSC and its permanent members.

Iran has offered ideas such as the Hormuz Peace Endeavour (HOPE) in 2019 or the Muslim West Asian Dialogue Association (MWADA) in 2024. Everyone in our region and beyond has a very high stake in thwarting the agenda of regional destabilisation. Other countries in the HOPE or MWADA region, including Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen, who have now seen some of the horrifying realities of Israel's concocted dangerous future, should take the matter in their own hands, present individual or joint initiatives, improve Iranian proposals or provide plans of their own, and collectively and without further delay ask the UNSC to adopt a resolution for regional arrangements drafted primarily by the countries of this region.

The lesson of the past 10 years since the conclusion of JCPOA must have illustrated to everyone that coercion will ultimately harm even its initiators. Diplomacy for a future of common vision, hope and positive-sum outcome is, has always been, and will forever remain the only reasonable way. Time is of the essence.



# Roughly 6 in 10 Americans oppose Trump’s megabill, CNN poll finds

**ROUGHLY 6 in 10 Americans say they oppose the GOP domestic policy bill that President Donald Trump recently signed into law, according to a new CNN poll conducted by SSRS.**

In the wake of his most sweeping legislative achievement since returning to office, Trump’s rating for handling the budget has slumped 11 points since March, with a rising majority also saying he’s gone too far in cutting government programs.

While there are signs that opinions have yet to fully settle – fewer than a third of the public reports following news about the bill very closely, and roughly half of Americans don’t express strong feelings one way or the other – the initial strong opposition to the bill outpaces initial strong support.

Americans say, 61% to 39%, that they oppose the spending bill overall. Most, 58%, now say Trump’s gone too far in cutting federal government programs (up 7 points since February), and his rating for handling the federal budget now stands at just 37%. His rating for handling taxes, though still under-water, is modestly more positive: 44% approve of his handling of taxes, close to his first-term high on that issue.

More expect the bill to hurt the economy than to help it, 51% to 29%, with the rest expecting it to make little difference. And more expect it to leave their family worse off than better off, 37% to 16%, with nearly half unsure or predicting they’ll be largely unaffected.

Trump’s overall job approval rating remains at 42%, largely unchanged since spring, but just 37% say he has had the right priorities, down 6 points from March.

What Americans like and dislike about the bill

The public response to the bill’s proposals isn’t entirely negative. By a 29-point margin, Americans say that the changes it makes to tax laws – such as permanent extension of the tax cuts passed in 2017, temporarily ending taxes on tips and expanded tax breaks for seniors and parents – are more of a reason to support it than to oppose it.

They say the same of its increase to defense

spending (by a 13-point margin) and its increased spending on border security, immigration enforcement and detention (by an 8-point margin).

But by a 45-point margin, Americans call the amount that it will add to the deficit a reason for opposition. By a 25-point margin, they oppose its removal of incentives for the use of clean energy to encourage the use of oil and gas.

By a smaller 8-point margin, they oppose the changes it makes to social safety net pro-

**Ariel Edwards-Levy**

Republican-leaning support the bill overall, only about one-quarter express strong support.

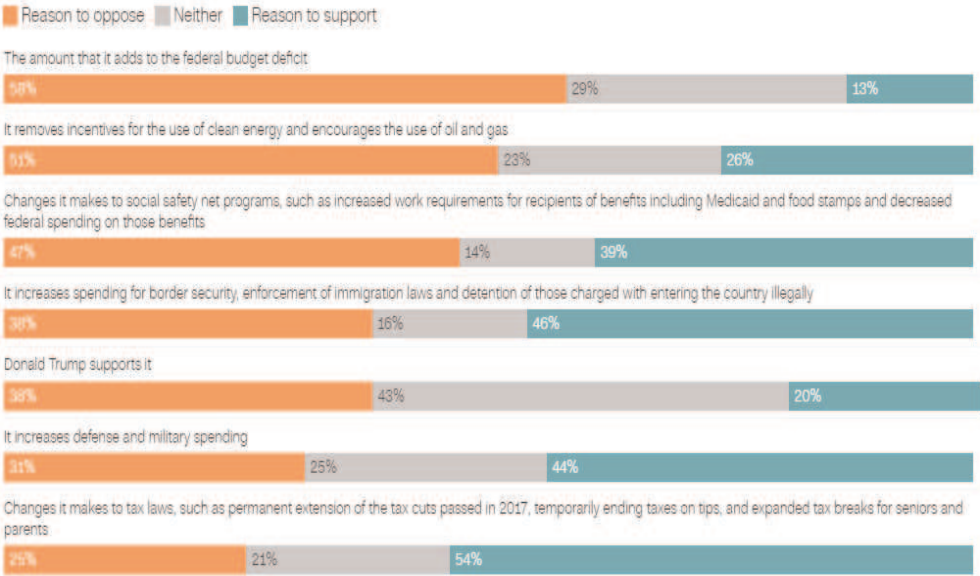
And although there’s broad GOP-aligned backing for the bill’s provisions on taxes (86% see this as a reason to support the bill) and immigration enforcement spending (83%), roughly 4 in 10 don’t expect it to help the economy, and only about one-third expect to see a personal benefit. Four in 10 also see the amount it adds to the federal deficit as a

reading amongst his own party since his return to office in January. And a majority (56%) say Trump’s approach to the presidency has been unnecessarily risky rather than a necessary shakeup in Washington.

Some 56% also say that’s he’s gone too far in using the power of the presidency and executive branch, and 51% say that he’s gone too far in pressing colleges and universities to change their policies. When it comes to trying to reduce the price of everyday goods, by contrast, 58%

topics rank second to the economy as a top issue. While that’s similar overall to January, the partisan dynamics of the issue have shifted. At the start of the year, Republicans and Republican-leaning independents were 26 points likelier than those aligned with the Democratic Party to mention immigration. Now, that gap has narrowed to 10 points among rising Democratic concern about Trump’s deportation program, even as many Republicans continue to praise the effort.

*Q: For each of the following, please indicate whether you see it more as a reason to SUPPORT the bill, more a reason to OPPOSE it, or if it does not make a difference either way.*



NOTE: The CNN poll was conducted by SSRS from July 10-13 among a random national sample of 1,057 US adults drawn from a probability-based panel. Surveys were either conducted online or by telephone with a live interviewer. Results shown in this chart have a margin of sampling error of up to ±3.5 percentage points.

Source: CNN/SSRS polling  
Graphic: Ariel Edwards-Levy, CNN

grams, such as increased work requirements for recipients of benefits including Medicaid and nutrition assistance and decreased federal spending on those benefits – changes that have been at the heart of much of the Democratic messaging against the bill. Trump’s support for the bill is also seen, by an 18-point margin, as more of a reason for opposition than support.

**Democratic opposition outstrips Republican support**

Views of the policy bill are sharply divided by party, but the intensity of Democratic opposition far outstrips the strength of Republican support. A near-unanimous 93% of Democrats and Democratic-leaning say they oppose the bill, with 71% opposing it strongly.

By contrast, while 78% of Republicans and

reason to oppose the bill.

“There’s no way we can continue as a country with this kind of oppressive debt,” one Virginia Republican polled wrote in answer to the survey. She approved of Trump’s handling of the presidency as a whole but gave him negative marks on the federal budget, and called the federal debt the country’s most urgent issue.

**Most say Trump hasn’t had right priorities**

As Trump’s second-term job rating has stabilized in the low 40s on both the presidency and his handling of the economy overall, a 63% majority also says he hasn’t paid enough attention to the country’s most important issues.

While 75% of Republicans say he has the right priorities, that’s down markedly since March and his lowest

say Trump has yet to go far enough.

Asked in an open-ended question to name the issue they consider most important, 31% of Americans mention something related to the economy, inflation or cost of living – a plurality, although down from 44% in January. These economy-focused Americans are even more sharp in their criticism of Trump’s handling of high prices: 65% say he hasn’t gone far enough to reduce the price of everyday goods.

“We were promised a lot of things during the campaign and there haven’t been a lot of improvements,” wrote another woman polled, an independent from Texas who called the state of the economy the most pressing national concern.

Immigration-related

The poll also finds increased Democratic attention to government spending, concerns about separation of powers and the rule of law, and Trump himself.

One issue that didn’t rise to prominence in the poll: The ongoing uproar about the information the federal government has released on the Jeffrey Epstein case. Just one respondent mentioned that as the most important problem.

The CNN poll was conducted by SSRS from July 10-13 among a random national sample of 1,057 US adults drawn from a probability-based panel. Surveys were either conducted online or by telephone with a live interviewer. Results among all adults have a margin of sampling error of ±3.5 percentage points.

— CNN

# The Levant swings between dreams and deals

**Eyad Abu Shakra**

**THE talk of a new Middle Eastern “deal” we have been hearing over the past few days is jarring. The agreement reportedly being cooked up sees Syria cede the Golan Heights to Israel in return for the Lebanese city of Tripoli.**

The official reactions of Lebanese parties, of course, mixed outrage and condemnation. However, those who understand the intentions they hold behind the scenes and see the implications of Benjamin Netanyahu shaping Washington’s vision and approach to the Middle East will address this development with the seriousness it deserves.

Moreover, this apparent deal was leaked as Israel tightened its control over Iran’s airspace and expanded its list of targets inside Iran. Not only that, but it also coincided with the tacit alignment of Washington, Tel Aviv and Ankara’s visions regarding all regional crises, from the Kurdish question to what remains of the Palestinian struggle.

Some observers now believe that the Washington-Tel Aviv axis has new priorities with regard to the sectarian dynamics of the Levant, at least temporarily, following the transition from Barack Obama and Joe Biden to Donald Trump. The irony, however, is this same American (Republican) and Israeli (Likud) right had originally bet on “political Shiism” in the region during the buildup to the invasion of Iraq.

Back then, it was the American neoconservatives, working closely alongside the Israeli right, that steered George W. Bush’s presidency via his White House advisers and Pentagon officials.

At the time, the US was also trying to overcome a trauma, that of 9/11. The neoconservatives exploited this catastrophe to occupy Iraq, which was eventually handed over to Iran. The leader of the Coalition Provisional Authority that oversaw Iraq’s transition, Paul Bremer, even boasted that his administration had “ended a thousand years of Sunni rule” in Iraq.

As the saying goes, a lot of water has flowed under the bridge since 2003. To begin with, despite the Democrats’ sympathy for the so-called Arab Spring in several Arab countries, they and the Israeli leadership refrained from supporting the Syrian uprising against Bashar Assad’s regime. Later, they effectively turned a blind eye to Iran’s military interven-

tion to rescue the Syrian regime. Moreover, the Democratic leadership was keen on ensuring the success of the nuclear deal it had signed with Iran after the Muscat negotiations. As a result of this deal, and the policies pursued by the Obama and Biden administrations, Tehran felt empowered to move freely across the region. In contrast, Netanyahu and his Likud allies never forgot their apprehensions about Iran’s role in the Arab arena and continued to seek containment.

However, it is clear that Israel has been the biggest beneficiary of Iran’s role in the region. It was happy to see Iran become a “bogeyman” that fright-

political entities that never meant anything to either of them, and at the expense of peoples who have never factored into their political calculations.

Indeed, the future of Palestine has rarely seemed as bleak and hopeless since 1948. As for Syria, Lebanon and Iraq, whose borders were drawn by the Sykes-Picot Agreement (which completed what the Balfour Declaration had begun), they may now need to brace for a world in which Turkiye is the region’s second power, behind Israel.

Lebanon’s most sectarian non-Sunni hard-liners likely would not object, in my view, to ceding more than half of the Sunni population and giving up to Tripoli (and Akkar and Dinniyeh), if Washington

**Some observers now believe that the Washington-Tel Aviv axis has new priorities with regard to the sectarian dynamics of the Levant, at least temporarily, following the transition from Barack Obama and Joe Biden to Donald Trump. The irony, however, is this same American (Republican) and Israeli (Likud) right had originally bet on “political Shiism” in the region during the buildup to the invasion of Iraq. Back then, it was the American neoconservatives, working closely alongside the Israeli right, that steered George W. Bush’s presidency via his White House advisers and Pentagon officials. At the time, the US was also trying to overcome a trauma, that of 9/11. The neoconservatives exploited this catastrophe to occupy Iraq, which was eventually handed over to Iran. The leader of the Coalition Provisional Authority that oversaw Iraq’s transition, Paul Bremer, even boasted that his administration had “ended a thousand years of Sunni rule” in Iraq. As the saying goes, a lot of water has flowed under the bridge since 2003. To begin with, despite the Democrats’ sympathy for the so-called Arab Spring in several Arab countries, they and the Israeli leadership refrained from supporting the Syrian uprising against Bashar Assad’s regime. Later, they effectively turned a blind eye to Iran’s military intervention to rescue the Syrian regime. Moreover, the Democratic leadership was keen on ensuring the success of the nuclear deal it had signed with Iran after the Muscat negotiations.**

ened Arab states and compelled them to rush toward normalization with Tel Aviv in pursuit of protection. Moreover, Israel has never truly been concerned by the bombastic rhetoric of the so-called resistance regimes and parties, so long as its borders remained secure ... and the possibility of expanding them remained available. Still, in one way or another, the events of Oct. 7, 2023 (the Al-Aqsa Flood operation launched from the Gaza Strip), was a replay of 9/11.

That day undoubtedly marked a turning point for regional alliances, leading to a shift in priorities. Without minimizing the tragedy in Gaza, the most dangerous aspect of Israel’s political response was Netanyahu’s stated intention to “reshape the Middle East.”

In Trump, Netanyahu found his long-sought prize. Trump is an ideal partner in drawing this map over the rubble of

and Tel Aviv guaranteed “privileges” for the Christians and Shiites. In fact, many Lebanese Christians have lost hope in the very idea of “Greater Lebanon,” which was born in 1920 and saw Tripoli and other areas added to the country. And many Shiite extremists would be happy to secure a demographic majority by reducing the number of Sunnis in the country.

As for Syria, the Sunni majority seems well placed to strengthen its position and to address the fears of the Alawite, Christian, Druze and Kurdish minorities through a deal between the US and Turkiye.

Moreover, it is worth keeping an eye on the Syrian-Iraqi border amid the radical shifts and consequential negotiations underway in the Kurdish arena.

So, one wonders: will dreams align with the fine print of the deals? Or are we back to the mess of trial and error?

# Transactional diplomacy versus the international order

**Dr. Zafiris Tzannatos**

**CROSS-BORDER conflicts lead not only to deaths, injuries and other casualties, but can also have long-lasting economic impacts sparking domestic unrest. The key to preventing both outcomes is what type of diplomacy countries pursue and over what timeframe.**

Transactional diplomacy prioritizes achieving “deals” over adherence to “rules-based” approaches grounded in international principles and humanitarian values. The term gained prominence during Donald Trump’s first presidential term and has continued into his current term. This form of diplomacy is gaining ground, including within the EU, contributing to the rise of populism, xenophobia and nationalism at the domestic level and increasing the prospect for regional and global conflicts.

Transactional diplomacy can be shortsighted. This can be seen by comparing the chaotic impact on global trade of the “reciprocal tariffs” announced by Trump in April with the gradual, yet consistent, progress made by the World Trade Organization since its inception in 1995, which has advanced globalization through multilateral negotiations.

The consequences of

the increasingly fluid international order are especially evident in the Middle East and North Africa region. In addition to the effects of regional instability, the majority of Arab countries are facing economic stagnation and increasing poverty. According to a report published by the World Bank last month, the poverty rate in MENA has more than doubled to an estimated 9.4 percent this year, compared to only 4 percent in 2010. In the past year alone, an additional 11 million people have fallen below the poverty line.

The rise in poverty in MENA cannot be explained by global crises, such as the 2008 financial meltdown, the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2022 war in Ukraine. These crises have also affected the rest of the world, but the current global poverty rate of 9.9 percent is less than half the 21 percent recorded in 2010. And the typically disruptive energy price fluctuations tend to have a neutral impact on the MENA region as a whole, which comprises both energy-exporting and energy-importing countries.

An obvious culprit in the region is prolonged conflict and fragility. In this context, Arab nations may ask themselves what kind of diplomacy can

halt and reverse their economic and humanitarian descent. Should they adopt a transactional approach or one grounded in principles, or some balance between the two?

The question is timely,

**Video evidence, meticulously analysed by Forensis, an independent research agency founded and led by members of Forensic Architecture, has unequivocally disproven every single one of the Berlin police’s claims. The footage shows an officer with the number BE24111 written on the back of his uniform jacket advancing into the crowd with colleagues to arrest a protester. As they push people around, BE24111 starts punching protesters in the head and kicking them. He appears to injure himself during this violent fit and retreats with his colleagues. There is no violent mob. No one is dragging him into the crowd. No one knocks him to the ground. No one kicks him. On the contrary, the footage shows demonstrators actively distancing themselves and shielding one another from BE24111’s assault. It was the officer, not the crowd, who carried out violence. Despite the truth being uncovered, the damage has already been done. The Berlin Police’s false narrative was quickly amplified by media outlets and government officials, unleashing a wave of fear-mongering and political opportunism. A police union representative appeared on Welt TV channel and described the demonstrators as a “gang of murderers” who “would have killed the officer if they could have”. The tabloid BILD ran a headline reading: “Jew hater kicks police officers” and quoted Stephan Weh of the German Police Union as saying, “when a colleague is dragged into a crowd and trampled, losing consciousness multiple times, we have to say it’s pure luck that he survived the night [...] This madness must end before one of our colleagues loses his life at such a gathering.” The Public Prosecutor’s Office stated it was “an attack on the organs of the rule of law” and launched a formal investigation into the incident under charges of “dangerous bodily harm” and a “serious breach of the peace”.**

following Israel’s airstrikes on Iran last month. The strikes, considered to be “preemptive” by Israel, are based on 30-year-old statements (also repeated at the UN more recently) by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, then an MP, that Iran could fulfill its nuclear ambitions in “a matter of months, or even weeks” without an external intervention.

Yet, despite decades of warnings that Iran is on the brink of developing nuclear weapons, no credible evidence supports this claim. As recently as March, US intelligence

chief Tulsi Gabbard testified before the Senate that Iran was not actively pursuing a nuclear bomb. The International Atomic Energy Agency backed

this assessment in May, reporting no indication of an undeclared weapons program, a view later repeated by Director General Rafael Grossi. Nevertheless, Israel’s strikes have been endorsed by German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, who stated that Israel is doing “the dirty work for all of us” in Iran. His assessment was in line with those of the representatives of the G7 countries that met in Canada when the strikes started. Soon after, the US conducted additional strikes on nuclear facilities in Iran, though a

ceasefire was reached two days later, with hopes that it will hold permanently.

Proxy wars may serve the interests of powerful nations, but the people

illustrate this clearly. Though both Egypt (in 1979) and Jordan (in 1994) signed peace treaties with Israel, their economies have been adversely affected by lower tourism revenues, increased transport costs and slower economic growth. Following the recent strikes in Iran, both Egypt and Jordan, among others, immediately experienced a surge in tourism cancellations, with increases in fiscal deficits, public debt and unemployment likely to pose significant risks to their macroeconomic stability and societal conditions if uncertainty continues and conflict resumes.

Wars exert consequences beyond the warring parties and military targets, often impacting neighboring countries even if they are not involved. The economic effects of the war in Gaza caught in their crossfire pay the ultimate price. The Iran-Iraq War of 1980 to 1988 is a case in point.

The war devastated both countries. Then Iraq fell out of favor and, in 2003, a US-led coalition, loudly seconded by the UK, invaded it, citing the presence of nonexistent nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.

Wars exert consequences beyond the warring parties and military targets, often impacting neighboring countries even if they are not involved. The economic effects of the war in Gaza

markets, spiking shipping costs, energy prices, inflation and interest rates, and unsettling financial systems. Stock volatility, investor flight and exchange rate pressures may follow, undermining global economic stability.

Yet some Western leaders still see war as an economic stimulus. UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer recently told Parliament that increased defense spending would “restore growth,” citing NATO commitments to the Ukraine war. While defense industries may benefit under such transactional thinking, the toll of wars on human lives, livelihoods and long-term economic growth outweighs their short-term gains.

Israel’s diplomacy, exemplified by the normalization of relations through the Abraham Accords with the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan in 2020, can be characterized as transactional in nature. Yet, a lesson can be learned from the alignment of such diplomacy with Israel’s long-term objectives to consolidate control over and eventually annex the Occupied Territories.

Arab states might take a similar approach, not by abandoning principles but by strategically aligning short-term deals with the long-term goal of peace

and prosperity in their countries. A transactional approach coupled with economic cooperation can de-escalate tensions as long as it adheres to principles. For example, Saudi Arabia has refrained from joining the Abraham Accords, maintaining that normalization with Israel must be contingent on a credible and irreversible path toward the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state along the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with the two-state solution.

In conclusion, the Arab countries are once again at a crossroads. In addition to the loss of lives, renewed conflict risks deepening their economic woes. In its ongoing stabilization program in a Middle East country, the International Monetary Fund flagged “widespread domestic protests and violence” driven by poverty and unemployment as a “high risk” factor that could jeopardize the success of the program.

Arab states should unite and develop a nuanced strategy that blends pragmatic deal-making with a principled vision for peace and sustainable prosperity. The stakes are not just regional. The world, too, may pay the price of inaction and miscalculation.





## Stock Exchange turns bullish, gains 440 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 Index turned around to bullish trend on Wednesday, gaining 440.10 points, a positive change of 0.32 per cent, closing at 136,379.97 points against 135,939.87 points last trading day.

A total of 705,955,999 shares were traded during the day as compared to 879,118,158 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 32.185 billion against Rs 38,608 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 482 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 223 of them recorded gains and 221 sustained losses,

whereas the share price of 38 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Pak International Bulk with 90,710,656 shares at Rs 9.69 per share, First Dawood Prop with 40,619,955 shares at Rs6.11 per share and DH Partners Limited with 37,196,800 shares at Rs 42.06 per share.

PIA Holding Company LimitedB witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 3,164.51 per share price, closing at Rs 34,809.56, whereas the runner-up was Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited with Rs 121.82 rise in its per share price to Rs 23,918.00.

Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs96.44 per share closing at Rs 9,453.00 followed by Ismail Industries Limited with Rs67.57 decline in its share price to close at Rs2,013.15.

**Rupee sheds 30 paise against US Dollar**

The Rupee on Wednesday depreciated by 30 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 284.96 against the previous day's closing of Rs 284.66.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood

at Rs288 and Rs288.5, respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by Rs1.62 to close at Rs 331.11 against the last day's closing of Rs 332.73, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese yen decreased by 01 paise and closed at Rs 1.91, whereas a decline of Rs 1.02 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 381.77 compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 382.79.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 08 paise each to close at Rs 77.58 and Rs 75.98, respectively.



**PESHAWAR:** Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce & Industry delegation led by Senior Vice President Zia ul Haq Sarhadi meeting with Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi.

### *Khalique honored a shield by CM* F.P. Report

KARACHI: Khalique Jafri, Chairman of SOGO Group of Companies, was honored with a shield by Chief Minister Sindh, Murad Ali Shah, for his contributions to the solar industry.

The event was also attended by Energy Minister Nasir Hussain Shah, Minister for Local Government Saeed Ghani, and the Consul General of UAE, Dr. Bakheet Ateeq Al Remeithi.

A panel discussion on "Solar Local Manufacturing & Taxation Challenges" was held under the chairmanship of Mushtaq Ahmed Sumroo, Secretary Sindh Energy Department.

It was attended by Khalique Jafri, other industry leaders and key government officials to discuss the current challenges and future opportunities in the solar sector.

### *PCJCCI pushes for honey export*

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry Wednesday expressed strong interest in enhancing Pakistan's honey exports to China by introducing international certification standards and modern processing technology. During a think-tank session held here at the PCJCCI Secretariat, the joint chamber's President Nazir Hussain highlighted the untapped potential of Pakistan's honey market and emphasized the urgent need for reform and modernization.

"Currently, Pakistani honey is sold for only USD 20-25 per kilogram, but with proper certification and international packaging, this can rise to USD 100 per kilogram," he added. Despite its superior taste and affordability compared to globally recognized brands like New Zealand's, Pakistan's honey lacks certification, which limits its export potential.

He called for the establishment of internationally accredited laboratories and large-scale processing facilities to bring Pakistan's honey sector up to global standards. China, being the world's largest honey producer and exporter, can be an invaluable partner in transferring advanced filtration and packaging technology to Pakistan," he suggested.

## Kundi vows support for industrial growth

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi has pledged full support for resolving challenges facing the province's industrial sector and Pak-Afghan trade.

He made these remarks during a meeting with a delegation of the Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry led by its S.V President, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi, at the Governor House on Tuesday.

The delegation briefed the Governor on the critical issues affecting industrial estates in the province, saying that four industrial zones are currently facing multiple challenges that have slowed down industri-

al activity.

They also raised serious concerns about the impact of provincial taxation on Afghan Transit Trade, which has resulted in the diversion of over 7,500 containers to Chaman, Balochistan significantly affecting local trade and economic links with Central Asia.

The delegation further highlighted complications arising from certain policies of the National Logistics Cell (NLC), which they said are contributing to disruptions in trade operations.

They proposed the formation of a steering committee under the Governor's leadership to engage with traders and relevant departments for

effective solutions.

Governor Kundi assured the delegation that steps would be taken to address their concerns, and that relevant federal and provincial institutions would be approached for a positive and timely resolution.

He emphasized that the province's prosperity depends on a thriving business environment and recognized the essential role traders and landowners play in Pakistan's economic development as taxpaying contributors.

He added that the Governor House would actively serve as an advocate for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's business community in addressing federal-level trade and industrial issues.

## SCCI, SNGPL agreed to set up a special desk — to facilitate business community

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Sui Northern Gas Pipeline Company Private Limited (SNGPL) have agreed to establish a special desk at the chamber and appoint a focal person to facilitate the business community.

The agreement was reached during a meeting with high officials of SNGPL with president of Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) president Fazal Moqeem Khan here at the chamber house, according to a statement here on Wednesday.

The meeting was attended by DMD Operations Saqib Arbab, DMD (S) Faisal Iqbal, SGM-North Taj Ali Khan, SGM (P) Khurram Ayub Khan, General Manager Peshawar region Waqasullah Shinwari, GM (RS) Majid Hussain, and other senior officials of the SNGPL.

During the meeting, SCCI senior vice president Abdul Jalil Jan, former presidents of the chamber Zahiddul Shah, Zulfikar Ali Khan, members of the SCCI's executive committee Aftab Iqbal, Adnan Nasir, Hassan Zahideen, Shams ur Rahim, former SVP Imran Khan Mohmand, and Chairman APCNGA Pervaz Khan

Khattak, Secretary General SCCI Muqtasid Ahsan, office bearers, owners of CNG stations and representatives and SNGPL officials concerned were present.

Fazal Moqeem in his open remarks highlighted the role and significance of SNGPL in the current scenario and lauded efforts of officials concerned of the department for swift resolution of commercial and industrial consumers issues.

On the occasion in various proposals, SCCI chief demanded the supply of gas for new CNG stations and industries at blended rates, abolishment of closure of CNG stations in upcoming winter season, increase of powers for regional offices to facilitate the local commercial, industrial and CNG consumers.

Similarly, he called for immediate approval of new connections for industries, commercial and CNG stations, as well as setting up Dispute Resolution Councils (DRCs) to swiftly address the grievances and issues of all categories of consumers.

Fazal Moqeem stressed reduction in security deposits, enforcement of insurance guarantee instead of cash and elimination of illegal and inappropriate treatment/handling of the recovery team.

Earlier, the participants of the meeting highlighted

the issues, mostly related to stealing of gas meters, overbilling, recovery, disconnections, low gas pressure, theft and line losses.

Fazal Moqeem praised the department for running a 150,000 square meter network to improve the entire system.

SCCI chief said a TBS metering system has been introduced, which would monitor pressure and flow of lines.

SNGPL officials while responding to various queries and proposals stated that the company losses have been reduced to 5 per cent because of concerted efforts and better planning and management of the department concerned.

Senior officials said SNGPL has adopted a pro-business strategy to facilitate businesses and industries. They furthermore stated visible changes were brought in policies under a reform agenda for better and improved management and system.

Senior officials issued stern instructions on the occasion to contractors to immediately rehabilitate the infrastructure that were damaged during laying down gas supply lanes.

They also promised there will be no closure of gas supply for CNG and the industrial sector and low pressure in upcoming summer.

## Devsinc launches Employee Stock Ownership Plan



F.P. Report

LAHORE: Devsinc, a leading IT and ITes firm, has introduced their Employee Stock Ownership Plan

(ESOP), offering company shares to employees across the board.

As evidence of Devsinc's long-term commitment to value creation and employee

empowerment, the initiative is to strengthen employee retention, foster a founder-like mindset, and align individual success with company growth. Under the arrangement, employees will earn their company shares gradually over four years, starting after they complete one full year. They will also have the option to sell back or exchange their shares later. Devsinc shared that distribution will follow a performance and tenure-based formula, similar to international ESOP models.

Usman Asif, CEO Devsinc, stated this to be a

remarkable move towards the idea of progressing together; "We want each of us to take the ownership as stakeholders, and commit to progress and prosperity for all." He said, "Equity is not just a reward; it is a commitment to the bigger picture."

This move reflects a growing trend in Pakistan's tech industry, where companies are exploring innovative incentive structures to compete with global job offers and retain top talent. As startups evolve into more mature enterprises, employee ownership is emerging as a key differentiator.

## BankIslami and ZLK Islamic Financial Services join hands

F.P. Report

KARACHI: In a joint effort to promote Riba-free banking in Pakistan, BankIslami and ZLK Islamic Financial Services, Pakistan's first Shariah-compliant brokerage Firm, hosted a high-impact session on Islamic finance for a diverse group of industry leaders and advocates of ethical banking.

Titled 'Leading with Purpose,' the event focused on meaningful conversations around Islamic finance and aimed to help individuals make informed, faith-aligned financial decisions. The session was attended by valued partners and corporate leaders from the business community, along with notable organizations, including Federation of Pakistan

Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI), Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI), Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (RCCI), as well as representatives from civil society, the armed forces, government, financial institutions, and religious scholars.

Dr. Mufti Irshad Ahmad Aijaz, former Chairman of the Shariah Advisory Committee of the State Bank of Pakistan and current Chairman of the Shariah Advisory Committee of SECP and Chairperson of the Shariah Board of BankIslami, delivered the keynote address, highlighting the growing global relevance of Islamic finance. He addressed common misconceptions and empha-

sized the ethical and socially responsible nature of Islamic finance.

"As leaders in Islamic finance in Pakistan, we are committed to fostering meaningful dialogue on Riba-free banking and raising awareness to drive this crucial cause forward," commented Rizwan Ata, President & CEO of Bank-Islami. "We are honored to join hands with ZLK Islamic Financial Services to strengthen the position of Islamic banking and collectively work towards realizing our vision of a Riba-free economy," he added.

Zahid Latif Khan, Chairman of ZLK Islamic Financial Services, commented, "This partnership with BankIslami is rooted in a shared vision to broaden understanding and trust

in Shariah-compliant investments. Together, we are laying the foundation for a principled financial ecosystem that serves all segments of society and aligns with the ethical aspirations of our people, regulators, and national direction toward a fully Islamic financial system."

This session marked a significant step forward in reinforcing the role of Islamic finance in Pakistan's evolving financial landscape. As the country progresses toward a fully Shariah-compliant system, BankIslami and ZLK Islamic Financial Services remain committed to leading with purpose, engaging stakeholders, and shaping a future centered on ethical, inclusive, and faith-aligned financial solutions.

## Award ceremony of Go Cashless in Cattle Markets Campaign 2025 held

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan, Banking Services Corporation (SBP BSC), hosted an award ceremony to honor high-performing banks for their outstanding contributions to the Go Cashless in Cattle Markets Campaign 2025.

Managing Director of SBP Banking Services Corporation, Mr. Maraj Mahmood while addressing the ceremony, appreciated the efforts of the participating banks and acknowledged their key role in promoting digital financial

services in the country. Furthermore, Executive Director, Digital Financial Services Group, SBP, Mr. Sohail Javaad also addressed the ceremony and highlighted SBP's efforts in promoting a digital economy.

Launched before Eid-ul-Azha, the Go Cashless campaign aimed to promote Digital Financial Services (DFS) and reduce reliance on cash transactions in urban cattle markets. With the participation of 24 partner banks, the campaign was successfully implemented in 54 major cattle

markets across Pakistan, resulting in 64,553 transactions valued at Rs. 4.656 billion. This campaign was highly appreciated by the buyers and sellers in the cattle markets, as it reduced their reliance on cash.

In recognition of the regional impact of campaign, SBP field offices have also organized recognition ceremonies for participating banks in their respective regions. These efforts underscore SBP's dedication to promoting financial inclusion through innovative digital initiatives.

Digital payment systems play a vital role in modern economies by offering transparency, reducing fraud risks, and providing secure, convenient, and inclusive access to financial services. Initiatives like Go Cashless are crucial in building trust and driving the adoption of digital platforms among a wide range of users, including livestock buyers and sellers.

Looking ahead, SBP remains committed to fostering partnerships within the financial industry to propel Pakistan towards a digitally inclusive future.

## Bestway celebrates 50 years with star-studded tribute to Sir Anwar Pervez

F.P. Report

LONDON: In a glittering celebration befitting a visionary entrepreneur, Bestway Group welcomed 800 distinguished guests to the Royal Albert Hall on Thursday evening to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Bestway's founding and to pay tribute to its revered founder, Sir Anwar Pervez OBE, H PK.

Hosted by Dermot O'Leary, the night paid tribute to one of Britain's most inspiring entrepreneurs, with a line-up of world-class performers and heart-felt speeches that reflected the remarkable journey of a man who arrived in the UK with little more than determination, going on to build a business empire that today employs over 50,000 people worldwide.

The Royal Albert Hall was transformed into a stage for celebration, including dignitaries, parliamentarians and friends of the Bestway family, gathered to honour the man behind one of the UK's most successful and socially responsible business groups.

"His is a story of grit, vision and purpose," said Lord Zameer Choudrey CBE SI (Pk), Chairman of Bestway Group and nephew of Sir Anwar, in his welcome speech. "From a remote village in rural Pakistan to the founding of Bestway in 1976, Sir Anwar's journey is not just one of commercial success - but of social upliftment, community investment, and philanthropy. It is our privilege to celebrate him and the 50 years of impact he

has inspired."

The evening's programme captured the spirit of the occasion, elegant and emotional. Highlights included a spellbinding performance from Katherine Jenkins OBE, a rousing set from Rahat Fateh Ali Khan, (who flew in from Pakistan specially for the event). The evening also featured the dynamic string quartet Escala, accompanied by the Novello Orchestra, under the baton of David Mahoney as well as high energy finale from classical fusion artist, Okiem.

Former Prime Minister, The Rt Hon Lord David Cameron paid tribute to Sir Anwar's lifelong values of enterprise, generosity, and service - calling him "a true British success story whose influence spans continents

and generations."

Lord Cameron highlighted Sir Anwar's belief in the community and the values that helped rebuild this country with a sense of service that has been one of the secrets of his success. He reinforced the family values reflecting how Sir Anwar, together with his nephew Zameer, and close friend Younus Sheikh, created the paragon of the family-run firm, built on trust, respect and shared purpose.

Sir Anwar's life is the embodiment of the immigrant dream fulfilled. Arriving in Britain in 1956, he worked a series of jobs in Bradford and London before opening his first retail store in 1963. Thirteen years later, he launched Bestway, laying the foundations for what

would become a diversified multinational group spanning food, pharmaceuticals, cement, and banking. Today, the Group is one of the UK's largest family-owned businesses and a leading voice in responsible business and philanthropy and thrives under Sir Anwar's guiding ethos of hard work, integrity, resilience and community service.

Equally defining has been his commitment to giving back. Founded in 1987, the Bestway Foundation has donated over £50 million to causes in the UK and abroad, with a focus on Education, Health, and Social Mobility, all issues that sit close to Sir Anwar's heart.

"Tonight is not only about looking back - it's about looking forward,"



said Lord Choudrey, "Bestway's story is still

being written, and it is one built on the legacy of a man

who dared to dream bigger than circumstance."





In brief

Rawalpindi  
Karate Champion  
aims for shine

RAWALPINDI (APP): National karate champion Shoaib Akhtar has expressed his determination to represent Pakistan on the international stage with an unwavering commitment, aiming to win medals and bring pride to the nation. In an exclusive interview with APP, Shoaib shared that his journey at the national level began in 2023 at the National Games in Quetta, where he showcased exceptional skill and clinched a gold medal. Reflecting on his performance at the 2024 National Games, Shoaib admitted to having not good experience, securing a silver medal. However, not letting disappointment define him, he used the setback as motivation, dedicating a year to rigorous training. His hard work paid off at this year's National Games in Abbottabad, where he reclaimed the gold medal, marking a significant milestone in his career. "I am trying to get maximum advantage from the improvement room I recently experienced during the national games for the upcoming events", he said. Shoaib also highlighted his international achievements, noting his participation in a karate event in Nepal in 2023, where he won two bronze medals. He considers these accomplishments pivotal to his career growth. Expressing gratitude to his coach, Tanveer Ahmed, Shoaib credited his ongoing training under Tanveer's guidance for his success. Looking ahead, he remains focused on excelling in global competitions and winning gold for Pakistan.

Real Madrid  
confirm Vazquez  
departure

MADRID (AFP): Real Madrid defender Lucas Vazquez will leave the club, the Spanish giants confirmed Wednesday. After his deal expired at the end of the season Los Blancos had agreed a short-term contract extension for the Spaniard to keep him for the Club World Cup, which they competed in this summer in the United States. "Vazquez exemplarily represents the values of Real Madrid, which has made him one of the most beloved players by our fans," said Madrid president Florentino Perez in a statement. "(He) symbolises the hard work, perseverance, humility, and winning spirit essential to succeed in this shirt." Originally a winger, the 34-year-old won 23 trophies at the club including five Champions Leagues and four La Liga titles, largely as a squad player. "I leave Real Madrid but Real Madrid will never leave me," said Vazquez in a goodbye video. The Spaniard came through the Madrid youth system and spent his whole career at the club, with the exception of a loan to Espanyol in the 2014-15 season, playing 402 times across all competitions for Los Blancos.

Chelsea keeper  
Petrovic joins  
Bournemouth

LONDON (AFP): Chelsea goalkeeper Djordje Petrovic joined Bournemouth in a deal worth a reported £25 million (\$33 million) on Wednesday. Petrovic agreed a contract that will keep him at the Vitality Stadium until June 2030. The 25-year-old had been at Chelsea since joining from MLS side New England Revolution in 2023. Petrovic, who spent last season on loan at French team Strasbourg, made 31 appearances for the west London club. "I'm really happy to be here. I came to Bournemouth because I want to grow and I want to play at the best level," the Serbia international said.

Andre Russell set to retire  
from international cricket

JAMAICA (Agencies): West Indies allrounder Andre Russell is set to announce his international retirement later on Wednesday.

Russell, 37, has been included in West Indies' T20I squad to face Australia in a five-match series from Sunday, but ESPNcricinfo understands that the opening two games at Sabina Park in Jamaica, Russell's home ground, will be his farewell to the international game.

Russell has been a T20I-only player since 2019 and currently has 84 caps. His retirement comes seven months before the next T20 World Cup, which will be staged in India and Sri Lanka in February 2026.

Russell is set to become the second high-profile West Indies player, after Nicholas Pooran, to quit international cricket in less than two months. Russell was a part of the West Indies squads when they won the T20 World Cup in 2012 and then in 2016, when he took the new ball



and dismissed Alex Hales in the second over in Kolkata.

Teenager Jewel Andrew and Jediah Blades, 23, earned their maiden call-ups to the West Indies T20I squad. In CPL 2024, at 17 years and 266 days, Andrew had become the youngest West Indian and second youngest overall to score a fifty in a major T20 league. Andrew is currently part of Guyana Amazon Warriors in the ongoing Global Super League (GSL) in Guyana.

As for Blades, he has not played the CPL so far but had impressed with the new ball during the inaugural West Indies breakout league, a tournament that was held recently to identify emerging talent from the region. Shai Hope will continue to lead the side, which also includes Rovman Powell, who missed the GSL for Dubai Capitals.

"Our goals and strategic plans are aligned to winning the T20 World Cup in 2026," coach Daren Sammy said in a statement. "We have continuity in the squad from the previous series and as a unit we will continue to fine tune our style and brand ahead of the World Cup."

"Our previous two T20 series at home we were on the wrong end of the results but starting against Australia, we want to regain our form at home as we build momentum into next year's World Cup with our exciting and dynamic group of players."

'Incredible' Stokes put body  
on line for England: Root

LONDON (AFP): England captain Ben Stokes put his body on the line to inspire his side's dramatic victory over India at Lord's, according to team-mate Joe Root.

Stokes took five wickets, scored 77 runs and delivered a crucial run-out of Rishabh Pant in two innings of relentless effort from the all-rounder.

Driven on by Stokes, England won the third Test by 22 runs on a pulsating final day to take a 2-1 lead in the five-match series.

Most remarkable of all was the workload that the injury-prone Stokes put his body through as he bowled 44 overs in total, including gruelling spells of 9.2 and 10 overs on the decisive final day. It was the most the 34-year-old has bowled in over six years and came after two severe hamstringing injuries

in the past 12 months.

Root watched on in awe, remembering his own attempts to stop Stokes pushing himself past the limit during his own captaincy. "You can try, but it doesn't make any difference. I tried for five years," Root said. "I mentioned it but he doesn't always listen to me. He didn't listen to me when I was captain!"

"That's his call now. It was an incredible effort to be able to do that, but that's just how he's built, I guess. He's just desperate to be the man and make things happen. "It's a great sign for us moving forward, it really is, because that's back to his best. He's got that mentality and that desire to win games and we're lucky to have him as our leader."

At one stage in the first innings, England head coach Brendon McCullum

sent a message via bowling consultant Tim Southee instructing his skipper to take a breather.

Root admits he was also concerned that Stokes might hit breaking point but now accepts that there is only one man who truly knows how far he can go.

"I was just panicking that he wasn't going to make it through the game after a couple of bad injuries but he clearly trusts his body now," he said.

"He knows what he's doing and he's got a good handle on where he's at physically." After the match, Stokes admitted his tiredness, telling reporters that he could not wait to "just lie on my bed for four days and then be raring to go for (next week's fourth Test at) Manchester".

The Old Trafford Test starts on July 23.

Hasnain qualifies  
for IBSF  
World Masters  
Snooker C'ships  
pre quarterfinals

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani cueist Hasnain Akhtar has qualified for the pre quarterfinals of the IBSF World Masters, U17, U21 & Men 6Red Snooker Championships 2025 at Manama, Bahrain.

According to details, in U17 Matches, Hasnain beat Mohammad Omar (UAE) 3-0 (98(61)-5, 74(65)-1, 92(54)-8) and also outplayed Witold Bystrzycki (Poland) 3-0 (79(63)-1, 81(48)-17, 59(34)-53).

Pro-Palestinian  
demonstrator  
arrested at  
Tour de France

TOULOUSE (AFP): A protestor wearing a t-shirt reading "Israel out of the Tour" was arrested on Wednesday after running onto the final straight of the Tour de France 11th stage.

The protestor, who was also holding a Palestinian keffiyeh scarf, got past security barriers and ran towards the finish line in Toulouse as Norway's Jonas Abrahamsen won a sprint finale. The man was intercepted by a race staff member and arrested, the local prefecture said.

Several police officers have been assigned to protecting the Israel-Premier Tech team during the Tour. The team was set up by Israeli-Canadian billionaire Sylvan Adams, but there are no Israeli riders in this year's race.

With the Gaza war causing international controversy, last year the team said it had asked its riders not to wear jerseys with any reference to Israel while out training as a precaution.

The Gaza war sparked by Hamas's attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, which resulted in the deaths of 1,219 people, most of them civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official figures. Israel's retaliatory campaign in Gaza has killed 58,573 Palestinians, mostly civilians, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory.

Pakistan moves  
in Asian Volleyball  
C'ship semis

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan team has achieved a historic feat by securing a commanding victory over Indonesia in the quarterfinal of the 2nd Asian Men's U16 Volleyball Championship, currently taking place in Nakhon Phanom, Thailand.

The match, held on Wednesday 16, concluded with Pakistan winning in straight sets: 25-23, 25-20, 25-20, said a press release.

This outstanding performance not only has send Pakistan into the semifinal of the championship, to be played on July 18, but also secured Pakistan's qualification for the FIVB U17 World Championship

Championship 2026 — a landmark achievement for the country's youth volleyball program.

The team delivered a clinical performance, marked by tactical discipline, athleticism, and teamwork. The standout players in today's match included Junaid, Faizan, Talha and Saran. Head Coach Kafait Ullah commended the boys, saying, "This win is not just about reaching the semi-final; it's about

proving that Pakistan's youth has the strength and skill to compete at the highest levels. Qualification for the FIVB U17 World Championship is a moment of national

pride."

President Shohail Khawar Mir and Chairman Ch. Muhammad Yaqoob of the Pakistan Volleyball Federation (PVF) congratulated the team and support staff for making the nation proud.

They emphasized that this success is a result of long-term investment in youth development and the federation's focus on building a strong foundation for the future of Pakistani volleyball.

With three group-stage victories against South Korea, Saudi Arabia, and Chinese Taipei, and now a quarterfinal win over Indonesia, Pakistan stands undefeated and determined.

Mahedi four-for, Tanzid fifty  
hands the series to Bangladesh



COLOMBO (Agencies):

Career-best contributions from Mahedi Hasan and Tanzid Hasan powered Bangladesh to a series-winning eight-wicket win against Sri Lanka. The home side had blown away Bangladesh in the first game in Palkelele, but the visitors fought back in the second game in Dambulla, before this win in Colombo.

Bangladesh have previously only once turned around from 1-0 down to win a three-match T20I series, against West Indies seven years ago.

Mahedi took 4 for 11, in a spell that never let Sri Lanka change gears due to constant wickets. This was an apt reward for a bowler who had been out of the side for Bangladesh's previous four T20Is. By the time his spell was over, Bangladesh were in control, and they seldom looked in trouble thereafter.

Tanzid cracked an unbeaten 47-ball 73, ensuring Bangladesh strolled through their 133-run chase. He struck six sixes, all of them with a bit of class and nonchalance.

Sri Lanka had earlier chosen to bat at the toss - an unusual decision given the lopsided results for sides batting first at the R Premadasa Stadium. After the quick boundaries Pathum Nissanka and Kusal Mendis hit in the match's first over, captain Charith Asalanka may have thought he had made the right call. As it turned out, by the end of the evening, the home side has lost every time they decided to bat first at this ground in night matches.

Mahedi makes a come-

back statement

The game began at top speed. Shoriful Islam removed Kusal Mendis in the first over, caught at the deep backward square leg boundary. Mahedi, who had replaced Mehidy Hasan Miraz for this game, jumped into action from the other end. He had Kusal Perera caught at slip for a duck.

Chandimal, returning to the T20I side after more than three years, survived two out of three chances in the space of six balls - Tanzim Hasan Sakib and Mustafizur Rahman dropped catches off his bat. Soon after, Chandimal top-edged Mahedi with a slog and was caught at point.

Sri Lanka captain Charith Asalanka was next to go, on the receiving end of what might have been the ball of the series. Mahedi got the ball to turn just enough to beat Asalanka's backfoot push, flattening the off-stump.

Nissanka was dismissed for 46, Mahedi completing a simple caught-and-bowled chance to claim his fourth wicket. Sri Lanka were 66 for 5 in the 11th over.

Shanaka's last-gasp blast Bangladesh kept picking up Sri Lanka's wickets through the middle and death overs, but could not dislodge Dasun Shanaka. He unleashed his shots in the last over, taking 22 off Shoriful, who finished with 1 for 50 from his four overs.

Shanaka hammered two fours and two sixes - one of which was hit out of the stadium - as the packed Khetarama crowd finally cleared their collective throats. The big-hitting

bumped up Sri Lanka's total to 132 for 7 in 20 overs, which had looked unlikely for most of an otherwise placid innings.

Litton, Tanzid topple

Thushara's early blow

Nuwan Thushara gave Sri Lanka what they needed to defend 132: a wicket off the first ball. Thushara trapped Parvez Hossain Emon lbw with an in-dipper, which he perhaps telegraphed with his slinging action, but it dipped late on Emon. Litton Das survived another lbw appeal with a review in the next over, but he was constantly looking for boundaries.

Bangladesh's counterattack came to the fore with Tanzid hitting Maheesh Theekshana over extra cover for the first six. Litton clattered Fernando over square-leg in the next over, before Tanzid launched Asalanka for two straight sixes. Tanzid's fourth six was a slog against a Jeffrey Vandersay floater.

By the eighth over, Bangladesh had sped to 71 for 1.

Tanzid leaves Sri Lanka in disarray

Kamindu Mendis ended the second-wicket stand worth 74 runs when he had Litton caught at the deep square-leg boundary. Litton made 32 off 26 balls with two fours and a six - an excellent supporting act for the marauding Tanzid.

Tanjid didn't let Litton's dismissal - against the run of play - slow him down, as he struck a fifth six. He then followed it up with a tickled boundary to reach his fifth half-century in T20Is. Tanzid's attack had Sri Lanka in disarray, who were guilty of several misfields. Theekshana dropped Tanzid on 60 - a straightforward chance he fluffed trying to run in too hard.

But the over ended with Tanzid hammering Kamindu for his sixth six. Hridoy also struck a maximum of his own, before taking the winning run in the 17th over.

Tanzid let out a loud yelp, although it was in front of a quiet home crowd.

Pogacar crashes but no time loss as Abrahamsen wins



TOULOUSE (Agencies): Tadej Pogacar was allowed to recover from a late crash on stage 11 of the Tour de France as Jonas Abrahamsen held on for his first Tour win.

As Mathieu van der Poel chased down Abrahamsen and Mauro Schmid during the final 5km in Toulouse, Pogacar went down in the peloton, which was

three minutes behind.

But the reigning champion swiftly got back on his bike - and his main rivals for the overall victory eased up to let him rejoin the group.

Meanwhile, Abrahamsen edged out Schmid in a two-up sprint to the line, with Van der Poel crossing seven seconds later having left his charge too

late.

Ireland's Ben Healy still leads Pogacar by 29 seconds in the general classification (GC) having taken the yellow jersey from the three-time winner after stage 10.

Abrahamsen is competing in his third Tour at 29 and spent the first 10 days of last year's race in the polka dot jersey,

worn by the mountain points leader.

But this was a first stage win on the Tour for Abrahamsen and his Uno-X Mobility team, and came just four weeks after the Norwegian rider broke his collarbone in the Tour of Belgium. "I was crying in the hospital because I thought I wouldn't ride in the Tour de France," he said.

"Every day I did everything I could to come back and now I'm sat here with a Tour de France stage win. It's amazing. It was my dream to win a Tour stage so it's so nice."

Pogacar was unharmed after his crash 4km from the finish of Wednesday's flat 156km stage, which began and ended in Toulouse.

The Slovenian fell after hitting the back wheel of another rider and slid across several metres of road before struggling to put his chain back on.

It looked as though he would lose 30 to 40 seconds but his main GC rivals Jonas Vingegaard and Remco Evenepoel sportingly waited for him to catch up.

After this year's first rest day, it was a dramatic redemption for the Tour, with Abrahamsen and Schmid attacking from the

outset to establish themselves in a long-range breakaway.

The stage began at a rapid pace, averaging 52km over the first hour, and splits repeatedly formed in the peloton while a chase group tried to reel in a five-man breakaway, which included British rider Fred Wright.

Wednesday also featured five categorised climbs, with two in the final 14km, when Van der Poel attacked out of the five chasers to close the gap.

Although the Dutch rider wore the yellow jersey earlier in the race, he is now out of GC contention and ultimately fell just short of claiming his second stage win this year.

The race heads into the Pyrenees on Thursday for a 180.6km mountain route from Auch to this year's first summit finish at Hautacam.

Stage 11 results

Jonas Abrahamsen (Nor/Uno-X Mobility) 3hrs 15mins 56secs

Mauro Schmid (Swi/Jayco AlUla) Same time

Axel Laurance (Fra/Ineos Grenadiers)

Fred Wright (GB/Bahrain Victorious)

Mathieu Burgaudeau (Fra/TotalEnergies)

Quinn Simmons (US/Lidl-Trek)

Davide Ballerini (Ita/XDS Astana) 1min 11secs

General classification after stage 11

Ben Healy (Ire/EF Education-EasyPost) 41hrs 1min 13secs

Tadej Pogacar (Slo/UAE Team Emirates-XRG) +29secs

Remco Evenepoel (Bel/Soudal Quick-Step) +1min 29secs

Jonas Vingegaard (Den/Visma-Lease a Bike) +1min 46secs

Matteo Jorgenson (US/Visma-Lease a Bike) +2mins 6secs

Kevin Vauquelin (Fra/Arkea-B&B Hotels) +2mins 26secs

Oscar Onley (GB/Picnic PostNL) +3mins 24secs

Florian Lipowitz (Ger/Red Bull - Bora-hansgrohe) +3mins 34secs

Primoz Roglic (Slo/Red Bull - Bora-hansgrohe) +3mins 41secs

Anders Johannessen (Nor/Uno-X Mobility) +5mins 3secs.





## In brief

### 8 illegal arm holders arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Police arrested eight illegal arm holders during crackdown here on Wednesday. According to police, operations were carried out in areas such as Pirwahai, Chaklala, Morgah, Saddar Wah, Gujjar Khan, and Chakri. During operations, police teams detained suspects and recovered illegal arms and ammunition from their possession. Divisional SPs appreciated the performance of police team and said that these efforts were aimed at improving law and order in the city. They also said that the operation against illegal arm holders will continue and leniency will not be tolerated at any cost.

### Two member honey-trap gang held

RAWALPINDI (APP): The police arrested a couple involved in operating honey trap scam on Wednesday in the jurisdiction of Race Course police station. According to police spokesman, the arrested couple reportedly lured citizens and then blackmailed them using secretly recorded videos to extort large sums of money. SP Potohar Talha Wali commended police team for their swift action and stated that the accused will be presented in court with solid evidence, and legal action will be taken to ensure strict punishment. He added that those who exploit innocent people through such tactics will not be spared and will face the rule of the law.

### Crackdown against beggars underway

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Police have launched a crackdown against professional beggars here on Wednesday. According to police, as many as 33 professional beggars have been detained over the past three days. Special squads have been formed to take strict action against such individuals, who are often found involved in theft, drug trafficking, and other criminal activities. City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Mehmod Hamdani said strict monitoring is being carried out on busy roads and highways to stop the increasing trend of begging. He added that the crackdown will be continued without any discrimination.

### 4 drug suppliers nabbed

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police on Wednesday nabbed four drug suppliers from different areas with over 4.5 kilograms of charas. According to Police spokesman, the Waris Khan Police detained an accused on the recovery of 2.25 kg of the contraband item. Similarly, the Rawat Police also arrested an accused with 1.6 kg charas. Likewise, the Sadiqabad Police held two suspects recovering 730 grams of charas from their possession.

### PFA discards adulterated milk

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) in Rawalpindi discarded approximately 2,000 litres of adulterated and unhygienic milk early on Wednesday morning. According to the PFA spokesman, the action was taken against a milk shop located in the Khayaban-e-Sir Syed area. The shop owner was found involved in mixing dry powder with milk. A case was also registered against the accused. The PFA urged the public to lodge their complaints, if any, regarding food, bakery items or milk at 1223.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi in a group photo with high-level delegation of Beijing Police. —APP Photo

## Girls clinch top positions in SSC exam

ISLAMABAD (APP): Girls clinched top positions in the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) annual exam of the Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (FBISE).

According to results, the overall pass percentage remained 62.18 % in SSC Part-I (9th class) and 88.51% in SSC-II (10th class). In 9th grade, a total of 146348 students appeared and 89882 of them were declared pass. Similarly, 137689 students appeared in 10th class exam and 121120 of them got through.

Dr Khalid Maqbool Sadique was chief guest at a function held to

announce the results at H-8 College. FBISE Chairman Pro Dr Ikran Ali Malik briefed him about the results. The position holders, their parents and teachers attended the ceremony.

In Science Group, Maryum Nadeem from Army Public School and College (Rooh-e-Rawan) Westridge -III Yousuf Colony Rawalpindi, got first position by getting 1093 marks. Anma Nasir from Lahore Grammar School, The Mall wah cantt, remained second by bagging 1087 marks while the third position was shared by two students – Saleha Saqib by securing from Emalah Foundation School and College PIA

colony, Misrial Road Rawalpindi, and Haniya Aiman Waheed Army Public School and College (Girls Attock) by securing 1083 marks each.

In Humanities Group, Sana Bibi from Shining Star Public School, St no 22, Allama Iqbal Colony Rawalpindi Cantt clinched the first position by getting 1045 marks. Abdul Rehman from Institute of Islamic Science, Satra Meel (F.A) Islamabad, got second position with 1029 marks followed by Muhammad Sufyan Ahmad from Institute of Islamic Sciences, Satra Meel Islamabad, who stood third by bagging 1022 marks.

## PIC issues show-cause notice to Chairman NHA

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Information Commission (PIC) has issued show cause notice to the Chairman of the National Highways Authority (NHA) for repeated non-compliance and failure to appear before the Commission, despite the issuance of multiple notices regarding an appeal filed under the Right of Access to Information Act, 2017.

The Commission was hearing an appeal filed by a citizen who alleged that the NHA failed to provide requested information under the provisions of the Right of Access to

Information Act. In response to this appeal, the Commission issued three separate notices—dated March 18, April 14, and May 21, 2025—directing the NHA Chairman to submit written reply and ensure the attendance of a responsible officer.

Despite confirmed delivery of the latest notice (verified via Pakistan Post's tracking system), no representative from NHA appeared before the Commission. In its order dated July 16, 2025, the Commission stated that the continuous non-appearance by the NHA demonstrates a willful disregard for the

Commission's directives.

In view of this, the Commission has issued show cause notice to the Chairman, NHA under Section 20(1)(f) of the Right of Access to Information Act, 2017. The notice requires the Chairman to explain why proceedings should not be initiated against him for non-compliance.

Additionally, the Commission has directed the NHA to submit written reply to the pending appeal and ensure the appearance of the designated Public Information Officer at the next hearing, scheduled for August 20, 2025.

## FOSPAH holds Khuli Kacheri at UC Sihala

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Ombudsperson Secretariat for Protection Against Harassment at the Workplace (FOSPAH) held a Khuli Kacheri at Union Council Sihala, here on Wednesday.

The khuli kacheri was held by Federal Ombudsperson Fauzia Viqar, who listened to women's stories of dispossession, exploitation, and injustice. Mehreen Baloch, Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) East, was also present and guided the complainants at the spot, said a press release.

The open forum gave voice to women from surrounding rural communities many of whom have long been silenced in matters of inheritance and ownership. From unlawful land grabs to denial of rightful shares,

the women came forward with courage and hope.

Among the attendees was Bibi Asma, a widow who shared that her in-laws had illegally seized her inherited land, leaving her and children without security. Another complainant Mahrana Bibi spoke of how her brother-in-law forcefully occupied her house and confiscated all original ownership documents, stripping her of legal proof.

FOSPAH's legal experts on site provided immediate guidance, outlining institutional remedies available under the Enforcement of Women's Property Rights Act, 2020. The cases were documented for formal follow-up, and complainants were assured that justice would not remain out of reach. "For many women, especially in underserved

areas, Khuli Kacheris are the only accessible path for reclaiming their rights," said Ms. Fauzia Viqar.

Fauzia Viqar also visited the Union Council's vocational center, where young girls are receiving training in sewing and tailoring to enhance their economic independence. She appreciated the initiative and stressed the importance of economic empowerment as a pillar of gender equality.

This public forum is part of FOSPAH's wider mission to address gender-based inequalities in property ownership; an issue often compounded by social stigma, legal illiteracy, and familial pressure. By stepping into local communities, FOSPAH continues to democratize access to justice, ensuring no woman is left behind.

## Digital strain, air pollutants remain big threats to eyes

RAWALPINDI (APP): With rising cell phone screen time, increasing temperature heat and worsening environmental pollution, protecting eye health is more critical than ever. Practical measures like the 20-20-20 rule, UV-blocking sunglasses, and artificial tears can combat digital strain, heat-related dryness, and pollution-induced irritation. Maintaining optimal eye temperature is equally vital to prevent discomfort and ensure long-term vision health in today's demanding environments.

Dr. Zain, a young ophthalmologist at Al Shifa Trust Eye Hospital, shared practicable solutions to safeguard vision. In an exclusive interaction with the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP), he emphasized adapting eye care to

modern lifestyle challenges.

Talking on 'digital eye strain', Dr. Zain highlighted the prolonged exposure to the cell phone screen causing dryness and blurred vision. "Every 20 minutes, one should remain 20 feet away from the cell phone screen for 20 seconds to relax your eyes," he advised.

He also recommended keeping devices 18–24 inches away and using blue light filters to reduce strain. The blue light filter feature is available in the smart phones with different names including eye care mode, blue light filter etc. By using the feature, human eyes receive reduced blue light from the cell phone screens.

Dr. Zain underlined the need for proper screen

habits.

"Dim lighting and reduced blinking dry out eyes," he said. He suggested adjusting screen brightness regularly and ensuring adequate room lighting.

"This will help the eyes remain moisturized", he said. Regarding hot weather, he stressed protecting eyes from UV rays and dehydration. "Sunglasses with full UVA/UVB protection are essential," Dr. Zain said.

Drinking sufficient water supports tear production, while avoiding eye rubbing prevents irritation in dusty, hot conditions.

The most dangerous, and mostly invisible threat for eyes is environmental pollutants, particularly the air mixed harmful particles. It is imperative to shield eyes from harmful particles.

## Beijing police to train Islamabad officers in modern policing

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi met with a delegation from the Beijing Police Department, led by Deputy Director General Gao Jianzan. The meeting focused on strengthening cooperation between the Islamabad Police and Beijing Police force.

It was agreed that officers from Islamabad will travel to Beijing for specialized training in modern policing methods and technology. The officers will also receive training in artificial intelligence to

improve policing systems back home.

Minister Naqvi said that the advanced training will boost the capabilities of Islamabad Police. He highlighted the importance of learning from the experiences of the highly equipped and modern Beijing Police force.

The minister also welcomed Beijing's support in providing anti-riot training to Islamabad Police and stressed the importance of timely information exchange in tackling terrorism, organized crime,

drug trafficking, and human smuggling.

Minister Naqvi thanked the Beijing Police delegation for their commitment to expanding cooperation.

The Chinese delegation included Li Yuhang, Deputy Director General of China's Ministry of Public Security, and senior directors from the Beijing Police Department. Pakistani officials, including Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry, the Federal Secretary Interior, DG FIA, and IG Islamabad, were also present during the meeting.

## PML-N leading solutions agenda to redress public issue: Hanif

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chairman Chief Minister Inspection Team Punjab, Raja Muhammad Hanif on Wednesday said that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government was leading solutions agenda to redress public problems.

He added that Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has clearly instructed officials to ensure quick and lasting solutions to problems faced by citizens. CM Inspection Team chair, Raja Hanif was

speaking to residents during the inauguration of a new tube well in A Block, Satellite Town, Union Council 26. The new tube well aims to permanently solve the area's long-standing water shortage.

He said providing clean water to Rawalpindi people is his personal mission. "The water crisis in Satellite Town A Block has finally ended today with the installation of this modern tube well," he stated. "This is not just a source of water

but a promise fulfilled."

Raja Hanif emphasized that the PML-N government always puts public welfare first. He said development work is ongoing in every street, neighborhood, and union council. He also assured locals that more development projects will be completed soon and that he will personally visit areas to inspect public problems.

Officials from WASA and the district administration briefed attendees at the event. They said the new

tube well is equipped with modern machinery that will ensure a steady supply of clean water for the area.

A large number of local residents, senior citizens, and PML-N leaders attended the event. People appreciated Raja Hanif and the Punjab government for solving a major problem. Women and elderly citizens said the water shortage had made summers especially difficult, and they are now thankful for this much-needed solution.

## ISSI hosts event commemorating Egypt's 'Revolution Day'



### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East and Africa (CAMEA) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Pakistan Africa Institute for Development and Research (PAIDAR), organized an event to commemorate Egypt's 'Revolution Day'.

The proceedings, which began with the national anthems of Pakistan and Egypt, were moderated by Ms. Amina Khan, Director CAMEA. Speakers included Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Director General ISSI; Dr. Ihab Abdelhamid Hassan, Ambassador of Egypt to Pakistan; Mr. Aamir Shouket, Ambassador of Pakistan to Egypt; and Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BOG ISSI.

The Chief Guest on the occasion was Mr. Mushahid Hussain Sayed, President PAIDAR, and the Keynote Speaker was Ambassador Hamid Asghar Khan, Additional Secretary (Africa), Ministry of Foreign Affairs Pakistan (MOFA).

Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed said that Africa is now firmly on Pakistan's foreign policy radar, with Egypt occupying a special place. He described Egypt as a unique civilizational state with a

5,000-year-old history and a strategic, political, cultural and intellectual centre of gravity in the Arab world.

He highlighted three key contributions of Egypt after World War II: the 1952 Revolution, the 1956 nationalization of the Suez Canal by President Gamal Abdel Nasser, and the strong Egyptian response to Israeli aggression during the 1973 Ramadan War. He also noted that Pakistan facilitated Egypt's return to the OIC in 1984 and recalled that Egypt was one of the countries Qauid-i-Azam visited after independence, a reflection of the historic and enduring bonds between the two nations.

Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, in his remarks, recalled the historic significance of the July 1952 Revolution, which marked a transformative moment in Egypt's journey towards sovereignty, dignity, and social justice, and inspired peoples across the Arab world and Africa. Paying tribute to the Egyptian people's resilience, he noted Egypt's important contributions to peace, stability, and development in the Middle East and North Africa.

He highlighted the long-standing and cordial relations between Pakistan and Egypt, rooted in shared values and mutual respect. He noted that Pakistan and Egypt had a longstanding

tradition of close collaboration in multilateral forums including the UN, OIC, Developing-8 and NAM.

Ambassador Sohail Mahmood underlined the potential for deepening cooperation in trade, investment, energy, infrastructure, education, and tourism. He acknowledged Egypt's pivotal role in Pakistan's 'Engage Africa' policy. Stressing the importance of academic and policy exchanges, he reaffirmed ISSI's commitment to fostering stronger linkages with Egyptian think-tanks and research institutions and concluded with warm felicitations to the Government and people of Egypt on this important occasion.

Ambassador Hamid Asghar Khan lauded Egypt's rich history, iconic architecture, and Al-Azhar as a jewel of Islamic heritage. He noted shared challenges like water security and praised Egypt's thriving tourism sector, urging Pakistan to learn from its success.

Highlighting Pakistan's football factory in Egypt, he underscored investment potential in Africa. Emphasizing job creation and youth engagement, he called for Pakistan to adopt a forward-looking agenda like Egypt's Vision 2030.

Ms. Amina Khan highlighted the significance of Egypt's Revolution Day as a landmark in the country's journey toward sovereignty

and regional leadership. She emphasized Egypt's vital role in the Arab and African regions and its importance to Pakistan's 'Engage Africa' policy. Ms. Khan also pointed to the promising potential for collaboration in higher education, agriculture, climate adaptation, and digital connectivity.

Ambassador Dr. Ihab Abdelhamid Hassan stated that July 23 marks a proud moment as Egypt commemorates the 1952 Revolution, a key pillar of its dignity and resilience. He highlighted the strong Egypt-Pakistan ties, built on shared values and a mutual vision for peace. Egypt was among the first to recognize Pakistan diplomatically, and both countries have cooperated closely in diplomacy, defence, and multilateral forums. He also noted Egypt's continued friendship through annual scholarships for Pakistani students at Al-Azhar University.

Ambassador Ihab also presented a set of books on a diverse range of subjects from Egypt for the ISSI library on the occasion.

Ambassador Aamir Shouket highlighted the historic significance of the July Revolution as a turning point in Egypt's modern history, marking a collective push for national resurgence and stability. He also reaffirmed Pakistan's deep respect for Egypt's transformatory journey and underscored the enduring partnership between the two countries, rooted in shared history, cultural affinity, and mutual strategic alignment. He also highlighted the current status of bilateral cooperation in diverse fields and the potential for enhanced collaboration in the future.

Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, in his vote of thanks, stated that Pakistan and Egypt share close and historic ties, aligned with Pakistan's 'Engage Africa' policy. He noted that both ISSI and PAIDAR are playing an important role in advancing this relationship.



11 killed, 4 hurt in accident

KABUL (Pajhwok): Nearly a dozen people have been killed and four others wounded in a traffic accident on the Kabul-Herat highway in southern Helmand province, police said on Wednesday. In a statement, the police headquarters said a 580-type passenger bus collided with a Flying coach vehicle in Karez area of Washir district on Tuesday. It said eleven people lost their lives and four others were wounded in the collision.

Taliban arrest two in Kabul

KABUL (Anu TV): Taliban have arrested 2 individuals on charges of promoting Christianity, after allegedly discovering a number of books in their possession. The arrests stemmed from the individuals' ownership of several books, including a copy of the Bible and titles such as Jesus: Myth or History?, The Life of the Most Famous Iranian Poets, Logical Positivism, Hazaristan: The Hazara People and Greater Khorasan, and Youth from the Perspective of (Imam) Khomeini.

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

Employment plans discussed for returning refugees

KABUL (Pajhwok): Acting Minister of Refugees and Repatriation Maulvi Abdul Kabir says the forced deportation of Afghan refugees from Iran has affected the country's economic and social situation. He emphasised the importance of utilising the skills and education of returnees to create employment opportunities. The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) posted on its X account that the Employment Committee for Returnees recently held its scheduled meeting. The committee includes representatives from the Ministry of Economy

(MoE), the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MoAIL), the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA), and MoRR. During the meeting, Maulvi Abdul Kabir highlighted that the forced return of a significant number of refugees had adversely affected Afghanistan's economy and society. He stressed that the skills and qualifications of returnees should be harnessed to generate employment opportunities. He called on relevant institutions to enhance the employment capacity of

returnees and assist them in completing their unfinished education, enabling them to become active members of society. He also urged the MoE and MoCI to prioritise returnees in their operations and agreements, with a focus on strengthening the rural economy. Addressing the meeting, Acting Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Mullah Abdul Manan Omari, said that several returnees had already been introduced to government departments for employment. Omari added: "Returnees possess significant skills in agriculture, livestock, industry, and com-

merce, and some hold post-graduate degrees in religious and modern sciences." Meanwhile, Acting Minister of Commerce and Industry Nooruddin Azizi said his ministry would provide job opportunities to thousands of people annually under its five-year plan, with a particular focus on supporting small businesses owned by returnees. Azizi noted that the Islamic Emirate had allocated the necessary land to the MoCI, which would be distributed to industrialists. MoRR added that, at the conclusion of the meeting, proposals aimed at accel-

erating and enhancing the effectiveness of the Employment Committee's work were reviewed, and decisions were made on several matters to improve job opportunities for returnees. Earlier, Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs, Maulvi Abdul Salam Hanafi, said that half a million Afghan refugees had returned from Iran in June alone. He said that currently, up to 30,000 Afghans were being forcibly repatriated daily from the neighbouring country through Islam Qala in Herat and approximately 10,000 through the Abrasham crossing in Nimroz.



On Tuesday, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) representative in Afghanistan, Arafat Jamal, announced that the agency had allocated 10 million US dollars in cash assistance to support returnees.

Govt annual accountability program kicks off



KABUL (Pajhwok): The program to present one-year achievements of government agencies officially began on Wednesday and is expected to continue for 40 days. During this period, officials from various state institutions will present their annual performance reports to the public. Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, Mullah Abdul Wasih Khadem, Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister of the caretaker government, said the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) assumed power four years ago amid significant security, economic, social, and

cultural challenges. He noted that despite these inherited difficulties, the government has made progress in administrative reforms, revenue growth, and ensuring nationwide security over the past four years. Mullah Khadem also stated that Afghanistan currently maintained relations with over 40 countries, and the process of gaining formal international recognition was ongoing. He highlighted the government's efforts in providing support to migrants at border areas and the reactivation of several media outlets. He urged government

institutions to present their achievements transparently and called on the media to reflect the realities on the ground. Referring to the launch of the accountability program, Mullah Khadem said its purpose was to keep the public informed about the government's performance and ensure officials share their reports in a transparent manner. According to him, approximately 44 government agencies of the Islamic Emirate will participate in this year's program, not only presenting their one-year performance summaries but also responding to journalists' questions.

Agriculture threatened by climate change

KABUL (TOLONews): Climate change and natural disasters are increasingly threatening Afghanistan's agricultural sector. Farmers are reporting significant losses due to droughts and floods and are calling for immediate government support. Abdul Qayyum, a farmer with 28 years of experience in the northern part of the country, states that recent floods and droughts have severely impacted him. He urges officials and organizations to provide assistance. "I've been farming for several years now. We buy seeds from the market, but I'm still in debt. My land is destroyed by floods on one side and drought on the other. We're losing money. I have ten dependents at home and don't know what to do," Abdul Qayyum told TOLONews. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock says it has implemented programs to support farmers, including distributing improved seeds, providing drip irrigation equipment, offering technical training, and establishing marketing centers. Ghulam Mohammad Kazem Shahamat, spokesperson for the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock, stated, "Following the decree from Amir al-Muminin to ban opium cultivation in the country, thousands of farmers have benefited from alternative livelihood programs in various agricultural, irrigation, and livestock sectors through the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and international aid and implementing organizations." The Afghanistan Chamber of Agriculture and Livestock highlights the growth and development of dense orchards, soybeans, asafetida (hing), and saffron as alternative crops in the country's agricultural activities.

Baghlan residents complain about high prices, poor-quality medicine

BAGHLAN (TOLONews): A number of Baghlan residents are complaining about the poor quality and high prices of medicine in some pharmacies in the province. According to them, the continuous prescription of these medicines by doctors has had no positive effect on their treatment, and they are urging officials to pay serious attention to this issue. "We've taken our patients to doctors several times, but the medicines were low quality and didn't work," Mohammad Yaqoob, a resident of Baghlan province, told TOLONews. "There's a world of difference between the medicines we bought from Pakistan and those sold here. The company name is the same, but

their quality varies greatly." Mohammad Atiq, another resident of Baghlan province, said: "Before, when you bought medicine, the price was written and stamped on the back of the packet, and you could ask about it. But now, pharmacies sell medicine for whatever price they want, and you're forced to pay. They don't even give a 10 Afghani discount, and ultimately, their medicines are low quality." Many Baghlan residents claim that in many cases, using these low-quality medicines has worsened patients' health conditions. They are calling on officials, especially the Public Health Directorate of the province, to give serious attention to this matter. Hazratuddin, a resident of Baghlan province, said:

"Our expectation from officials is to monitor pharmacies, inquire about prices, check the quality of medicines, and then allow these medicines to be imported. But when medicines enter the country from every border and corner without official oversight, it's clear they'll be low quality." Shirullah, a resident of Baghlan province, said: "We bought medicine for two or three months, and we've been buying heart medicine for almost two years, but it doesn't do any good. We just buy expensive medicine, but we don't see any benefit from it." However, the Baghlan Public Health Directorate says that its inspection teams monitor pharmacies and wholesale drug suppliers

daily in the center and districts of the province, and they don't allow anyone to engage in price gouging or sell low-quality medicines. Abdul Qahar Ahmadi, head of the Baghlan Public Health Directorate, told TOLONews: "Our teams inspect clinics, wholesalers, pharmacies, and retail drugstores daily to ensure they don't sell low-quality or expired medicines. Our procedures, which we have from the Ministry of Public Health, are implemented daily." This comes as some doctors in the province had previously warned that using low-quality medicines not only has no positive effect on patient treatment but can sometimes lead to side effects and even patient deaths.

7,500 SIM cards distributed to returnees daily in Heart

HERAT CITY (Pajhwok): About 7,500 SIM cards are daily distributed free of charge by telecommunication companies to newly returnees in Islam Qala port of western Herat province of Afghanistan, an official said on Wednesday. Head of Telecommunications and Information Technology Department Hafiz Khairullah Khairkhwah said telecom companies in cooperation with his department distributed up to 7,500 SIM cards to migrants daily at Islam Qala border reception center and other areas. The measure was aimed at facilitating migrants' communication with their families and their access to telecommunication services, he added. Khairkhwah said all SIM cards were distributed after biometric registration, and immigrants could use call, message, and internet services immediately after receiving them. Meanwhile, Maulvi Baz



Mohammad Sarwari, head of the Afghanistan Telecom Regulatory Authority (ATRA), explained in addition to distributing SIM cards, telecommunications companies were also cooperating in providing food packages and transporting refugees to their accommodation centers. These SIM cards are offered with free call, message, and internet packages to meet the communication

needs of returnees. Returnees expressed satisfaction with this process, said receiving a free SIM card upon entering the country has been a great help for them in contacting their families and accessing information. Refugee outreach services, including the provision of humanitarian aid, the transfer of returnees from the provinces, the provision of water, bread, and health-

care, continue on a daily basis by the government and charitable organizations. According to officials, more than half a million Afghan refugees have been forcibly deported from Iran, and now, up to 30,000 people are being returned to the country daily through Islam Qala and 10,000 people through the Nimroz Silk Bridge in past month.

Funding shortage cripples WFP effort to assist returnees

KABUL (Pajhwok): The World Food Programme (WFP) has raised concerns over the situation of Afghan returnees from Iran, warning that limited resources allow it to support only a small portion of those in need. In its June monthly report, published today (Wednesday), WFP said it provided food and cash assistance to 1.8 million people across Afghanistan during the month. It said mass arrivals of returnees from Iran, with high needs, were placing additional strain on already fragile communities. The organisation added: "Daily arrivals average over 19,000, with a peak of 25,900 have been recorded. Resource constraints mean that we are able to reach only a small fraction of those needing assistance. Without a further injection of funding, returnee assistance will diminish and cease within a few weeks." WFP continued it assisted 268 households affected by flooding in Badakhshan, Takhar and Baghlan provinces and supported 76 of 125 households displaced by cross-border conflict in Kunar's Nari district.

It warned: "Limited resources mean we can only assist a fraction of those in need. Without additional funding, support for returnees will be reduced and could come to a halt within weeks." On Tuesday, UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan Roza Otunbayeva called for urgent and coordinated international action to address the situation following her visit to Islam Qala border where she observed the large-scale return of Afghan refugees from Iran.

Mass deportations: Thousands return from Iran empty-handed

KABUL (Pajhwok): Amid an unprecedented surge in the deportations of Afghan migrants from Iran, thousands of families have returned to the country empty-handed. Returnees are urging the Afghan government to provide them with shelter and job opportunities. Meanwhile, human rights experts are calling the forced deportation of migrants a violation of international law and have urged the United Nations to intervene and bring to a halt the practice. Mass deportation from Iran a violation of human rights: Experts have strongly condemned the mass and forced deportation of Afghan migrants from Iran, labeling it a clear violation of human rights. They call on the United Nations to take urgent action to stop the ongoing expulsions. Returnees plead for support At the transportation terminal in the Sara-i-Shamali area of Kabul, thousands of forcibly returned migrants from Iran arrive daily. Many of these families had

initially migrated due to poverty and economic hardships and have now returned with nothing. Rahila, who returned with her five children, shared her story: "I have three sons and two daughters. At 3 a.m., Iranian police came and said, 'Didn't we tell you to return to your country by the fourth month?' I begged for one more day, but they refused. We grabbed a few clothes, gave the house key to a neighbor for the landlord, and left." Rahila, a native of Baghlan province, had worked for years as a cleaner in Iran. Her husband, who struggled with addiction, disappeared two years ago and was never found. She returned to Afghanistan after seven years. "Life in Iran was hard, but we managed to survive through the efforts of every family member. Now that we're back, we're lost and don't know where to begin," she said. "We have no home. We don't know where to go." She described how they had gradually built a modest life over the years in

Iran—only to be forced to abandon it all overnight. Deportation from Turkey adds to migrants' plight Masuma Khawari, originally from Mazar-i-Sharif, was recently deported from Turkey. She said their visas had not yet expired when they were forcibly removed. "They tricked us by saying they needed us for an hour. But then we were taken to camps. For ten days, we were moved from one camp to another. Men, women, and children were kept separately, without food or basic facilities. Finally, without any explanation, we were deported." Khawari had lived in Denizli, Turkey, for seven years after fleeing economic hardship and insecurity in Afghanistan. "We had built a basic life there," she said, glancing nervously at her young children. "When we arrived back, we had no home, no belongings. At the airport, we were given just one blanket, a couple of winter clothes, and a small amount of cash." She described the depor-

tation as one of the most traumatic experiences of her life, having left behind all possessions and personal documents. Bibi Zainab, a widow from Kunduz province, returned to Kabul three days ago after years of struggle in Iran. One of her sons remains in Iran to collect his unpaid wages. "We're searching for a home, but we can't find anything," she said, visibly exhausted. She explained that Afghans in Iran faced regular discrimination, including being denied bread at bakeries and access to basic stores. Only some Herati-owned bakeries would sell bread to Afghan migrants. She appealed to the international community to stop the forced deportations and assist returnees. Naser Ahmad Arefi, who returned with 20 family members after 12 years in Iran, said he had no place to stay nor the money to return to his home province of Takhar. "We lost 140 million toman for our house and 100 million toman in unpaid wages. Now we

don't even have enough money to get to Takhar," he said. He left Afghanistan because of economic difficulties and unemployment. Though life in Iran was harsh, he was able to support his family through work. Arefi also described the rough treatment they received from Iranian police and said all their belongings remained behind. While passing through Nimroz province, he received just 10,000 afghanis in aid—nowhere near enough to meet their basic needs. Like others, he called on the Islamic Emirate to provide shelter and job opportunities and asked international aid agencies not to abandon them. Legal Experts: Mass Deportation Violates International Law Bilal Ahmad Khateer, a legal expert, said: "Under international conventions—especially the 1990 Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers—states have the right to deport migrants. However, this

right is not absolute; it comes with restrictions." He cited the principle of non-collective expulsion outlined in Protocol No. 4 of the European Convention on Human Rights and Article 22 of the Migrant Workers Convention, both of which prohibit mass deportations—something Iran is clearly violating. Khateer emphasized that deported migrants have the right to appeal and must not be subjected to inhumane treatment. "If a migrant poses a security threat, they should be individually assessed—not collectively deported," he said. He urged the Islamic Emirate to provide key services such as registration, free transportation to home provinces, healthcare, and shelter for returnees. He also called on the United Nations to pressure Iran to stop the deportations. Migration Expert Warns of Long-Term Crisis Abdul Razaq Adeel, a migration expert, described the mass deportation of Afghan migrants as a

"humanitarian disaster" which will have long-lasting consequences. "This not only creates immediate hardship for thousands of families, but also risks serious social and economic crises in Afghanistan," he said. He called on the Islamic Emirate to work closely with international organizations to implement a comprehensive plan to meet the basic needs of returnees. "Mass deportation is against human values and can cause long-term instability. The international community must increase support to help Afghanistan meet the needs of returnees," Adeel added. Over Half a Million Migrants Returned This Month Abdul Mutalib Haqqani, spokesperson for the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, told Pajhwok that more than 576,000 Afghan migrants had returned so far this month (Saratani/July 2025). "Since the start of Saratan 1404, 576,079 migrants returned from Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey,"

he said. "Of these, over 90,000 were single individuals, and more than 400,000 constituted families." He said the ministry has provided facilities in areas such as housing, education, and employment for the returnees. Haqqani acknowledged recent video footage showing the mistreatment of Afghan migrants in Iran. Although the exact locations of the videos remain unverified, he said the reports were concerning. He urged Iranian authorities to investigate the abuse and prevent further harm to bilateral relations. According to Haqqani, the Afghan government has made all necessary preparations to respond to the needs of returnees, including financial support, essential services, and transportation to their home provinces. Committees have been established to address migrant issues. He emphasized that reintegration efforts are ongoing and that the government is committed to protecting the dignity and rights of returnees.



# Govt increases police martyrs' children recruitment quota

## Monsoon trees plantation campaign launched in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, has reaffirmed that ensuring law and order and safeguarding the lives and property of the people remains the foremost priority of the provincial government. "There can be no compromise on peace-because without it, development is impossible," he stated.

Speaking at a police darbar held at Police Lines Peshawar on Wednesday, the Chief Minister highlighted key steps taken by his government to strengthen the police force. He noted that last fiscal year, the police budget was increased to Rs. 124 billion, and this year it has been further raised to Rs. 158 billion. Salaries of KP police personnel have been increased to bring them in line with those of other provinces, which the CM described as a rightful entitlement of the force.

He said that promotion processes within the police have also been expedited adding that recruitment quota for children of martyred police has been raised from 5% to 12.5%, under which 280 appointments have already been made. Significant progress has also been made on the earlier announced initiative to provide free plots to families of martyrs, with distribution set to take place this year within government housing societies. "The provincial treasury is at the service of public and police safety,"

said CM Gandapur, emphasizing that the government has made considerable efforts over the past year to meet the force's needs, and will continue to do so. "Lack of resources will never be allowed to become a hurdle in fulfilling the police's requirements."

Upon arrival at Police Lines, the Chief Minister was received by the Inspector General of Police and senior police officers. A smartly turned-out contingent of police presented him with a guard of honour. He also laid a wreath at the Martyrs' Monument to pay tribute to fallen heroes.

The Chief Minister inspected newly acquired Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs), bulletproof vehicles, weapons, and other modern equipment provided to the police. Addressing the darbar, he said, "Nations that honour their martyrs become invincible. Unless we give dignity to our martyrs and their families, our police personnel will not develop the spirit of sacrifice."

He announced that families of martyred police personnel visiting any government office-including the Chief Minister's Office-must be welcomed with respect, standing in their honour. "These are the families of those who laid down their lives for our protection," he emphasized. CM Gandapur stated that he had delayed attending the police darbar until meaningful steps had been taken for police welfare. "Now that we've taken real measures-including provi-

sion of modern arms and equipment-I feel proud to stand before you," he said. He also urged officers and personnel to uphold merit and justice:

"Do not accept any recommendations or influence in your work. As Chief Minister, I have never made a single recommendation for recruitment or posting in the police. If I don't do it, no one else's recommendation should be accepted either. Ensure that the weak are not denied justice, and the powerful are not spared from accountability. I will fully support the police in this regard."

Addressing traffic police in particular, he instructed that poor taxi and rickshaw drivers committing minor violations should be given warnings instead of fines. "These individuals work hard to feed their families and cannot afford heavy fines. Instead, issue heavier penalties to the wealthy who flout traffic laws with large vehicles," he directed. Inspector General of Police, Zulfiqar Hameed, also addressed the darbar. The event began with a collective prayer for the elevation of ranks of the martyred police personnel.

Meanwhile, the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has officially launched the Monsoon Tree Plantation Campaign 2025. Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur launched the campaign by planting a sapling on the lawn of the Chief Minister's House in Peshawar on Wednesday. Senior officials from the



Forest Department briefed the Chief Minister on the campaign's objectives, informing him that a total of one million saplings will be planted across the province. Among these, 184,000 fruit-bearing trees will be planted in addition to regular saplings.

According to the plan, the Forest Department itself will plant over 700,000 saplings, while more than 250,000 saplings will be distributed among the public for planting.

Region-wise targets include 367,000 saplings in the Malakand Forest Region, 475,000 in the Northern Region, and 149,000 in the Central South Forest Region.

Talking on this occasion, the Chief Minister emphasized the vital importance of forest conservation and expansion in combating the challenges of climate change. He said the provincial government is pursuing a comprehensive strategy for forest protection and afforestation, under which the mon-

soon plantation drive holds special significance. He urged the public to actively participate in the campaign and help ensure its success. "Tree plantation is a national duty," the Chief Minister stated. "The people must become partners in this effort and play their part in ensuring a clean and healthy environment for future generations." He expressed the hope that through collective effort, the vision of a Clean and Green Khyber Pakhtunkhwa can soon become a reality.

## Two policemen martyred in targeted shooting in D I Khan

### F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Two police personnel were martyred in a targeted shooting by unidentified assailants near Sakhi Gate in the Kulachi tehsil of Dera Ismail Khan.

According to police authorities, the victims have been identified as Head Constable Ghulam Muhammad, who hails from Panyala, and Constable Shehzad, a resident of Aba Khel in Lakki Marwat.

Their bodies have been shifted to the hospital for post-mortem examination. The attackers managed to flee the scene, and a search operation has been launched in the surrounding area to apprehend the culprits. Security has been tightened in the

area as investigations are underway.

The funeral prayers of police constables Ghulam Muhammad and Shehzad, who were martyred in a terrorist attack in Kulachi, were held with full official honours at Police Lines Dera Ismail Khan on Wednesday.

According to the police spokesman, Commissioner Dera Division Zafarul Islam Khattak, Regional Police Officer (RPO) Dera Syed Ashfaq Anwar, District Police Officer (DPO) Dera Sajjad Ahmad Sahibzada, other senior officials, and the families of the martyrs attended the funeral. A police contingent presented a salute to the martyrs, while flower wreaths were placed on the coffins. Special prayers were offered

for their high ranks in the hereafter.

RPO Dera Syed Ashfaq Anwar said on the occasion that the sacrifice of the police martyrs is a source of pride for the entire force. He said their blood will not go in vain, and strict action will be taken against those responsible. "One of the terrorists involved in the attack was killed during the exchange of fire, while two others were injured. Comprehensive search and strike operations are actively underway to track down and arrest the remaining culprits. We are determined to bring all those responsible to justice at the earliest," the RPO added. He further assured the families that the police department stands firmly with them and will provide all possible support.

## Protection of journalists' rights priority, says Tarar

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Wednesday said the government was committed to protect the rights and dignity of journalists at all levels.

He made these remarks during a meeting with a delegation, comprising of the representatives of various associations of journalists including Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), Rawalpindi Islamabad Union of Journalists (RIUJ), and the Parliamentary Reporters Association (PRA). Tarar also expressed concern over a recent incident involving Tariq Virk, President of the RIUJ, assuring the delegation he would prioritize the resolution of the issue.

He affirmed that journalists would receive all possible cooperation and protection while discharging their duties. The minister emphasized on the government's unwavering commitment to defend free journalism which was a cornerstone of societal betterment. Principal Information Officer Mubashir Hasan was also present at the meeting.

## Court grants relief to Parvez Elahi

### F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: The Lahore High Court Rawalpindi Bench has granted major relief to former Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Parvez Elahi by suspending a decision made by the accountability court.

The two-member bench, comprising Justice Shahram Sarwar and Justice Sajid Mehmood Sethi, issued a notice to the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) while hearing Elahi's writ petition. The bench suspended the accountability court's order in graft case and exempted him from personal appearances before the NAB court.

Elahi was represented by advocates Sardar Abdul Razzaq Khan and Aamir Saeed Raan before the High Court's division bench. During the hearing, Elahi's lawyer argued that the former chief minister is an elderly politician and is currently undergoing medical treatment in Lahore due to ill health, making it difficult for him to appear in court on every hearing date. The trial court had unlawfully dismissed his application for exemption from personal appearance, the lawyer claimed.

Justice Shahram Sarwar questioned the NAB prosecutor about their objection to granting Elahi an exemption. The prosecutor responded that Elahi's illness was not severe enough to warrant such relief. After the preliminary hearing, the court admitted the petition for regular proceedings, suspended the accountability court's earlier decision, and issued notices to NAB for a detailed hearing.

## Saif flays federal govt for hike in PoL prices

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, Barrister Dr. Saif, has strongly condemned the repeated hikes in petroleum prices, accusing the "illegitimate federal rulers" of dropping a petrol bomb on the people every fifteen days.

He stated that in just the past one and a half months, the "fake government" has increased fuel prices four times, raising petroleum prices by nearly 30 rupees per litre during this short period.

Barrister Dr. Saif questioned the silence of the mainstream media over

these consistent price hikes, calling it "deeply concerning". He highlighted that while global petroleum prices are falling, fuel prices in Pakistan continue to rise, further burdening a population already crushed by inflation. He warned that the latest fuel price increases will trigger another wave of inflation, driving up the prices of food and essential commodities.

Recalling the criticism faced by the previous government during Imran Khan's tenure over petrol prices reaching 150 rupees per litre, Dr. Saif asked why those same voices are now silent as the current government raises prices beyond those levels.

"The people are being pushed towards starvation while the so-called government remains indifferent," he said. "Their sole focus is keeping Imran Khan behind bars in fabricated cases, not providing relief to the public."

Barrister Dr. Saif accused the "Form 47-imposed mafia" of exploiting the people and draining the country's resources. He lamented that inflation has broken the backs of ordinary citizens, yet the "fake rulers" remain unmoved. He also pointed out that while the wealth of the ruling elite continues to grow, the common man is being crushed under economic hardship.

## Pak Navy Command and Staff conference ends

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Command & Staff Conference of Pakistan Navy concluded at Naval Headquarters, Islamabad. The conference was chaired by Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf.

During the conference, Chief of the Naval Staff underscored the importance of maintaining perpetual combat readiness to effectively counter both traditional and non-traditional threats in the maritime domain. He specifically appreciated PN's impregnable deterrence at



sea during MARKA-E-HAQ highlighting the successful demonstration of its prowess and robust defence capabilities. Naval Chief commended PN's proactive measures in ensuring continuous flow of supplies through Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOCs) and uninterrupted operations at sea ports. Admiral Naveed Ashraf also emphasized the development of capabilities in unmanned systems,

including drones and unmanned surface/ underwater vessels, to enhance surveillance and response capabilities. The Command & Staff Conference is the apex decision-making forum of Pakistan Navy, where the Chief of the Naval Staff, along with all Principal Staff Officers and Field Commanders, review the policies and strategic plans of the service.

## ‘Serious questions’ over UK secret Afghan relocations: PM

LONDON (AFP): Ministers in the UK's last Conservative government have "serious questions to answer" over a secret resettlement plan for thousands of Afghans after a data breach endangered their lives, Prime Minister Keir Starmer said Wednesday.

Parliamentary Speaker Lindsay Hoyle said the affair raised significant constitutional issues" after it emerged that the previous government had obtained a court order banning media coverage and preventing any scrutiny by parliament. Thousands of Afghans who worked with the UK and their families have been brought to Britain under the programme following the leak.

But the 2022 breach and the resettlement plan to protect those involved from potential repercussions only came to light on Tuesday after a court super-gag was lifted. Defence Minister John Healey told parliament a UK official had accidentally leaked a spreadsheet containing the names and details of almost 19,000 Afghans who had asked to be relocated to Britain.

It happened in February 2022, just six months after Taliban fighters seized Kabul, he said. In parliament Wednesday, Starmer said his government supported the principle of ful-

filling "our obligations to Afghans who served alongside British forces" in the post 9/11 conflict in the South Asian country. Healey had "set out the full extent of the failings that we inherited: a major data breach, a superinjunction, a secret route that has already cost hundreds of millions of pounds", he added.

"Ministers who served under the party opposite have serious questions to answer about how this was ever allowed to happen," he said. The nearly two-year-long court ban secured by the previous government prevented any media reporting of the leak. In addition, parliament was not briefed and there was no public knowledge of the resettlement plan and the costs involved.

Speaker of Parliament Lindsay Hoyle, who is responsible for the proper administration of the House of Commons, also commented on the affair. "This episode raises significant constitutional issues. I have therefore asked the clerks to consider whether any lessons need to be learned from this case," he told lawmakers. Under the Conservatives the secret programme was put in place in April 2024 to help those "judged to be at the highest risk of reprisals by the Taliban", Healey said

told parliament.

Some 900 Afghans and 3,600 family members have now been brought to Britain or are in transit under the programme known as the Afghan Response Route, at a cost of around £400 million (\$535 million). Applications from 600 more people have also been accepted, bringing the estimated total cost of the scheme to £850 million. They are among some 36,000 Afghans accepted by Britain under different schemes since the August 2021 fall of Kabul.

Former defence minister Ben Wallace said he stood by his decision to seek secrecy from the court in August 2023 and rejected claims of a "cover-up". "I make no apology for applying to the court for an injunction at the time," he said.

"If this leak was reported at the time, the existence of the list would put in peril those we needed to help," he told BBC radio. When Labour came to power in July 2024, the scheme was up and running but Healey said he had been "deeply uncomfortable to be constrained from reporting" it to parliament. He estimated the total cost of relocating people to Britain from Afghanistan under the various resettlement schemes at between £5.5 billion to £6 billion.

## France, UK, Germany to reimpose Iran sanctions in August

BRUSSELS (AP): France, the United Kingdom and Germany will reinstate harsh sanctions on Iran by the end of August if no progress is made on a nuclear deal, Western diplomats and officials say.

The economic penalties on Iran that were lifted under a 2015 agreement in return for allowing restrictions and monitoring of its nuclear programme would return by the end of next month "at the latest" if there is no breakthrough, French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot told reporters in Brussels on Tuesday. The deadline was announced as pressure mounts on diplomats to find a new solution to Iran's nuclear ambitions, which Tehran has reiterated are civilian in nature, in the wake of massive Israeli and United States strikes on the country last month. "France and its partners are ... justified in reapplying global embargoes on arms, banks and nuclear equipment that were lifted 10 years ago," Barrot told reporters before a meeting with European Union foreign ministers in Brussels. "Without a firm, tangible and verifiable commitment from Iran, we will do so by the end of August at the latest."

Under a so-called snapback provision in the 2015 deal, United Nations sanctions are able to be reimposed on

### Iran rules out resumption of US talks

DUBAI (Reuters) : Iran's parliament said the country should not resume nuclear negotiations with the United States until preconditions are met, in a statement reported on Wednesday by Iranian state media. "When the US use negotiations as a tool to deceive Iran and cover up a sudden military attack by the Zionist regime (Israel), talks cannot be conducted as before. Preconditions must be set and no new negotiations can take place until they are fully met," the statement said. The statement did not define the preconditions, but Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi has previously said there should be guarantees there will be no further attacks against Tehran. Israel and the US launched strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities last month, saying that they were part of a programme geared towards developing nuclear weapons. Tehran maintains that its nuclear programme is purely for civilian purposes. Tehran and Washington had held five rounds of indirect negotiations mediated by Oman prior to the 12-day air war, with US demands that Tehran drop its domestic uranium enrichment programme reaching a dead end.

Iran if Tehran does not comply with its requirements. The British, French and German ambassadors to the UN met on Tuesday to discuss reimposing the sanctions, The Associated Press news agency reported. The issue was also discussed in a phone call on Monday between the foreign ministers of the three countries and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, two US officials, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations, told the agency.

Iran's UN mission made no comment in response to the threat of returned sanctions, AP reported. But

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said in recent days that the return of UN sanctions by the European signatories of the 2015 nuclear deal would "end" Europe's role in the Iranian nuclear issue and as a mediator between Tehran and Washington. The US and Iran were engaged in extended negotiations over Tehran's nuclear programme before the Israeli strikes began in June and were joined in their latter stages with strikes by Washington. US President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the US from the Iran nuclear agreement in 2018 during his first term in office, declaring it too weak on Iran.