

Kundi administers Oath

PESHAWAR (APP): A formal oath-taking ceremony was held at the Governor House on Sunday, where 25 newly elected members of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly on reserved seats for women and non-Muslims took their oath. The ceremony was administered by Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi, following a nomination order issued by the Chief Justice of the Peshawar High Court.



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GAZA Palestinians gather as they carry aid supplies that entered Gaza through Israel, amid a hunger crisis, in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip on Sunday. — Reuters photo

## Gandapur warns of action against dissenting PTI Senate candidates

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur on Sunday announced that strict action would be taken at the party level against PTI members contesting the upcoming Senate elections in violation of party discipline. Speaking to media persons in Peshawar, Mr Gandapur said the provincial government would honour its recent understanding with the opposition, under which six Senate seats would go to the government and five to the opposition. However, he clarified that the alliance between the treasury and the oppo-

sition benches was "limited to Senate polls only".

"The candidates going against the party decision are, in fact, defying the directives of PTI founder Imran Khan," Mr Gandapur said, adding that the six Senate candidates approved by Mr Khan are the only ones recognised as official PTI nominees. The chief minister noted that, on the instructions of the PTI founder, both the party's parliamentary and political committees had unanimously agreed that candidates should be elected unopposed to ensure transparency and avoid horse-trading.

"This will be the first time in the province's history that truly transparent

Senate elections will be held," he claimed.

Despite these efforts, several PTI candidates dissatisfied with the party's choices did not withdraw their nomination papers by the official deadline of 12 noon.

Among them is Irfan Saleem, who reiterated his intention to stay in the race, saying he would not step down "under any circumstances" and was "fighting for principles".

Meanwhile, a joint meeting between government and opposition representatives earlier agreed that if the breakaway PTI candidates refused to pull out, both sides would jointly field their candidates against them in the polls.

## Four terrorists killed in Kalat

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Security forces killed four terrorists linked to the Indian proxy group Fitna al Hindustan during an intelligence-based operation in Kalat late Saturday night, recovering weapons, ammunition, and explosives from the terrorists.

According to the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), the security forces conducted an intelligence-based operation in Kalat District of Balochistan, targeting reported presence of terrorists affiliated with the Indian proxy group, Fitna al Hindustan.

During the conduct of operation, own forces effectively engaged the terrorists' location, and after an intense fire exchange, four Indian sponsored terrorists were sent to hell.

Weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from the terrorists, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area.

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 reaffirm the nation's unwavering resolve to bring the perpetrators of terrorism to justice.

President, PM pay tribute to security forces for killing terrorists in Kalat

President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Sunday paid tribute to security forces for killing four Khawarij terrorists during successful operation against Fitna-tul-Hindustan in Kalat district.

The President said, "Security forces are always determined to eradicate terrorism." "Terrorism will be defeated at all costs with the unity of the nation," he said adding, "The state will continue to take action against terrorism with full force."

## Indian veterans refuse to play against Pakistan

L O N D O N (ESPNCricinfo): A veterans' cricket match that was to be played between India and Pakistan in the World Championship of Legends (WCL) in Birmingham on Sunday has been cancelled after the Indian players, including Shikhar Dhawan, refused to participate in it because of the "current geopolitical situation and prevailing tensions" between the two countries.

There had been cross-border tensions between India and Pakistan after the Pahalgam terror attack in India in April, which had led to the temporary suspensions of the IPL and PSL.

Even though the organisers of WCL said in a statement that they had planned this match in the tournament - that also involves teams from Australia, South Africa,

England and West Indies - after hearing news that the Pakistan hockey team will be touring India this year and seeing a recent volleyball match between the Under-16 sides of the two nations, they cancelled the game if they had "unintentionally caused discomfort to our Indian Cricket Legends."

Dhawan posted a screenshot of his statement on X that said: "This is to formally reiterate that Mr Shikhar Dhawan will not be participating in any matches against the Pakistan team in the upcoming WCL League. This discussion was communicated earlier during our discussion on call and WhatsApp dated 11th May 2025."

"In view of our current geopolitical situation and prevailing tensions between India and Pakistan, Mr Dhawan and his team have taken this

position after due consideration. We respectfully request the league's understanding and cooperation on this matter."

The second edition of the WCL started on July 18 in Birmingham and has seen three matches played. Pakistan played the opening game of the tournament but Sunday's clash was going to be India's first. Yuvraj Singh is leading the India side while Mohammad Hafeez is captaining Pakistan.

Each of the six teams in the tournament will play each other once before the top four proceed to the semi-finals scheduled for July 31 and the final on August 2. The tournament will be played in Birmingham, Northampton, Leicester and Leeds. It remains to be seen what will happen if India and Pakistan set up a knockout clash later in the tournament.

# Israel fire kills dozens more aid seekers in Gaza, medics say, as hunger worsens

CAIRO (Reuters): At least 67 people were killed by Israeli fire while they waited for U.N. aid trucks in northern Gaza on Sunday, the territory's health ministry said, as Israel issued new evacuation orders for areas packed with displaced Gazans, some of whom began to leave.

The ministry said dozens of people were also wounded in the incident in northern Gaza, in one of the highest reported tolls among repeated recent cases in which aid seekers have been killed, including 36 on Saturday. Six other people were killed near another aid site in the south, it said.

The Israeli military said its troops had fired warn-

ing shots towards a crowd of thousands in northern Gaza on Sunday to remove what it said was "an immediate threat".

It said initial findings suggested reported casualty figures were inflated, and it "certainly does not intentionally target humanitarian aid trucks".

It did not immediately comment on the incident in the south.

In total, health authorities said 88 people had been killed by Israeli gunfire and airstrikes across Gaza on Sunday.

After Israel's military dropped leaflets urging people to evacuate from neighbourhoods in central Gaza's Deir al-Balah, residents said Israeli planes struck three houses in the

area.

Dozens of families began leaving their homes, carrying some of their belongings. Hundreds of thousands of displaced Gazans have been sheltering in the Deir al-Balah area.

Israel's military said it had not entered the districts subject to the evacuation order during the current conflict and that it was continuing "to operate with great force to destroy the enemy's capabilities and terrorist infrastructure in the area".

Israeli sources have said the reason the army has so far stayed out is because they suspect Hamas might be holding hostages there. At least 20 of the remaining 50

hostages in captivity in Gaza are believed to still be alive.

Hostage families demanded an explanation from the army.

"Can anyone (promise) to us that this decision will not come at the cost of losing our loved ones?" the families said in a statement. Much of Gaza has been reduced to a wasteland during more than 21 months of war and there are fears of accelerating starvation.

Palestinian health officials said hundreds of people could soon die as hospitals were inundated with patients suffering from dizziness and exhaustion due to the scarcity of food and a collapse in aid deliveries.

"We warn that hundreds of people whose bodies have wasted away are at risk of imminent death due to hunger," the health ministry, which is controlled by Hamas, said.

The United Nations also said on Sunday that civilians were starving and needed an urgent influx of aid.

Residents said it was becoming impossible to find essential food such as flour. The Gaza health ministry said at least 71 children had died of malnutrition during the war, and 60,000 others were suffering from symptoms of malnutrition.

Later on Sunday, it said 18 people have died of hunger in the past 24 hours.

Food prices have increased well beyond what most of the population of more than two million can afford.

Several people who spoke to Reuters via chat apps said they either had one meal or no meal in the past 24 hours.

"As a father, I wake up in the early morning to look for food, for even a loaf of bread for my five children, but all in vain," said Ziad, a nurse.

"People who didn't die of bombs will die of hunger. We want an end to this war now, a truce, even for two months," he told Reuters.

Others said they felt dizzy walking in the streets and that many fainted as they walked.

Fathers leave tents to avoid questions by their children about what to eat.

UNRWA, the U.N. refugee agency dedicated to Palestinians, demanded Israel allow more aid trucks into Gaza, saying it had enough food for the entire population for over three months which was not allowed in.

Israel's military said that it "views the transfer of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip as a matter of utmost importance, and works to enable and facilitate its entry in coordination with the international community".

Some Palestinians suggested the move on Deir al-Balah might be an attempt to put pressure on Hamas to make more con-

cessions in long-running ceasefire negotiations.

Israel and Hamas are engaged in indirect talks in Doha aimed at reaching a 60-day truce and hostage deal, although there has been no sign of breakthrough.

The war began when Hamas-led militants stormed into Israel on October 7, 2023, killing 1,200 people and taking 251 hostages back to Gaza.

The Israeli military campaign against Hamas in Gaza has since killed more than 58,000 Palestinians according to health officials, displaced almost the entire population and plunged the enclave into a humanitarian crisis.

## Akhtar Mengal offloaded

### F.P. Report

QUETTA: Balochistan National Party (BNP) leader Sardar Akhtar Mengal was barred from traveling abroad, according to FIA officials. Mengal was offloaded from a private airline flight bound for Dubai, as his name appeared on the Provisional National Identification List (PNIL), the officials said.

# Nine militants killed, eight apprehended

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani security forces have killed nine terrorists and apprehended eight others linked to the Indian-sponsored militant group Fitna al-Khawarij in a comprehensive joint operation conducted in Malakand Division.

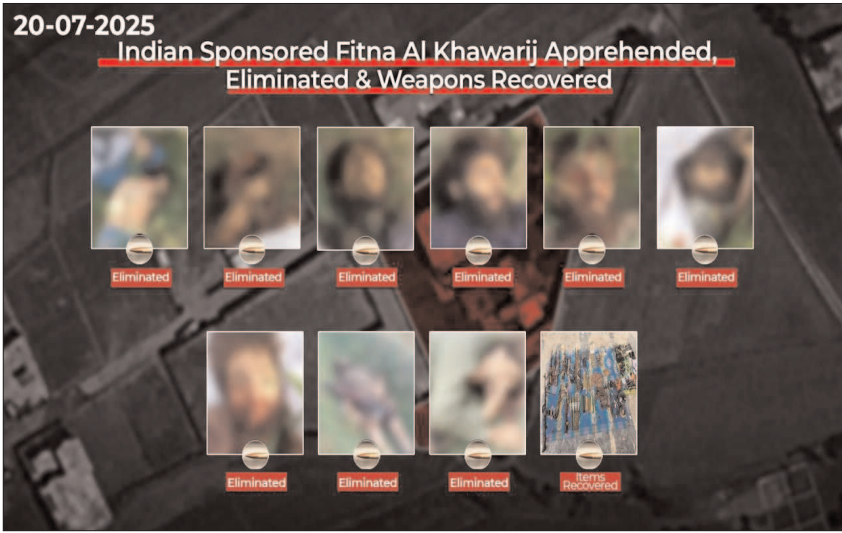
According to Inter-Services Public Relation (ISPR), the operation was carried out by security forces in coordination with Police, Levies, CTD, and District Administration, on reported presence of khwarij belonging to Indian proxy, Fitna al Khwarij.

During the conduct of operation, spread over four days, own forces skillfully surrounded & effectively engaged the khwarij location, and after intense multiple fire exchanges, nine Indian sponsored khwarij were sent to hell, while eight khwarij were apprehended.

Two hideouts used by khwarij were also busted and a large quantity of weapons ammunition & explosives was recovered.

Locals of the area appreciated the operation and expressed their full support to the State's counter terrorism efforts.

Sanitization operation is



being conducted to eliminate any other Kharji found in the area, as the Security Forces and Law Enforcement Agencies of Pakistan, in step with the nation, are determined to wipe out the menace of Indian Sponsored Terrorism from the country.

PM pays tribute to Pakistan Army , Police for operation against terrorists

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Sunday paid tribute to Pakistan Army, Police, Levies, Counter-Terrorism Department and district administration for successful joint operation against

Fitna-al-Khawarij terrorists in Malakand district.

He praised security forces and supporting agencies for killing nine Fitna-al-Khawarij terrorists in successful operation.

He said, "This successful operation against terrorists is a great example of coordination between different agencies."

"The entire nation stands with security forces in the war against terrorism," he added.

He expressed resolve of the government to completely eradicate all forms of terrorism from the country.

President lauds securi-

ty forces for eliminating Khwarij in Malakand

President Asif Ali Zardari on Sunday commended the security forces and Levies for eliminating three Khwarij terrorists in Malakand operation.

The president said the nation was united and terrorism would be eradicated at all costs.

He also reiterated the resolve that the State would continue its steps with full strength against terrorism, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release.

The president further said that terrorists of Fitna al Hindustan would be brought to justice.

## Pakistan, Afghanistan to boost anti-terrorism cooperation



### F.P. Report

KABUL: Pakistan and Afghanistan have agreed to strengthen mutual cooperation for effective border management and the elimination of terrorism.

This understanding was reached during a meeting between Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and his Afghan counterpart Sirajuddin Haqqani in Kabul on Sunday.

The two leaders underscored the importance of peaceful coexistence, regional stability, and

enhanced collaboration between both nations.

Discussions centered on bilateral relations, with a particular focus on counterterrorism, cross-border infiltration, and the proscribed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan.

They also explored strategies for efficient management of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, curbing drug trafficking, and regulating cross-border movement.

Besides, the repatriation process of Afghan nationals residing illegally in

Pakistan was another key topic of discussion.

Speaking on the occasion, Mohsin Naqvi stressed that terrorist organizations are fueling unrest and instability, and that both countries must work together to eliminate such threats.

He reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to fostering fraternal and enduring relations with Afghanistan.

He also highlighted Pakistan's decades-long hospitality towards millions of Afghan refugees, noting that the country's

doors remain open for Afghan citizens arriving through legal channels.

Earlier, upon his arrival at the Afghan Ministry of Interior, Mohsin Naqvi received a warm welcome from Sirajuddin Haqqani.

The meeting was also attended by Afghanistan's Senior Deputy Interior Minister Ibrahim Sardar, Pakistan's Special Representative for Afghanistan Mohammad Sadiq, Federal Secretary for Interior Khurram Agha, and other high-ranking officials.





LAHORE: A double-decker tourism bus passes in front of the iconic WAPDA House. —APP Photo

### Sindh allocates Rs 42 billion for universities

KARACHI (PPI): The Sindh government has announced a record budget of Rs 42 billion for universities along with the expansion of the digital skills program. The second phase of the Peoples Information Technology will train 35,000 students in 12 in-demand IT fields with an investment of Rs 1.4 billion. Provincial representative Sharjeel Inam Memon termed the program an exemplary initiative for incorporating youth into the digital workforce. In the initial phase, 13,565 participants received training in modern IT fields, while 300 top performers were awarded laptops and Chromebooks.

The increased funding for universities for the fiscal year 2025-26 is the provincial government's largest investment in higher education across the region. Memon reiterated the government's commitment to equipping the new generation with modern technology skills.

He cited recent infrastructure improvements including the new Food Engineering Department facility (Rs 96.481 million) and the International Boys Hostel (Rs 67.11 million) at NED University as proof of commitment to enhancing higher education facilities.

### ESD responds to 1,305 emergencies in Punjab

LAHORE (APP): The Emergency Services Department (ESD) responded to 1,305 road traffic crashes in Punjab during the last 24 hours.

In these accidents, 12 people died, and 1,527 others were injured. As many as 624 people with serious injuries were shifted to different hospitals, while 903 victims with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by the rescue medical teams.

Majority of accidents involved motorbikes, therefore effective enforcement of traffic laws and lane discipline were essential to reduce the increasing number of road crashes.

The analysis showed that 812 drivers, 76 underage drivers, 173 pedestrians, and 554 passengers were among the victims of road traffic crashes. The statistics showed that 263 accidents were reported in Lahore, which affected 329 people, placing the provincial capital at top of the list, followed by Faisalabad with 95 accidents and 120 victims and at third Multan with 70 accidents and 75 victims.

The details further revealed that 1,539 victims were affected by road traffic crashes including 1,241 males and 298 females, while the age group of the victims shows that 334 were under 18 years of age, 788 were between 18 and 40 years and rest of the 417 victims were reported above 40 years of age.

According to the data, 1,234 motorbikes, 83 autorickshaws, 115 motorcars, 29 vans, 13 passenger buses, 43 truck and 113 other types of vehicles and slow-moving carts were involved in aforesaid road traffic accidents.

## CM launches mobile education projects

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has announced an innovative set of mobile education initiatives aimed at promoting learning in remote and underserved areas of the province.

The projects, School on Wheels, Library on Wheels, and Mobile Library, will bring educational opportunities directly to children's doorsteps.

The CM while giving in-principle approval for the launch of these mobile projects under the School Education Department said, "If you study, you will grow." She emphasized that School on Wheels will be designed using electric rick-

shaws, equipped with solar panels and folding chairs, enabling teachers to conduct classes under umbrella-like canopies in streets, neighborhoods, and towns.

Books, educational toys, and painting kits will be provided to spark creativity and curiosity among children. "This initiative will help provide the jewel of education to children in far-flung and difficult-to-reach areas," she said.

The CM also approved the Library on Wheels initiative, which will be operated from minivans decorated with cartoons to attract young readers. These mobile libraries will carry a wide range of books, both curricular and

non-curricular, and will travel to various localities, fields, and public spaces to promote reading habits among children.

Additionally, she announced the launch of a Mobile Library project housed in modern buses. These mobile libraries will be furnished with chairs and tables, offering children a comfortable reading environment. They will stock books in Urdu, English, and science subjects, along with educational magazines.

Provincial Education Minister Rana Sikandar Hayat provided a comprehensive briefing on the implementation and objectives of these projects.

## MQM stuck in negative thinking: Wahab

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh government spokesperson Murtaza Wahab Siddiqui, in response to Farooq Sattar's press conference, said that MQM is still stuck in a cycle of negative thinking.

He emphasized the Peoples Party's efforts to promote national unity and bridge the divide between urban and rural Sindh. Siddiqui also mentioned Sattar and his faction of MQM's alleged involvement in past violent incidents and

illegal activities in Karachi. Siddiqui questioned MQM's resistance to the new vehicle registration plates, suggesting that it aids criminal activities. He claimed the party's stance hinders crime prevention efforts.

The spokesperson dismissed their concerns about the inclusion of the Ajrak design as a pretext, arguing that MQM understands that the modern plates will help identify and apprehend criminals.

He defended the Ajrak as a cultural symbol of Sindh and the wider region.

The spokesperson stated that attempts to create division in Sindh will fail. He termed the demands for resignations over poor infrastructure as political drama. Siddiqui accused MQM of paralyzing institutions during their tenure in power, and contrasted this with the Sindh government's current province-wide development initiatives.

## Nine people killed, many others injured

KARACHI (INP): At least nine people lost their lives and many others were injured in separate bus accidents in Sindh on Sunday.

In the first accident, six people were dead and 12 injured when a bus carrying picnickers from Orangi Town to Keenjhar Lake of Thatta fell into a ditch, Dunya News reported on Sunday. Having been informed, police and rescue teams scrambled to the accident site and shifted the dead and injured to a nearby hospital.

It is reported that the passengers were heading to Keenjhar Lake for picnic when they met the accident. The bus had picked them from Orangi Town, Karachi. Police were investigating and trying to know the exact cause of falling the bus into the ditch. The accident news spread a wave of shock to the people of Orangi Town, who gathered outside the houses of those who lost their lives in the accident.

In the second incident, a passenger bus en route from

Karachi to Mansehra overturned on the National Highway near Tando Masti in Khairpur, leaving three people dead and over 25 injured. Police stated that the bodies and injured were shifted to Gambat Institute of Medical Sciences (GIMS).

The accident was attributed to overspeeding amid heavy rainfall. Such highway accidents are frequent in Pakistan, often caused by driver negligence, overspeeding, and poor road or weather conditions.

## Dist admin launches crackdown on profiteering

LAHORE (APP): The district administration has launched a vigorous city-wide crackdown against profiteering, hoarding, and illegal encroachments in a bid to protect public rights and ensure urban order.

As part of the anti-profiteering drive, Assistant Commissioners and Price Control Magistrates are actively inspecting markets across the city to enforce official price lists.

The action follows clear directives from Deputy Commissioner Syed Musa Raza, who emphasized that public relief remains the administration's foremost priority. "No one will be allowed to exploit citizens through illegal profiteering or hoarding," he said. "We are dealing with such elements with an iron hand, and no leniency will be

shown. Strict action is being taken to eliminate artificial inflation and ensure adherence to government-notified prices", he added. The public has been urged to report incidents of overpricing and hoarding by calling the district control room at 0307-0002345 or reaching out through the DC's official social media platforms.

Meanwhile, a grand anti-encroachment operation is underway throughout Lahore. In a major action, 27 truckloads of illegally placed goods were confiscated from key roads including Mall Road, Circular Road, and Urdu Bazaar. The campaign aims to reclaim public spaces, ensure traffic flow, and restore the city's historic beauty. "Eliminating encroachments is essential for sustainable urban devel-

opment and the well-being of citizens," said Syed Musa Raza. "These operations are being carried out indiscriminately which will continue without any interruption until the city is completely cleared", he said.

The DC said that crackdown was the part of zero-tolerance policy issued by Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif. "We are committed to permanent removal of encroachments and strict enforcement of the law", he said and added that citizens deserve clear roads, accessible public spaces, and fair markets. The DC warned that no one would be allowed to occupy public spaces or manipulate prices at the expense of people. "Upholding the rule of law and protecting public rights will remain our unwavering commitment," he concluded.

### Anti-quackery drive: PHC seals 721 centres

LAHORE (APP): In its anti-quackery drive across the province, the Punjab Healthcare Commission has shut 721 illegal treatment centres during the last five weeks. According to the PHC spokesperson on Sunday, enforcement teams of the PHC raided 2,815 treatment centres. 456 quacks have abandoned quackery. Additionally, the PHC will continue to monitor another 1,386 treatment centres. Of the sealed businesses, most were used as family clinics, while the remaining included medical stores practising quackery, illegal dentists, hakeems, and homoeopathic doctors prescribing allopathic medicines.

In the district of Lahore alone, the PHC teams had sealed 155 illegal treatment centres. Among other districts, 48 were sealed in Sialkot, Narowal 39, Gujranwala 37, Faisalabad 34, Sheikhupura 33, and 30 in Sheikhupura. The PHC spokesperson has also added that so far, the Commission has raided over 222,500 treatment centres, and sealed around 62,000 illegal setups.

### 126 arrested during anti-narcotics operations

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Police have stepped up anti-narcotics operations across the province, and the law-enforcement teams carried out 233 targeted raids on suspected drug dealers' hideouts in the last 24 hours.

According to a spokesperson, the operations resulted in the arrest of 126 individuals involved in drug trafficking, with FIRs registered against all suspects. During the crackdown, police seized 53 kilograms of charas, 11 kilograms of heroin, 6 kilograms of ice (methamphetamine), and 1,277 litres of liquor from the accused.

### Ban on garbage dumping, waste disposal

LAHORE (PPI): Deputy Commissioner Syed Musa Raza has approved "bird-free zones" to mitigate risks posed to aircraft. A complete ban has been imposed on littering, waste dumping, and bird feeding in areas surrounding the airport. The measure aims to reduce bird activity, which poses a serious threat to flights.

This step demonstrates the administration's commitment to enforcing aviation safety protocols. Bird strikes can cause significant damage to aircraft, potentially leading to catastrophic incidents. By controlling factors that attract birds to the area, authorities aim to minimize such risks.

The restrictions encompass all forms of waste disposal and feeding activities that may attract birds near the airport. The administration is expected to outline the specific boundaries of these restricted zones and provide details on penalties for violators. This action follows reports of increased bird activity near the airport, raising concerns among aviation officials.

The new regulations are designed to proactively address this issue and ensure safe air travel.

## Imran, wife facing harsh conditions in jail: PTI

LAHORE (PPI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) senior leader Musarrat Jamsheed Cheema claims that PTI Chairman Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi are facing harsh conditions in jail. Cheema alleges that Bushra Bibi is being harassed to put pressure on Imran Khan.

Cheema also criticized the current government for increasing petrol prices by 14 rupees and diesel prices by 22 rupees in a single month. She accused the ruling

party of hypocrisy, saying that those who expressed sympathy with the public's struggle against inflation are now contradicting their actions after coming to power. She also rejected the government's claims of minimal inflation.

The PTI leader says that the government's claims of progress are causing difficulties and instability instead of prosperity and ease. Pointing to the rising prices of basic necessities like electricity, gas, and

fuel, she said that these are becoming out of reach for ordinary citizens.

She contrasted the government's promises of abundant resources with the reality of citizens cutting back on food.

Cheema concluded her statement by emphasizing Imran Khan's commitment to sacrificing his personal freedom and well-being for the rights of the people. She termed Imran Khan's imprisonment a sacrifice for the same cause.

## PUC declares honour killing un-islamic

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) has issued a strong religious decree declaring honour killings as un-Islamic, anti-Shariah, illegal, and a form of terrorism, calling for strict legal action against the perpetrators under terrorism laws.

In a joint statement issued on Sunday, PUC Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi, along with Maulana Asad Zakariya Qasimi, Maulana Tahir Aqeel Awan, Maulana Muhammad Aslam Siddiqui, Maulana Ashfaq Pitafi, Mufti Umar Farooq, and

others, condemned a recent incident in Balochistan where a woman was reportedly killed in the name of 'honour,' the video of which went viral on social media.

The council demanded the Chief Minister of Balochistan, the Governor, and the Inspector General of Police to immediately arrest those responsible and register cases against them under anti-terrorism laws. "The culprits should be prosecuted in the same area where the crime occurred, and justice must be delivered without delay," the statement read.

The religious scholars emphasized that Islam strictly prohibits honour killings, and such acts are a grave violation of Islamic teachings. "Seeking a woman's consent before marriage is a clear requirement of Shariah, and there are numerous examples of this in Islamic jurisprudence," they added.

The PUC urged the government and judiciary to take honour killings seriously and ensure that such crimes are no longer tolerated in the name of culture or tradition.

## FBR must stop harassing businessmen: PDP

KARACHI (PPI): Pasban Democratic Party Chairman Altaf Shakoor stated that Karachi contributes the most taxes but receives the least attention from the government. He demanded that the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) cease harassing the business community.

He argued that if the government cannot offer incentives to industrialists, it should at least maintain encouraging dialogue. Shakoor criticized the International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s impact on Pakistan, asserting that its conditions have devastated the country.

He highlighted Karachi's significant tax contribution, stating the city receives

minimal support from the government. He warned that continued adherence to IMF dictates will have dire consequences for the country.

Industry and trade are facing difficulties, and government actions are exacerbating the situation. Shakoor advocated for promoting industrial and artisanal development instead of pressuring traders.

He further advised against publicizing police encounters and counterterrorism operations, as these deter investment. He blamed the government for industries closing down or relocating abroad, criticizing the finance minister for imposing increased taxes and strict regulations without offering reciprocal benefits to traders.

Shakoor argued that granting excessive powers to the FBR will cripple the economy. He prioritized eliminating corruption within the FBR. He stated that reducing raw material costs is crucial for trade growth and advocated for appropriate prioritization to foster a robust economy.

Shakoor emphasized that prioritizing industrial expansion in Karachi is essential for Pakistan's development. He highlighted the government's reported 22% unemployment figure and criticized the administration's inaction in addressing this issue. He further condemned the administration for celebrating increased exports while ignoring the problem of brain drain.

## Funding for girls primary school rehabilitation

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Government of the Netherlands, in collaboration with the Sarhad Rural Support Programme (SRSP), has approved funding for the rehabilitation and solarization of a government primary school in Badizai, a suburban area of the provincial capital.

The initiative, facilitated through the dedicated efforts of Chairman Badizai Haji Obaidullah Khan Khalil and the support of the Netherlands Government, aims to improve sanitation facilities and promote a safe, healthy learning environment for schoolchildren—particularly girls.

Following the project's approval, a field visit was conducted by the Badizai Welfare Committee to assess on-ground conditions and engage the local community. The visit was attended by senior SRSP official Sultan Mahmood, technical experts, and community leaders. The primary objective of the visit was to consult the community for the third time as part of the planning process and to ensure transparency in the project's financial management. During the visit, the first installment of funds was officially transferred to the school's Parent-Teacher Council (PTC) account. This disbursement will enable

immediate commencement of the repair and construction of wash blocks and bathroom facilities.

Village elders and community members welcomed the initiative, praising the transparency of the process and expressing satisfaction with the project's progress. Local leaders highlighted that the development will significantly enhance the educational environment and ensure better hygiene and safety for female students.

The Badizai Welfare Committee reiterated its full support for SRSP and expressed hope that similar development initiatives will continue to be introduced for the benefit of the village and its residents.



LAHORE: People buying bags from a vendor's roadside stall in the city. —APP Photo



# Alkhidmat Bano Qabil graduation ceremony held



### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Alkhidmat Bano Qabil graduation ceremony was held on Saturday at Nishtar Hall, Peshawar, where over 10,000 students who completed free IT courses were awarded certificates, and top performers received laptops. The event marked the successful conclusion of the program's first phase and the official launch of Bano Qabil Phase Two, which includes 28 additional advanced courses.

Engineer Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman, Emir Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan and the founding figure behind the Bano Qabil program, presided as chief guest. In his keynote address, he

underscored the urgent need for a unified education system in Pakistan and criticized the state's long-standing neglect of education as a national priority.

"Since independence, education has been divided along class lines, denying equal opportunity to millions," Rehman said. "Public schools have been deliberately weakened, forcing families to turn to expensive private institutions. It's time to change this system."

The Bano Qabil program, run by Alkhidmat Foundation, aims to equip Pakistan's youth who make up over 65 percent of the population with market-relevant IT skills free of charge. In the first

phase, more than 186,000 students applied from across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and over 25,000 appeared in what was the province's largest-ever IT entrance test. The selected 10,000 students completed 16 specialized courses over a three-month period.

During the event, Emir Ji Pakistan Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman, President Alkhidmat Foundation Pakistan Professor Dr Hafizur Rehman, Emir Ji Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Central Abdul Wasi and President Alkhidmat Foundation KP Khalid Waqas inaugurated the second phase of the program, which will now offer a total of 44 IT

courses. They also distributed certificates and laptops to the graduating students.

Alkhidmat Foundation leaders in attendance included Provincial General Secretary Sabir Hussain Awan, District Emir Bahrullah Khan Advocate, General Secretary Shakir Siddiqui, Program Director Mian Sohaibuddin Kakakhel and Alkhidmat district president Arbab Abdul Haseeb. The ceremony was attended by educators, business leaders including Sarhad Chamber Commerce President Fazal Mugeem Khan, social media activists, journalists, students, and their families.

Speaking on the program's growth, Khalid Waqas said, "Bano Qabil has become a model for empowering youth. We're not just offering courses, we're building futures."

In a passionate conclusion, Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman also voiced solidarity with the people of Gaza and Palestine, condemning the ongoing humanitarian crisis and urging the Pakistani government to take a firm moral stand on the international stage.

"Bano Qabil is more than a program-it's a vision for a better Pakistan," he said.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi administering oath from the members of the KP Assembly on reserved seats.

## Kundi terms PTI's reaction to oath-taking a 'new drama'

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Sunday said that the PTI has once again created "a new story" by raising objections to the oath-taking of reserved seat members, despite following constitutional procedures.

Speaking to the media after administering oath to 25 newly notified women and minority members of the KP Assembly, Governor Kundi said that the summary was duly

signed as per the government's request and the tradition of swearing in members according to the agenda was upheld.

He criticized PTI for pointing out a lack of quorum in the assembly session, saying, "Despite their objections, the oath had to be taken. They violate the Constitution and then claim to be wronged."

Referring to the 2008-2013 period, he recalled that former President Asif Ali Zardari ensured unopposed Senate elections in

all four provinces, offering the opposition full authority to decide the process.

Kundi disclosed that a mutual understanding had been reached with the opposition to contest elections on five Senate seats, and the PPP had withdrawn its own candidates accordingly.

"The founding chairman, current chairman, and chief minister all approved the formula. Now they say their candidates are not under control if they can't manage their candidates,

how will they manage their voters?"

The Governor expressed confidence in winning 6 to 7 Senate seats and said that his party could even secure more seats in collaboration with independent candidates.

"These newly sworn-in members will cast their votes tomorrow," he added, saying that the Chief Justice had directed him to administer the oath, and identity cards for these MPs would be issued soon.

## Capacity Building Training held to empower M&E AMOs

PESHAWAR (APP): A week long comprehensive capacity-building training workshop held in the scenic valley of Shogran for Assistant Monitoring Officers of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) that has significantly enhanced their professional capabilities.

Organized by the Directorate General of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), the training was conducted in three batches and focused on strengthening

the technical, analytical, and operational skills of M&E officers.

Sessions included key areas such as KPRA rules, ETEA recruitment processes, the Ten Billion Tree Tsunami Programme, planning cycles, modern monitoring techniques, evaluation methodologies, and technical report writing.

Led by a technical team from M&E Headquarters, the workshop featured expert input from Sajjad

Khan (ADG), Mian Zakiullah (Moderator), and resource persons Akhtar Shahzad and Ejaz Hamid. Logistical and facilitation support was provided by Sultan Khan, Abdul Wahid Shah, Aizaz, and Zeeshan Khan, ensuring smooth execution and an engaging learning environment.

Assistant Monitoring Officers through out the province appreciated the initiative and extended heartfelt gratitude to

Usman Zaman, Director General M&E, for his leadership in organizing the training. Despite logistical challenges, the effort was lauded for its timeliness, relevance, and the boost it provided to team spirit and collaboration within the department.

Participants hailed the workshop as a significant step toward institutional development and expressed hope for more such opportunities in the future.

## Khizer flays Speaker's refusal to administer oath

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Arbab Khizer Hayat, Additional Secretary Information of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), strongly condemned the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Assembly Speaker's refusal to administer the oath to newly elected members of the provincial

assembly. He termed the action a blatant violation of the Constitution and an abandonment of a constitutional duty.

Citing Articles 65 and 127 of the Constitution of Pakistan (1973), Hayat emphasized that it is mandatory for any member of the assembly to formally begin their tenure by taking the oath of office,

which must be administered by the Speaker or an authority nominated by the Speaker.

He stated that the Speaker's refusal has not only set an unconstitutional precedent but has also undermined democratic traditions. "The 'Affirmation/Oath by the Speaker of the Provincial Assembly' is a clear constitutional requirement, and any

deviation from it constitutes a serious breach," he added.

According to him, the Speaker has failed to fulfill his constitutional responsibilities, causing significant damage to institutional balance and public trust. "This conduct tarnishes the image of the assembly and casts doubts over the public's right to representation," he said.

## Province-wide WAPDA protest and sit-in finalized for July 22

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR :In the light of the special instructions of the Chairman of All Pakistan Wapda Hydroelectric Workers Union Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Muhammad Iqbal, Provincial Secretary Noor ul Amin Haiderzai, on July 22, 2025, the provincial secretary Noorul Amin Haiderzai has contacted the regional and zonal representatives of the union to make the province-wide protest successful against the severe shortage of staff in PESCO, TESCO and HAZECO and the employees being made to work for 16 hours instead of 8 hours. Extraordinary delay in recruitment. Problems faced by the meter readers community.

Marriage grant. Closure of scholarship. Non-permanent status of lumsum employees and non-increase in salaries of part-time employees. Preparations are complete for a full-scale protest in all districts in this regard. In the Nizawada House sit-in, including Peshawar, Shabqadar. Workers of Charsadda, Mardan, Swabi, Nowshera, Khyber and Kohat divisions will participate in full force. Also, on the same day, July 22, 2025, WAPDA workers will hold a protest in all district headquarters across the province.

## KP residents grapple with urban sprawl and crumbling amenities

PESHAWAR (APP) Every morning before sunrise, Faraz Ali, a 28-year-old rickshaw driver from the outskirts of Peshawar, straps three empty plastic gallons to the back of his three-wheeler and begins a routine that has become all too common for many low-income families in most areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa ie the search for clean drinking water.

"The water in our village became heavier and unfit for human consumption after the 2022 floods," Faraz told APP, as he waited in line at a TMA (Tehsil Municipal Administration) filtration plant on the city's edge.

"We were left with no choice. I can't risk my children falling ill with water-borne diseases."

For residents like Waheed, the struggle for basic necessities like clean water, reliable sanitation, and passable roads has only intensified in recent years. The 2022 floods, which devastated large swathes of KP, damaged already fragile civic infrastructure in peri-

urban and rural areas. But even three years later, many of those systems remain in disrepair as victims not only of the disaster itself but of chronic neglect and unplanned urban expansion.

As Pakistan's population reached the 250 million mark, urban centers are increasingly buckling under pressure, none more visibly than in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where unplanned expansion and surging migration are straining the very core of civic life.

The influx of people, driven by poverty, unemployment, and the hope of better living conditions, has created a daunting challenge for urban resources.

With the provincial capital Peshawar at the epicenter, the demands on housing, sanitation, education, healthcare, and transportation have reached critical levels.

The provincial capital's woes have been amplified by years of underwhelming urban policy. Experts point to the lack of foresight by successive governments,

particularly under PTI, in addressing basic urban needs. Unplanned housing colonies many built over agricultural land have not only wiped out green belts but also expanded the city's footprint in unsustainable ways.

Dr. Naeem Khattak, former Chairman of the Economics Department at the University of Peshawar, explained the scale of the problem and said that from 1951 to 2017, nearly 14.5 million people migrated from villages to cities. This translates to a yearly influx of around 750,000 people, significantly overburdening essential services.

He cited official figures revealing over 104 illegal housing schemes currently operating in Peshawar alone, cheating residents of their savings and further distorting urban planning.

The lived experience of residents speaks volumes. A walk through the inner neighborhoods of Kohati, Gunj,

Khalasa, Hazarkhwani, and Fagirabad reveals uncovered drains,

overflowing garbage, and foul-smelling water.

"Leaking water pipes and open drains make it impossible to breathe in some areas," said Ali Khan a resident of Kohati gate Peshawar.

"The contaminated water are exposing people to fatal diseases such as hepatitis, cholera, and even polio" he said.

The health implications of failing infrastructure are stark. According to a 2024 report by KP's Health Department, over 70% of water samples collected from informal settlements were contaminated with bacteria or heavy metals. Cases of diarrhea, hepatitis A, and skin infections have increased in these areas — particularly among children.

Dr. Riaz Khan a public health expert warns that the situation could spiral into a full-blown health crisis if immediate action is not taken. "Access to clean water is not a luxury; it's a basic human right. We are creating long-term public health liabilities by ignoring

these communities," she said.

Limited public spaces further deteriorate the urban experience. Historic sites like Wazir Bagh and Shalimar Gardens are now overrun by encroachments. Rickshaws, lacking regulation, clog narrow lanes are making routine movement unbearable.

KP's urban areas, especially Peshawar, Mardan, Swat, and Abbottabad, have seen an unprecedented influx of people over the past decade both from within the province and due to internal displacement caused by natural disasters and regional conflicts.

Urban planners say this influx has outpaced the government's ability to provide basic amenities.

"Unplanned settlements are popping up faster than civic bodies can respond," said Dr Shafiqur Rehman, a former Chairman of Environmental Science Department and development researcher at the University of Peshawar.

"These areas often lack

legal status, making it difficult to extend official services like water pipelines, sewage systems, or garbage collection."

According to KP's Urban Policy Unit, the urban population in the province has grown by more than 40% in the past 15 years. However, investment in public services has not kept pace. In Peshawar alone, dozens of low-income neighborhoods are entirely dependent on private water tankers or nearby filtration plants, many of which are over-stretched.

The Water and Sanitation Services Company (WSSC) sources admitted the sanitation challenges, especially in informal settlements.

"Unplanned construction and the lack of cooperation from residents are overwhelming us," the WSSP officials stated. "Keeping cities clean isn't just our job it requires civic responsibility."

Still, some efforts have borne fruit. A \$44.6 million USAID-backed Municipal Services Program has helped

restore water and sanitation for nearly 2 million residents.

It included replacing 25,700 meters of rusted pipelines, rehabilitating sewerage in 21 urban councils, and upgrading solid waste disposal systems with 575 new vehicles.

Urban sprawl has not stressed human services but it is also harming the environment. Air pollution in Peshawar is now visible to the naked eye and traffic jams was almost a routine matter due to ill planned BRT Corridor.

"Peshawar's green belts were bulldozed for the ill-planned BRT corridor. The project not only created a traffic nightmare but also failed to incorporate any environmental safeguards," Hamza Khan, PMLN KP Nowshera President said claimed.

He said brick kilns and marble factories continue to operate on the city's outskirts, contributing to smog and particulate pollution.

With KP's urban popula-

tion expected to reach 55% of the total within 15 years, experts warn of an even bleaker scenario unless major reforms are enacted.

"We are short of 2.5 million housing units in KP alone," Dr. Naeem Khattak emphasized. "Pakistan needs to build 1.1 million houses annually to keep up with demand."

Hamza criticized past PTI government pledges, highlighting unmet commitments such as a unified education system, 5 million houses, and 350 mini dams all of which remain incomplete.

Experts underline that beyond government action, a cultural shift is necessary. They call upon media, religious leaders, and politicians to educate the public on civic responsibility, resource conservation, and the dangers of unchecked urban growth.

"We need legal, technical, and regulatory reforms," said Dr. Naeem. "But we also need to build a culture that respects the city as a shared home."





## In brief

### Asif holds open court

SIALKOT (APP): Federal Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif held an open court at his residence in Sialkot Cantt area, here on Sunday. He listened to the public problems and complaints and issued orders on various applications for urgent relief. Member Provincial Assembly (MPA) Manshaullah Butt, former mayor Sialkot Municipal Corporation Chaudhry Tauheed Akhtar and others were also present.

### Four profiteers arrested

SARGODHA (APP): The district administration arrested four shopkeepers for profiteering in various parts of the city on Sunday. According to official sources, price control magistrates inspected various markets and found shopkeepers, including Aslam, Javed, Gulzar and Nasir, involved in profiteering. The magistrates lodged cases and also fined them.

### PFA imposes penalty

DG KHAN (INP): The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) imposed Rs. 80,000 penalty on two food outlets including a bakery and an ice-cream shop and discarded expired, non-labeled and banned food items on Sunday. As part of its ongoing crackdown on food adulteration and malpractices across the division, the PFA food safety team raided an ice-cream shop located in Tufailabad, Talpur Road, in Kot Chhattha. The outlet was fined Rs. 30,000 for selling unlabeled ice lollies and maintaining unsanitary conditions, including insect infestation in the processing area. In another raid on Fatahpur Road, Chowk Azam, in Layyah district, a bakery unit was penalised Rs. 50,000 for selling expired products. Authorities confiscated and discarded 400 substandard ice lollies, 20-kg expired food items, and 10-kg banned artificial colour on-the-spot, including a bakery and an ice-cream shop and discarded expired, non-labeled and banned food items on Sunday. As part of its ongoing crackdown on food adulteration and malpractices across the division, the PFA food safety team raided an ice-cream shop located in Tufailabad, Talpur Road, in Kot Chhattha. The outlet was fined Rs. 30,000 for selling unlabeled ice lollies and maintaining unsanitary conditions, including insect infestation in the processing area.

### Cop laid to rest

DG KHAN (APP): Funeral prayers of Dolphin Force personnel Raees Khan, who was martyred in a road accident in Sadar police limits, was held with full state honors. Senior officials including Regional Police Officer (RPO) Capt (R) Sajjad Hassan Khan, Commissioner Ashfaq Ahmed Chaudhry, District Police Officer (DPO) Syed Ali, Deputy Commissioner, political and social figures, and a large number of police personnel and citizens attended the funeral prayers. Floral wreaths were laid on the martyr's body by high-ranking police officials, who also offered prayers for the elevation of his rank in the hereafter. RPO Capt (R) Sajjad Hassan Khan personally met with the bereaved family, extended heartfelt condolences, and paid rich tribute to the late officer. Officers who sacrifice their lives in the line of duty are the pride of our department," said RPO Sajjad. "The police department will take full responsibility for the welfare of the martyr's family."

# New superintendent Kohat Jail introduces reforms

## F.P. Report

KOHAT: The revolutionary steps taken by the newly transferred Superintendent District Jail Kohat Motasim Billah in just two months of his appointment are truly historic.

Few months ago, the hospital, doors, electric boards and other basic facilities of the Jail were severely damaged due to the riot in Kohat Jail but Motasim Billah not only completed all the repairs within no time but also transformed the Jail into a modern, clean, safe and correctional center.

Under his leadership, 3 water Bores and 4 Water Chillers were installed inside the Jail while the environment of the jail was completely changed with the arrangements for cleanliness, whitewashing and beautification.

The electricity system was stabilized by installing two 6-Kilowatt Solar Plants and environmental improvement was done by planting 1250 fruit plants. The jail hospital was equipped with new medical facilities, medicines and other modern facilities, while free medical camps were also arranged.

The prison kitchen was provided with new utensils and the library was decorated with the books and the Holy Quran. Air coolers and solar panels were provided for women and juvenile prisoners.

Moreover, Motasim Billah established the first regular drug rehabilitation center in the Jail, activated a skill training institute, and modernized the laundry system with washing machines. Cleaning of the staff barracks, repair of electrical transformers and wires, and installation of

30 automatic solar lights gave a new look to the prison infrastructure. Vaccination of children staying with female prisoners was done while regular religious sermons formally started in the mosque.

Education and training classes were provided inside the Jail, machinery for cutting trees and grass, and steps were taken towards agricultural self-sufficiency by making barren land cultivable.

All these steps are not just reforms, but a living example of a visionary and sincere leader. Superintendent Motasim Billah has proven that if there is a will for service, a big change can be brought about even in a short span of time. His services are not only commendable but also serve as a beacon of light for all other institutions.

# PDMA Balochistan mobilizes for monsoon emergencies

QUETTA (APP): Amid heightened flood threats during ongoing monsoon, the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Balochistan has launched a province-wide emergency readiness plan, aiming to safeguard lives and property from potential flooding and rain-related disasters.

Speaking to APP, PDMA Director General Jahanzaib Khan confirmed that the government has activated District Disaster Management Authorities, empowered local administrations, and stockpiled vital relief supplies to respond swiftly across vulnerable regions.

He emphasized that clear directives from Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti will ensure accountability, coordination, and a proactive stance in tackling seasonal calamities.

Jahanzaib Khan emphasized that the Balochistan government was fully committed to ensuring swift and effective emergency response across all vulnerable districts.

The PDMA and the Irrigation Department have taken proactive measures to safeguard canals and prevent flooding in the region.

In light of recent heavy rainfall and changing weather patterns, the PDMA has activated district-level emergency teams chaired by Deputy Commissioners (DCs), with participation from key line departments, he said and added that these teams were tasked with leading rescue and rehabilitation efforts during flooding or other emergencies.

The DG PDMA assured immediate release of the Disaster Management funds and pledged the

deployment of PDMA-owned heavy machinery to the districts as needed.

"The DCs, who also head District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMAs) will the authority to utilize the funds in emergency during a crisis," he added.

He said the DG confirmed that DCs have been authorized to hire private machinery for rescue operations, while PDMA's own equipment will also be dispatched to flood-prone areas to ensure readiness.

Jahanzaib Khan said that the Secretaries of C&W and Irrigation departments also pledged their full support, directing their respective XENs to coordinate closely with the district administrations and ensure timely provision of resources.

Jahanzaib Khan highlighted that the Balochistan government has approved a comprehensive contingency plan on June 12, reflecting its proactive stance on disaster preparedness.

"The chief minister has been directed all district administrations to complete emergency preparations based on local weather forecasts," he added.

"Relevant departments including District administration, Health, Irrigation, Police, Livestock and others have been instructed to remain on high alert to avoid any untoward situation.

The PDMA has advised DDMAs to coordinate closely with these agencies to ensure the availability of emergency personnel, inventory and essential supplies at vulnerable locations.

To bolster readiness, the PDMA has stockpiled relief items for over 300

families in each district. These include tents, blankets, groceries, fuel, and machinery, ensuring rapid deployment when needed".

The DG confirmed he will personally oversee rescue and relief operations in affected districts. He also stated that food supplies will be provided on an emergency basis wherever needed.

District Commissioners have been directed to return any unused funds from relief operations and submit machinery back to PDMA offices for inventory and audit purposes. Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti has also commended the performance of PDMA during previous rains and floods, urged continued vigilance and efficiency. Protecting lives and property is our top priority.

The government will provide all necessary resources to ensure effective disaster response, he affirmed.

He stressed for the need to ensure protection of lives and properties of the people while maintaining efficiency of the concerned departments and agencies during calamities.

He assured that the provincial government would provide all necessary resources in this regard.

He said the leaves of PDMA officials have been canceled and all personnel are on high alert to respond to emergency situations unfolding across various areas of the province.

The Director General said that the Chief Minister has issued clear directives, if any department found negligent will face strict action. Each department's responsibilities have been clearly outlined in the contingency plan, he added.



HYDERABAD: A view of Makki Shah's main road submerged with rainwater after heavy rainfall.

## Modern computer lab inaugurated at AMC

ABBOTTABAD (APP): A newly established, state-of-the-art Computer Lab and Student Resource Center was inaugurated at Ayub Medical College (AMC) Abbottabad.

The inauguration was led by Vice Chancellor of Khyber Medical University (KMU) Peshawar, Professor Dr. Zia-ul-Haq, alongside Chairman of the AMC Board of Governors, Professor Dr. Abid Jameel.

The event was attended by Board of Governors (BoG) member Professor Alamzeb Manan, Dean and CEO of AMC Professor Dr. Saqib Malik, Hospital Director Dr. Sajjad Ahmad Afridi, Medical Director Dr. Imran Khan, IT teams of KMU and AMC, as well as heads of various departments.

Speaking at the occasion, Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Zia-ul-Haq expressed his appreciation for the advanced technology setup. He noted that the lab is equipped with high-performance computers, a modern control room, and other digital tools that will significantly improve the examination system.

"This lab marks a new era of transparency in medical education," he said. "Previously, examinations were paper-based. With this facility, we have now transitioned to computer-based testing, ensuring timely results and helping students complete their five-year course within the designated time frame."

Professor Dr. Zia-ul-Haq commended the efforts of the Board of Governors and the Dean of AMC for establishing this high-tech facility and announced that all future examinations would be conducted in the new lab. "Immediate result generation will uphold meritocracy and eliminate delays," he added.

Chairman of the Board of Governors, Professor Dr. Abid Jameel, reiterated the institution's commitment to modernization. "This lab is just the beginning," he said. "We aim to transform AMC into the leading medical institution in the province. Our mission is to provide the best possible facilities to students, faculty, doctors, and the public."

## Gang arrested involved in issuing fake Pakistani IDs

ABBOTTABAD (APP): In a major crackdown on document fraud, the Abbottabad Cantonment Police arrested a group involved in illegally obtaining Pakistani identity cards for Afghan nationals.

The operation was carried out on the special directives of District Police Officer (DPO) Umar Tufail (PSP) and led by SHO Cantt Police Station, Cadet Abdul Ghafoor Qureshi. According to police sources, the arrested suspects have been identified as Saqib, son of Javed, a resident of Islamabad; Naem, son of Abdul Jaleel, from Kehal; Sami, son of Ihsanullah, a citizen of Afghanistan; and Abdul Jaleel, son of Khalil-ur-Rehman.

These individuals were allegedly involved in forging documents to help Afghan nationals fraudulently acquire Pakistani national identity cards.

# Man kills sister-in-law in Lower Dir

## F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: In a shocking incident reported from the Mayar area of Lower Dir, a man allegedly shot dead his sister-in-law and a man on the pretext of "honour."

According to Mayar police, one Munawar, son of Muhammad Zair, a resident of Kotkay opened fire and killed his sister-in-law (N) and a man identified as

Nor ud Din in the name of honour here on Sunday. The accused reportedly suspected the couple of having illicit relations, which he claimed brought disgrace to the family. A minor daughter of Nor ud Din was also injured in the firing.

Upon receiving information, police reached the scene and shifted the bodies to the hospital for medico-legal formalities.

SHO Mayar Police Station, confirmed the incident and said efforts were underway to arrest the suspect, who fled the scene after the crime. He said a case has been registered and further investigation is in progress.

The gruesome incident has sparked fear and concern among the local community, as such honour-related crimes continue to plague the region.

# OMS officially launched in Charsadda



## F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: The Office Management System (OMS) has officially been launched at the District Prosecution Office in Charsadda. With this new system, all information from FIR registration to court verdicts will now be accessible with a single click.

Director General (DG) Public Prosecution, Rubina Haider Bukhari, announced that this system will be extended to all other districts of the province as well.

An inaugural ceremony was held at the District Prosecution Office Charsadda, attended by DG Public Prosecution Rubina Bukhari, District Public Prosecutor (DPP) Charsadda Sangeen Shah,

DPP Peshawar Javed Khan, DPP Mardan, and other prosecutors and deputy prosecutors from various districts.

On this occasion, District Public Prosecutor Sangeen Shah briefed Director Rubina Haidari Bukhari, stating that the OMS will maintain complete records from FIRs to final court decisions. These records will be accessible and retrievable at the click of a button, benefiting both the public and the prosecution department.

He emphasized that prosecutors serve as public defenders, safeguarding citizens' rights, but unfortunately, the public remains largely unaware of this role. He further noted that police, prosecutors, and judiciary are the three key

stakeholders in the justice system, with prosecutors playing a central role - assisting the police on one hand and supporting the judiciary on the other, from the filing of charges to the conclusion of the case. Sangeen Shah also stated that alongside the OMS, the manual procedures will continue as well. He mentioned that the OMS will streamline and track all operations, making case tracking much easier. The public can also obtain information regarding any of their cases from the District Prosecution Office.

DG Public Prosecutor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Rubina Bukhari, praised the new system, calling it an excellent and commendable initiative. She said that with this system, all departmental information will be available at a single click, and steps will be taken to implement the OMS in all districts of the province. The system will ensure transparency in all departmental affairs, she formally inaugurated the OMS and prayed for its success.

# WASA ordered for faster response time

FAISALABAD (APP): Managing Director (MD) Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) Sohail Qadir Cheema has directed all operational staff to further reduce response time for public complaints and maintain full preparedness for rapid drainage operations as additional monsoon spells have been forecast in the coming days.

Chairing a meeting, he said that speedy action and efficient drainage are imperative to provide relief to the citizens during ongoing rainy season. He acknowledged the efforts of operations officers and staff during recent monsoon rains and praised their dedication and responsibility. However, he stressed the need to enhance responsiveness by ensuring that complaints registered by the citizens are addressed without any delay. He directed the field staff to remain high alert to respond promptly to any emerging drainage issues. He also ordered that all disposal stations must remain fully operational at full capacity while dewatering sets and other essential machinery

should be kept in active condition.

These directives came in light of meteorological predictions indicating more rain in the near future which is demanding uninterrupted and timely wastewater management across the city, he added. He also highlighted top priority of the agency and said that providing high-quality drainage services to the public is non-negotiable.

He made it clear that negligence or laziness in addressing drainage-related complaints would not be tolerated at any cost.

# Nine forced laborers rescued, Sarfraz Bugti orders swift action

QUETTA (APP): In a decisive move to uphold human rights, Balochistan's Levies Force rescued nine Hindu laborers from bonded servitude in the Khoda area of Tehsil Naal, District Kalat.

The operation was carried out on orders from Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti, following urgent appeals from Senators Poonjo Mal Bheel and Dhanesh Kumar.

Acting swiftly on the Chief Minister's directive, the Kalat district adminis-

tration led by Commissioner Kalat launched an early morning raid that resulted in the safe recovery of all victims.

The rescued individuals, originally from Sanghar district in Sindh, had been forcibly employed in agricultural fields by influential landlords.

Two suspects, identified as Babu and Dad Muhammad Baloch, were arrested at the scene. Legal proceedings have been initiated, with the provincial government pledging full

accountability. "Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti has issued firm instructions for strict legal action against all involved in this gross violation of human rights," said a hand-out issued by CM's Secretariat.

The rescue has drawn praise from human rights organizations and the Hindu Panchayat, who commended the government's swift response and strong stance against exploitation of minority communities.

# Khyber Festival 2025 kicks off in Jamrud

## F.P. Report

JAMRUD: The Khyber Festival 2025 organised by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) in collaboration with the district sports office kicked with cultural and sports activities at the Jamrud Sports Complex.

The festival aims to promote cultural heritage, youth engagement, and recreational activities for locals, especially youth, women and children.

The event was formally inaugurated by KPCTA project director Ishfaq Khan. Assistant Commissioner Jamrud Fahad Zia, Additional Assistant Commissioner Naseem Ali Shah, District Sports Officer Muhammad Hussain, local officials, journalists, athletes and a large number of spectators.

The opening ceremony featured the national anthem followed by gymnastics, a PT show, and a march-past by local youth. A range of sports competitions were organised, including badminton, basketball, tug of war,

archery, martial arts and physical training demonstrations.

Adding a cultural flair to the event, food stalls offering traditional cuisine and handicraft stalls set up by skilled local women and youth showcased regional crafts, clothing and artwork. A major highlight was the "Cultural Evening," where renowned Pashto singers presented captivating performances.

Popular comedian Syed Rehman Sheno and his team also presented a thought-provoking stage play titled "Haq", aimed at

raising social awareness through humour and drama.

Speaking at the event, Project Director Ishfaq Khan said that the purpose of the festival was not only to entertain but also to guide youth toward positive activities and help foster sustainable peace in the region.

Local elders and participants praised the initiative calling the Khyber Festival a refreshing and positive step for Jamrud, one that enhances the region's identity and offers healthy activities for the community's youth.







# UAE anti-drugs crackdown uncovers global smuggling ring



Asif Ali Yousafzai

ABU DHABI: As the world moves rapidly toward modernity and development, it continues to face grave threats that undermine not just personal safety, but societal well-being. One such serious threat was recently dismantled in the United Arab Emirates, where Sharjah Police uncovered a transnational narcotics operation, exposing the dark underbelly of global drug trafficking networks.

This network operated from the coastal regions of Canada and Spain, extending its reach into UAE ports. In a precise and highly coordinated operation, Sharjah Police seized 131 kilograms of narcotic and psychotropic substances, arresting seven individuals, including an

Arab national who shockingly used his wife and two children as cover for the illicit trade.

The investigation began when the authorities flagged the primary suspect due to his repeated suspicious entries into the UAE. With the suspect placed under discreet surveillance, police traced his movements and uncovered meetings with local accomplices. This surveillance led to a series of successful raids, culminating in the arrest of all involved.

The main accused confessed to smuggling drugs with the active involvement of his spouse, using geolocation-based drop points for internal distribution. Five additional individuals of Asian origin were found to be part of the syndicate, engaged in

receiving, promoting, and selling the drugs within the region. The operation also led to the recovery of 9,945 illicit capsules, various tools, and promotional materials-revealing the operation's disturbing scale and sophistication.

This decisive crackdown follows a key diplomatic meeting held days earlier in Abu Dhabi, where Pakistan's Federal Minister for Interior and Narcotics Control, Mohsin Naqvi, met with UAE's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Lieutenant General Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Their discussions focused on bilateral cooperation in security, counter-narcotics, intelligence sharing, and regional stability.

While diplomatic in nature, the timing and outcomes of the meeting

underline its practical impact. The recent Sharjah operation is already being seen as an early success of enhanced cross-border collaboration, underscoring the importance of international coordination in tackling transnational threats.

Speaking on the matter, Brigadier Majid Sultan Al Asam, Director of Sharjah Police's Anti-Narcotics Department, reaffirmed that the force remains resolute in the face of such threats. He emphasized that this operation is part of a national zero-tolerance policy against drugs, carried out in coordination with international law enforcement partners.

This case is a stark reminder of the human cost of greed. It is tragic when individuals not only risk their own lives but also exploit their families-and by extension, endanger future generations-for temporary financial gain.

The message is clear: crime may bring fleeting rewards, but its consequences are lasting and often devastating. As a society, we must not only recognize the courage and effectiveness of law enforcement but also invest in education, moral values, and public awareness. A safe, ethical, and drug-free society is a shared responsibility-not only of the police and government, but of each and every one of us.



HONG KONG, CHINA: A train departure screen lists trains as cancelled at Hong Kong West Kowloon Station as Typhoon Wipha approaches on Sunday in Hong Kong, China.

## Pope Leo XIV urges immediate end to 'barbarity' of Gaza war

CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy (AFP): Pope Leo XIV slammed the "barbarity" of the war in Gaza on Sunday and urged against the "indiscriminate use of force," just days after a deadly strike by Israel's military on a Catholic church.

"I once again ask for an immediate end to the barbarity of the war and for a peaceful resolution to the conflict," Leo said at the end of the Angelus prayer at Castel Gandolfo, the papal summer residence near Rome.

The pope, who spoke by telephone with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu the morning after Thursday's strike, spoke of his "deep sorrow" for the attack on the Holy Family Church.

The church was sheltering around 600 displaced people, the majority of them children and including dozens of people with special needs.

Israel expressed "deep sorrow" over the damage and civilian casualties,



adding that the military was investigating the strike.

"This act, unfortunately, adds to the ongoing military attacks against the civilian population and places of worship in Gaza," Leo said on Sunday.

"I appeal to the international community to observe humanitarian law and respect the obligation

to protect civilians, as well as the prohibition of collective punishment, the indiscriminate use of force, and the forced displacement of populations," he added.

The Israeli military on Sunday issued an evacuation order for Palestinians in the central Gaza Strip, warning of imminent action against Hamas militants.

Most of Gaza's population of more than two million people have been displaced at least once during the war, which is now in its 22nd month.

The pope also expressed his "sympathy" for the plight of "beloved Middle Eastern Christians" and their "sense of being able to do little in the face of this dramatic situation."

## Eritrean president warns Ethiopia against waging war

NAIROBI (AFP): Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki has warned neighbor Ethiopia against launching a new war between the bitter foes, with tensions high in the Horn of Africa region.

Eritrea and Ethiopia have had fraught relations since the former declared independence in 1993, with tens of thousands of people killed in a war between the two from 1998 to 2000.

At the heart of the current tension, according to the Eritrean government, is landlocked Ethiopia's long-held desire for a seaport.

Afwerki, who has ruled Eritrea with an iron fist since independence, warned Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed that

he would not be able to simply overwhelm his country by weight of numbers — Ethiopia's population is 130 million, compared to just 3.5 million people living in Eritrea.

"If he thinks he can overwhelm (Eritrean forces) with human wave attack, (he is mistaken)," Afwerki told state television channel Eri-TV.

"Before dragging the people of Ethiopia into unwanted wars or using them for another political agenda, the country's internal problems must be first addressed and solved," he said.

He called Abiy's actions a "reckless" attempt to "divert attention" from domestic problems.

Abiy signed a peace deal with Afwerki shortly after coming to power in 2018, but a violent conflict erupted in Ethiopia's Tigray province from 2020 to 2022 as Eritrea's forces backed rebels there fighting Ethiopian troops.

At least 600,000 people were killed in the conflict, according to an African Union estimate.

Although a peace deal ended the fighting, Eritrea has maintained a military presence in Tigray and relations between the neighbors have deteriorated.

Abiy has repeatedly said Ethiopia must have access to the sea, but by peaceful means.

Last month, a report by a US monitoring group

accused Eritrea of rebuilding its army and destabilizing its neighbors.

Eritrean Information Minister Yemane Ghebremeskel criticized the report by NGO The Sentry and blamed "the new tension in the region" on Ethiopia.

Eritrea had been under US arms sanctions that were lifted after the 2018 peace deal.

Eritrea is a single-party state which consistently ranks among the worst in the world for rights — in last place for press freedom, according to Reporters Without Borders, and 175th out of 183 for human development in 2022, according to the United Nations.

## Greeks mourn, Turks celebrate anniversary of invasion



NICOSIA (Reuters): Greek and Turkish Cypriots marked on Sunday the 51st anniversary of Turkey's 1974 invasion of Cyprus, an event that split the island and remains a source of tension between NATO partners Greece and Turkey.

Air raid sirens sounded across the southern Greek Cypriot-populated parts of Cyprus at 5:30 a.m. (0230 GMT), the exact time when Turkish troops landed on the northern coast in a military intervention triggered by a brief Greece-inspired coup.

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan was due to attend celebrations in north Cyprus, a breakaway state recognised only by Ankara.

Cyprus President Nikos Christodoulides attended a memorial service in the south to commemorate the more than 3,000 people who died in the Turkish invasion, which also drove tens of thousands of Greek Cypriots from their homes. "Despite those who want us to forget, we will never forget, or yield an inch of land," Christodoulides said, calling celebrations in the

north "shameful".

Efforts to reunify Cyprus as a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation have repeatedly failed amid deep-rooted mistrust and competing visions for the island's future.

Before the invasion, clashes between Turkish and Greek Cypriots saw Turkish Cypriots withdraw from a power-sharing government and prompted the deployment of U.N. peacekeepers in 1964.

Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar said the invasion had brought "peace and tranquility" to the island following the "dark-

est years" for Turkish Cypriots.

"Their (Greek Cypriots) goal was to destroy the Turkish Cypriots," he said in a video address posted on X.

The simmering conflict complicates Turkey's ambitions to foster closer ties with the European Union, of which both Cyprus and Greece are members.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said last week the two sides would continue discussions on trust-building measures, warning that "there is a long road ahead".

## Japan PM laments 'harsh' election result as upper house control slips

TOKYO (Reuters): Japan's shaky ruling coalition is likely to lose control of the upper house, exit polls showed after Sunday's election, potentially heralding political turmoil as a tariff deadline with the United States looms.

While the ballot does not directly determine whether Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba's minority government falls, it heaps pressure on the embattled leader who also lost control of the more powerful lower house in October.

Ishiba's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and coalition partner Komeito need 50 seats to secure the 248-seat upper chamber in an election where half the seats were up for grabs. They are forecast to hold 32 to 51 seats, the exit poll by public broadcaster NHK showed.

Other broadcasters forecast the ruling coalition would return 41-43 seats. If the coalition drops below 46 seats, it would mark its worst result since it was formed in 1999.

That comes on top of its worst showing in 15 years in October's lower house election, a vote which has left Ishiba's administration vulnerable to no-confi-

dence motions and calls from within his own party for leadership change.

Speaking two hours after polls closed to public broadcaster NHK, Ishiba said he "solemnly" accepted the "harsh result".

Asked whether he intended to stay on as prime minister and party leader, he said "that's right".

"We are engaged in extremely critical tariff negotiations with the United States...we must never ruin these negotiations. It is only natural to devote our complete dedication and energy to realizing our national interests," he later told TV Tokyo.

Japan, the world's fourth largest economy, faces a deadline of August 1 to strike a trade deal with the United States or face punishing tariffs in its largest export market.

The main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party is projected to win 18 to 30 seats, from 22 held previously, NHK's exit poll showed.

The far-right Sanseito party, birthed on YouTube a few years ago, has been the surprise package with its 'Japanese First' campaign and warnings about a

"silent invasion" of foreigners. It is forecast to win 10-15 seats in the chamber, up from one held previously, yet it holds only three seats in the lower house.

Opposition parties advocating for tax cuts and welfare spending have struck a chord with voters, the exit polls showed, as rising consumer prices - particularly a jump in the cost of rice - have sowed frustration at the government's response.

"The LDP was largely playing defence in this election, being on the wrong side of a key voter issue," said David Boling, a director at consulting firm Eurasia Group.

"Polls show that most households want a cut to the consumption tax to address inflation, something that the LDP opposes. Opposition parties seized on it and hammered that message home."

The LDP has been urging for fiscal restraint, with one eye on a very jittery government bond market, as investors worry about Japan's ability to refinance the world's largest debt pile.

Sanseito, which first emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic

spreading conspiracy theories about vaccinations and a cabal of global elites, has dragged once-fringe political rhetoric into the mainstream and gained wider support among frustrated voters.

It remains to be seen whether the party can follow the path of other far-right parties with which it has drawn comparisons, such as Germany's AfD and Reform UK.

"I am attending graduate school but there are no Japanese around me. All of them are foreigners," said Yu Nagai, a 25-year-old student who voted for Sanseito earlier on Sunday.

"When I look at the way compensation and money are spent on foreigners, I think that Japanese people are a bit disrespected," Nagai said after casting his ballot at a polling station in Tokyo's Shinjuku ward.

Japan, the world's oldest society, saw foreign-born residents hit a record of about 3.8 million last year.

That is still just 3% of the total population, a much smaller fraction than in the United States and Europe, but comes amid a tourism boom that has made foreigners far more visible across the country.

## Vietnam hunts four missing after sudden thunderstorm capsized tourist boat

HALONG BAY/HANOI (Reuters): Dozens of rescuers were scrambling in Vietnam on Sunday to trace four missing people after retrieving the bodies of dozens killed when a thunderstorm capsized a boat in the top tourist destination of Halong Bay, authorities said.

Despite a calm sea, rescuers, from police and border guards to divers and navy personnel, were battling limited visibility hours before the expected landfall of Typhoon Wipha, which is now approaching Hong Kong.

The government said rescuers had managed to retrieve the sunken boat and revised down the death toll to 35 from an initial 38 on Saturday, while cutting an estimate of those aboard



to 49 from 53, though officials fear the toll could still rise.

All the tourists aboard were Vietnamese, including several children, the official Vietnam News Agency said.

"My brother can swim, but I was told everything happened too fast," Tran Trung Tu, 39, whose sibling was 32, told Reuters at a funeral parlour on

Sunday.

The accident was one of the worst in recent years in the UNESCO-protected archipelago of thousands of limestone islands about 200 km (125 miles) northeast of Hanoi, which draws tens of thousands of visitors each year.

The sudden thunderstorm turned the sky dark in a matter of minutes, felling trees in the capital of

Hanoi, where officials at the Noi Bai international airport said nine flights were diverted and three departures temporarily halted.

"It is the first time I have experienced an accident with so many casualties here," said insurance agent Do Thi Thuy.

A tour boat sank in Halong Bay in 2011, killing 12, with some foreign tourists among them.

The government said the accident was caused by a "sudden" storm. Strong winds, heavy rain and lightning were reported around the time of the event, at 2 p.m. on Saturday.

"I was told life vests were available, but it was too sudden," said Do Van Hai, 42, a Halong resident. "Hopefully, the missing ones will be found soon."



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# Goal of high-tech self-reliance unchanged

THE US government has intensified its crackdown on China's high-tech industry in recent years claiming it poses a threat to US "national security".

But in reality, by restricting exports of high-end chips to China, it is trying to make sure it dominates the development of artificial intelligence technology. Washington has also placed many Chinese high-tech companies including advanced chip producers on its blacklist, preventing them from using US semiconductor manufacturing technology and designs.

China firmly opposes the US' moves, calling them unilateral bullying and economic coercion that aim to "maliciously block and suppress Chinese businesses" and has called on the US to stop politicizing science and technology cooperation which is in the interests of both countries.

It was against this backdrop that Nvidia Chief Executive Officer Jensen Huang visited Beijing this week, announcing on Tuesday that the world's top AI chip maker will resume supplying China with its H20 chips in the coming months, having been given the green light to do so. He also said that the company is looking to bring more advanced semiconductors to the world's second-largest technology market.

The H20 chips are a less powerful version of Nvidia's AI processing units designed specifically for export to China following the US administration's implementation of its advanced chips export ban. But Nvidia still has to solicit the US administration's permission to ship the chips to China. "The US government has assured Nvidia that licenses will be granted, and Nvidia hopes to start deliveries soon," the company said.

The news certainly comes as a boon for Nvidia, given the Chinese market's importance to the company's business. "The Chinese market is massive, dynamic and highly innovative, and it's also home to many AI researchers," Huang said on Tuesday. The country generated \$17 billion in revenue for Nvidia in the fiscal year ending Jan 26, approximately 13 percent of its total sales, according to its latest annual report. Nvidia has also said that US sales restrictions on its chips in China would cost the company about \$5.5 billion.

The adjustment of the US' export restrictions can be attributed to the easing of trade tensions between the world's top two economies. US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said on Tuesday the planned resumption of sales of H20s to China is part of the US' bargaining negotiations on rare earths supplies from China, though he did not provide any additional details.

But Huang's consistent argument that Nvidia's leading position could slip away if the company cannot sell to the Chinese market has been echoed by many US industry leaders. This is because Chinese high-tech companies have never given up despite the challenges they face from the US export restrictions, and have continued to be competitive with their US peers.

Take Huawei for example. The major Chinese firm targeted by the US with sanctions has reportedly made breakthroughs in the manufacturing of its own AI chips and smartphone processors. Its Ascend 910C and upcoming Ascend 920 chips are reportedly poised to fill a void left by US tech export restrictions that have curbed China's access to top-tier US chips from companies such as Nvidia.

This may explain why some have seen Washington's policy adjustment as a calculated move to limit Huawei's AI chip prowess. White House science and technology advisor David Sacks was very direct when explaining why the US now lets Nvidia sell less-advanced chips, which he described as a pragmatic choice to maintain a commercial foothold in China. "We're not selling our latest, greatest chips to China, but we can deprive Huawei of basically having this giant market share in China," he told the media.

In the face of the US' sanctions on Chinese high-tech companies, China has no other choice but to make steady progress in developing homegrown chips and operating systems to reduce its reliance on foreign technologies. No matter how the US policies in regard to high-tech restrictions evolve, China will continue to make relentless efforts to achieve greater self-reliance and strength in the tech field. It is a path that the nation must take in a bid to achieve breakthroughs in "stranglehold technologies" in its modernization drive.

What has been happening in China as a result of the US restrictions on sales of advanced AI chips to the country demonstrates the old adage that what doesn't kill you makes you stronger.

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New Syria...



# Trump's big beautiful police state is here

Belén Fernández

On July 4, United States President Donald Trump signed into law his so-called "One Big Beautiful Bill", which will reduce taxes for the rich, punish the poor, and otherwise propel American plutocracy to ever more noxious heights.

Just days earlier, Trump's Vice President JD Vance took to X to underline the key component of the legislation: "Everything else — the CBO [Congressional Budget Office] score, the proper baseline, the minutiae of the Medicaid policy — is immaterial compared to the ICE money and immigration enforcement provisions."

Indeed, the bill allocates the unprecedentedly ludicrous sum of \$175bn to anti-immigration efforts, approximately \$30bn of which will go directly to the notorious federal law enforcement agency ICE, known in long form as US Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Another \$45bn is earmarked for the construction of new immigration detention centres, which, as the American Immigration Council notes, "represents a 265 percent annual budget increase to ICE's current detention budget". Thanks to these budgetary machinations, ICE now occupies the position of the largest US federal law enforcement agency in history, with more money at its annual disposal than the military of any country in the world apart from the US and China.

Given that ICE agents have as of late made a name for themselves running around in masks and kidnapping people, however, one would be forgiven for seeing this sudden windfall to the agency as something less than, um, "beautiful".

Of course, the fanatical increase in ICE funding is no surprise coming from a president whose obsession with the idea of deporting millions of people has not prompted him to contemplate how, precisely, a US economy fundamentally dependent on undocumented labour will continue to function in the absence of said labourers.

Anyway, the arrangement means big bucks for the detention-industrial complex, including detention companies like GEO Group and CoreCivic that are contracted by ICE. A July 4 Washington Post article on ICE's impending

"detention blitz" reported that each company coincidentally happened to donate half a million dollars to Trump's inauguration in January.

The Post article also provided other clues as to how US "democracy" really works: "On calls with Wall Street analysts this year, Geo Group executives have primed shareholders for a government contract bonanza that could boost annual revenue by more than 40 percent and profits by more than 60 percent."

But since the government cannot come right out and say this is all about money, it has to invent other narratives, such as that ICE is protecting the US from "vicious criminal illegal aliens". Never mind

**The arrangement means big bucks for the detention-industrial complex, including detention companies like GEO Group and CoreCivic that are contracted by ICE. A July 4 Washington Post article on ICE's impending "detention blitz" reported that each company coincidentally happened to donate half a million dollars to Trump's inauguration in January. The Post article also provided other clues as to how US "democracy" really works: "On calls with Wall Street analysts this year, Geo Group executives have primed shareholders for a government contract bonanza that could boost annual revenue by more than 40 percent and profits by more than 60 percent."**

that the vast majority of those detained by the agency have no criminal record whatsoever.

Among ICE's ever-growing list of victims is a six-year-old Honduran boy with leukaemia, who was arrested in late May at the Los Angeles immigration courthouse where he had come with his family for a scheduled asylum hearing. This month, massive ICE raids on two California farms resulted in more than 360 arrests and the death of 57-year-old Jaime Alanis, a Mexican farmworker who fell from a greenhouse roof during the upheaval.

Nor are all of ICE's detainees undocumented;

after all, it is hard to be discerning when you are scrambling to meet detention quotas, and when you are well aware of the fact that you are totally above the law. One of the detainees from the farm raids was 25-year-old security guard George Retes, a US Army veteran, no less, who was pepper-sprayed and then jailed for three days, missing his three-year-old daughter's birthday party. He was released with no explanation.

Now imagine the landscape with an additional \$175bn in "ICE money and immigration enforcement provisions", to borrow Vance's words.

As if manic and arbitrary detention operations and the elimination of due

GEO Group — all because she had co-authored an article for the university newspaper the previous year expressing solidarity with Palestinians.

In a new essay for Vanity Fair, Ozturk reflects on her 45-day detention in appalling conditions that were only made bearable thanks to the solidarity of her fellow female detainees, hailing from an array of nations. Ozturk writes: "One time, an officer came and took away all the cookie boxes, claiming we would use them to make weapons. Another time, we were shocked to witness an officer physically push two women in the kitchen."

When Tim Walz, the governor of Minnesota, recently had the nerve to refer to ICE as "Trump's modern-day Gestapo", the US Department of Homeland Security threw a tantrum over his "dangerous rhetoric", and issued a press release asserting that, "while politicians like Gov. Walz fight to protect criminal illegal aliens, ICE officers will continue risking their lives to arrest murderers, kidnappers, and pedophiles".

This was itself "dangerous rhetoric", no doubt, coming from the folks who are kidnapping doctoral students, six-year-old leukaemia patients, army veterans, and so on.

Although undocumented workers might be the most immediate and visible victims of the super-funding of ICE stipulated by the One Big Beautiful Bill, the consequences for US society as a whole cannot be understated. At the end of the day, a rogue agency snatching people off the street while entire communities live in fear does not denote a "land of the free", particularly when the president appears to view anyone who disagrees with him as potentially eligible for criminal punishment.

Aaron Reichlin-Melnick, a senior fellow at the American Immigration Council, has observed that "you don't build the mass deportation machine without building the police state first". And if we consider the Cambridge dictionary entry for police state — "a country in which the government uses the police to severely limit people's freedom" — it seems the US already fits the definition to a big beautiful T.

# Appeals and negotiations won't make Israel stop starving Gaza

Daoud Kuttab

On July 17, the Israeli army bombed the sole Catholic church in Gaza, killing three people and injuring at least 10. The parish priest, Gabriele Romanelli, who used to have almost daily calls with the late Pope Francis, was among the wounded.

After the attack, there were statements of condemnation. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni called it "unacceptable". Pope Leo said he was "deeply saddened" by it — a statement many saw as "vague" and "cowardly".

The Israeli government was quick to declare it "regretted" the attack.

Amid the global outrage, the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem was able to negotiate for church officials to visit the Christian community, deliver limited food and medicine to both Christian and Muslim families, and evacuate some of the injured for treatment outside Gaza.

These humanitarian actions, while welcomed by those in dire need in Gaza, are yet another sign of international failure. Why must the delivery of food, water and medicine be "earned" through negotiation? Why are basic rights enshrined in international law subject to political bargaining?

Palestinians deeply appreciate the church leaders' efforts. Their actions reflect compassion and moral clarity. But such steps should not be necessary. Under international humanitarian law, occupying powers have binding obligations to the people under their control. Securing access to food, water, medicine and critical services cannot be charitable favours — they are legal duties.

The 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention and the 1907 Hague Regulations clearly state that civilians in occupied territory must be protected and provided with essential services, especially when the occupying power controls access to borders, infrastructure and life-sustaining resources. Blocking or delaying aid isn't just inhumane — it amounts to a war crime.

International law also forbids the occupying power from forcibly transferring the local population or settling its own citizens on occupied land — practices that Israel continues in Gaza and the West Bank with impunity.

The occupier must ensure uninterrupted humanitarian access free from delay, political conditions or coercive trade-offs.

Israel has failed to comply on all these counts. But instead of facing consequences for its use of collective punishment, starvation tactics and attacks on civilian infrastructure — churches, hospitals, bakeries, schools — Israel receives concessions in exchange for promising to comply with basic legal norms. These "deals" are then spun as diplomatic "successes" by the powers that engage in them.

During a recent lecture in Amman, the European Union's ambassador to Jordan, Pierre-Christophe Chatzivasvas, revealed as much. According to him,

EU "discussions" about taking action on Israel's failure to comply with human rights provisions of the EU-Israel partnership agreement led to "effective political pressure". As a result, Israel "agreed" to allow increased food and aid deliveries, fuel for electricity and desalination, infrastructure repairs, the reopening of humanitarian corridors through Egypt and Jordan, and access for UN aid workers and observers.

This agreement led to the shelving of 10 proposed sanctions by the EU. Amnesty International described the move as a "cruel and unlawful betrayal" of its stated principles.

The problem with this "deal" is that Israel is failing to implement it, just like with all others before it. According to EU sources quoted in the media, Israel allows just 80 trucks per day to go in, when Gaza needs more than 500.

Whether 80 trucks indeed enter and how much of this aid actually reaches its intended recipients is unclear.

Gangs regularly attack aid convoys, and the Israeli army shoots at anyone trying to protect these trucks from looters.

Various agencies and organisations are ringing alarm bells about the epidemic of malnutrition killing children on a daily basis. Famine is real even if the UN, under pressure, is not yet willing to declare it.

Meanwhile, Israeli forces and foreign mercenaries continue to kill people seeking aid at distribution sites operated by the Israeli-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), which was set up to take away the functions of United Nations agencies, most notably UNRWA, its aid agency for Palestinian refugees. Nearly 900 people have been killed at these sites since GHF's operations began in late May.

If the EU as a whole will not act, individual member states still bear legal responsibility. At a minimum, European countries should suspend arms transfers, ban trade with illegal settlements and end cooperation with institutions complicit in the occupation and apartheid. These are not optional political stances. They are legal obligations. And this applies to the rest of the world.

The danger of appealing to Israel to allow in aid instead of forcing it to do so through sanctions is clear: When war crimes are overlooked in exchange for temporary relief, impunity becomes normalised. Starvation becomes an acceptable weapon of war. Civilian lives turn into bargaining chips.

The international community — including the EU, church institutions and world leaders — must continue to extend compassion and aid. But this must not replace justice. Mercy should be paired with resolve: Israel must be held to its legal and moral obligations. Palestinians — Christian and Muslim — must not be treated as pawns but as human beings entitled to dignity, safety and peace.

# North Africa must look south to boost trade

Audrey Verdier-Chouchane

Rising tariffs, geopolitical fragmentation, and persistent supply chain disruptions are roiling international trade. The World Trade Organization projects a 0.2 percent contraction in the global goods trade during 2025, which could deepen to 1.5 percent if tensions escalate.

UN Trade and Development warns that policy uncertainty is eroding business confidence and will slow global growth to 2.3 percent in 2025. Against this backdrop, developing economies are under mounting pressure to diversify partnerships and reduce external dependencies.

The pressure is particularly acute in North Africa. The region, comprising Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, and Tunisia, has long been tethered to European economic cycles. In 2023, the EU accounted for 45.2 percent of North Africa's trade, making the region vulnerable to any slowdown in

European demand. At the same time, North Africa has played a marginal role in international commerce, accounting for only 3.7 percent of global trade in 2023.

But this moment of uncertainty also represents a strategic opportunity for North Africa to look southward toward the fast-growing markets of Sub-Saharan Africa, which currently account for just 2.4 percent of North Africa's total trade.

As I, and others, argued nearly a decade ago, stronger economic ties within the continent could reshape regional growth trajectories. That continues to be true today. With economic growth in Sub-Saharan Africa estimated at 3.7 percent in 2024 and projected to rise to 4 percent in 2025, the rest of the continent offers many opportunities to North African businesses as an emerging market for manufactured exports, and as a region for the expansion of value chains.

North African products, particularly from the automotive, fisheries, food processing, pharmaceuticals, and textiles sectors, would likely be well received in Sub-Saharan Africa, owing to their higher quality and competitive prices.

Some progress has been made toward increasing intra-African trade and North Africa's role in it. Morocco recently became the continent's leading automobile exporter, for example, with sales of \$6.4 billion in 2023. Many of these cars went to West Africa, in part as a result of regional free-trade agreements.

Some North African countries belong to economic communities in other regions, including the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, and the Community of Sahel-Saharan States. But it is the ambitious African Continental Free Trade Area, or AfCFTA,

the free trade area on regional economies, using the Global Trade Analysis Project model, suggests that this is especially true for North Africa.

Under every scenario, North Africa's gross domestic product, and its components, are projected to increase by 2031. The region's full integration with Sub-Saharan Africa would bring the largest gains in trade (5.5 percent) and GDP (0.77 percent). The study also predicts that implementing AfCFTA will lead to a decline in poverty and an increase in wages for both skilled and unskilled workers in the region.

The main downside of AfCFTA is in the fiscal domain. The African Development Bank study anticipates a reduction of customs revenues in North African countries; the least affected will be those that have already entered into bilateral free-trade agreements, or have relatively high levels of economic

diversification and strong productive capacities.

There are also major barriers to realizing the potential of intracontinental trade, including inadequate infrastructure, tariff-harmonization challenges, and limited institutional coordination across Africa's regional economic communities. But given the overall potential benefits, North African economies should make implementation of AfCFTA a high priority. Enhanced intra-African trade flows would promote further economic diversification, job creation, investment, and GDP growth, generating long-term prosperity and private sector development in North Africa.

In a fracturing global economy, regional solidarity has taken on new importance. By fully committing to AfCFTA and strengthening ties with partners in Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa can chart a new path toward inclusive, resilient, and sustainable growth



# Why EU’s ties with China are likely to remain tense

Andrew Hammond

Relations between the EU and China last reached a mini-high during Donald Trump’s disruptive first presidency, when Beijing and Brussels agreed a Comprehensive Agreement on Investment. However, bilateral ties have not warmed during Trump’s second term in the White House, despite the US president threatening to instigate several new trade wars with his tariff policies.

Certainly, the mood between the EU and China is generally constructive and both sides are keen to showcase some achievements in relations during this landmark year, which marks the 50th anniversary of bilateral ties. This includes during their upcoming annual summit on July 24, when European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Antonio Costa will hold talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang.

Both sides stress that they have no insuperable conflicts of interest, and instead share common economic and political interests that are deepening. Underneath this high diplomacy, however, growing challenges are chilling relations, including the issue of the war in Ukraine.

Take the example of rare earths. This is a topic on which von der Leyen and Costa will this week urge

China to end restrictions that require EU-based exporters to secure licenses from Beijing, which controls more than 90 percent of the global processing capacity for these key metals. During the G7 Summit in June, von der Leyen accused China of “coercion” and “blackmail” over the measures, asserting that “no single country should control 80-90 percent of the market for essential raw materials and downstream products like magnets.”

On the economic front, China’s trade surplus with the EU hit a record high in May, and now stands at about &euro;400 billion (\$465 billion). One of the steps the EU has taken in response is to levy tariffs of up to 35 percent on Chinese electric vehicles, citing unfair subsidies. Beijing retaliated with inquiries into the European dairy and brandy sectors.

In the face of these proliferating challenges, von der Leyen, Costa, and other top EU officials are trying to build a broader, bloc-wide stance on China. This reflects the fact that Brussels has struggled at times to find common purpose across all 27 EU member states on the issue, especially those such as Hungary that are more sympathetic to Beijing.

Worse still, leading EU officials have become

increasingly concerned in recent years about whether the nature of China’s external interventions in Europe represent a strategy of divide-and-rule in an attempt to undermine the continent’s collective interests.

The former EU foreign affairs chief, Joseph Borrell, even asserted that Beijing was a “systemic rival that seeks to promote an alternative model of governance” to that of Europe. Von der Leyen said more recently that “China has an entirely different system” with “unique instruments at its disposal to play outside the rules.”

The backstory to this is that Europe is becoming an increasingly important foreign policy focal point for Beijing, economically and politically. The rising superpower had generally enjoyed growing influence across much of the region, at least until the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the past five years, however, since the pandemic and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, relations have become chillier. This has affected issues such as climate cooperation, with doubts reported about whether Beijing and Brussels will sign a joint climate action pledge during their upcoming summit, despite the precedent of previous important collaboration in this area.

Brussels has therefore sought to unite the bloc around a stronger policy toward China, with von der Leyen taking the lead on the issue, even though the role of European Commission president does not include any formal foreign policy mandate.

While the EU still deeply values its relationship with China, the direction of travel for policy on Beijing appears to be moving in a more hawkish direction. Even on issues in which breakthroughs have been made with China over the past five years, such as the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment in 2020, ratification of this key economic deal has stalled for years in the European Parliament as a result of deteriorating relations.

A central challenge for von der Leyen, however, remains the splits within the 27-member bloc regarding views on Beijing. It is too simplistic to characterize this as an East-West dichotomy within the region, not least because Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban is perhaps China’s biggest cheerleader in the EU.

There are nonetheless differences in outlook, primarily between hawkish Eastern European nations such as the Czech Republic, Poland, and

Lithuania, versus Western counterparts such as France and Spain that do much more bilateral business with China. The positions of those Western European nations can be particularly problematic for Brussels, given that both Paris and Madrid want extensive economic engagement with China to continue.

The longstanding, deep business ties between Paris and Beijing are widely documented, so it is no surprise that President Emmanuel Macron is sometimes more equivocal than von der Leyen on the issue of China.

During a joint visit with her to Beijing in 2023, the French president raised eyebrows in Europe by taking a large business delegation with him. He also utilized the language of economic reciprocity, rather than the European Commission president’s preferred choice of “derisking,” and did not appear to put significant pressure on China regarding its support for Russia in Ukraine.

This challenging context underlines why the upcoming summit might underdeliver on even the low expectations that surround it. Overall EU relations with China are likely to remain chilly for the foreseeable future, and could yet go into a deep freeze during von der Leyen’s second term as European Commission president.

# Support for Palestinian statehood gathers momentum

Yossi Mekelberg

In many European countries, official recognition of a Palestinian state is an excruciatingly slow process, more so than it should be. Despite mounting pressure from parliamentarians, civil society organizations and the wider public, many governments remain cautious, including British and the French authorities who have already expressed support for such a move.

Their caution, even fear, before taking such a crucial decision is harming their own national interests, violates natural justice, and ignores the fact that the promise of the advancement of a peace based on a two-state solution outstrips, by far, any political risks that come with taking the plunge and recognizing Palestine as a state.

Therefore, it was refreshing to hear French President Emmanuel Macron, during his visit to London this month for an Anglo-French summit, tell British parliamentarians: “With Gaza in ruins and the West Bank being attacked on a daily basis, the perspective of a Palestinian state has never been put at risk as it is (now), and this is why this solution of the two states and the recognition of the state of Palestine is ... the only way to build peace and stability for all in the whole region.”

This is a somewhat late realization of something that, had it been done years ago, might have prevented the events of the past two, horrific years. Still, Macron deserves credit for advancing this agenda now and resisting Israeli claims that in the aftermath of Oct. 7, such recognition would be a reward for Hamas and terrorism.

Israel is deliberately advancing this spurious theory that recognition of Palestinian statehood is effectively caving in to terrorism, when in fact the aim of such recognition is to break the impasse in resolving the long-running Israeli-Palestinian conflict peacefully, and actually sideline extremism. If nothing else, recognition would be a step toward redressing the power imbalance between Israel and Palestine, which has become a hindrance to efforts at reaching a peace agreement based on a two-state solution.

Macron’s remarks in London created some momentum for Palestinian statehood; immediately after his departure, perhaps inspired and encouraged by his statements, 59 MPs from Britain’s governing Labour Party signed a letter addressed to Foreign Secretary David Lammy, calling on him to recognize, “with great urgency,” the State of Palestine.

Certainly, many of those who signed the letter have for a long time been outspoken proponents of such recognition. But others were new recruits to the idea, who see it not only as an end in itself but also a response to the shocking news coming out of Gaza every day, and to the constant stream of “novel ideas” that originate from the Israeli government and inflict even more misery on the Palestinian people.

Deploable suggestions from both Washington and senior Israeli officials have also served as a catalyst for the letter from MPs, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s proposal of a “voluntary

migration” of Palestinians from Gaza, and the announcement by Defense Minister Israel Katz of his plan to forcibly transfer hundreds of thousands of Palestinian civilians, if not the entire population of the territory, to a camp in the almost completely destroyed city of Rafah.

The MPs called for action to prevent Katz’s sinister plan becoming reality before it is too late. Israel’s former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert this week described it as tantamount to the construction of a “concentration camp.” It is designed to make the lives of those forcibly placed there impossible, while preventing them from leaving unless their destination is outside of Mandatory Palestine.

The British politicians who signed the letter to Lammy consider recognition of Palestinian state-

***The need for unanimity in passing such a resolution within the EU makes it almost impossible to achieve, as long as countries such as Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, and Hungary oppose it. Therefore, if Paris and London were to announce recognition of Palestinian statehood in tandem — either before or during the upcoming summit of world leaders on the two-state solution, which was postponed by the outbreak of the war between Israel and Iran in June and is now scheduled to convene at the UN headquarters in New York in September — it would send a strong message from two major powers, which are also permanent members of the UN Security Council, in support of what is already the policy of 147 other members of the UN.***

hood a priority, but in the meantime they also demanded the removal from the agenda of Katz’s draconian proposal to concentrate masses of Palestinians in such a camp, which seems to be more of a transitional facility serving as a precursor to expulsion.

In addition, they urged Lammy to continue to support the work of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in providing aid to the people of Gaza, while also pressing for the “full and unhindered resumption of the humanitarian aid,” and efforts to secure the release of all hostages. This is an opportunity for the British government to adopt these recommendations — some would call them demands — and in doing so become an important player in efforts to resolve one of the most intractable conflicts in modern history.

In an ideal world, recognition of the State of Palestine by European nations would come from the EU as a whole and not happen in piecemeal fashion, as has been the case so far with the much-welcomed recognition in May last year by Spain, Ireland, Slovenia, and Norway (the last of which is not a member of the EU). Nevertheless, the need for unanimity in passing such a resolution within the EU makes it almost impossible to achieve, as long as countries such as Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, and Hungary oppose it.

Therefore, if Paris and London were to announce recognition of Palestinian statehood in tandem —

partition plan of 1947 and many subsequent international resolutions, and follows in the footsteps of diplomatic efforts that began with the Oslo Accords in 1993 and have been negotiated in different rounds of peace talks since then.

It could be a game-changer, allowing the Palestinians to negotiate with the Israelis as equals. As long as this does not happen, the asymmetry in the balance of power between the two protagonists remains a major obstacle, and it is one Israel is unfairly using during negotiations to demand concessions their Palestinian interlocutors cannot deliver, or to cause crises in the discussions. This effectively allows Israel to postpone indefinitely any agreement based on a two-state solution, while also creating a situation on the ground that is prohibitive to the establishment of a territorially contiguous independent Palestinian state.

Recognition of a Palestinian state would send a clear message from the international community to those who are hell-bent on annexation of the occupied West Bank and the building of Israeli settlements there. Whatever the setbacks along the way, the only viable and long-term sustainable solution to the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians remains a two-state solution. The letter from British MPs is, therefore, a welcome contribution to the efforts to advance this cause, and the British government must heed its recommendations.

# How gold has become the lifeblood of Sudan’s war economy

Hafed Al-Ghwell

As the civil war in Sudan rages on, the devastation is increasingly measured in troy ounces and metric tonnes. Before the conflict began, the country officially produced 87 tonnes of gold annually, a figure that plummeted to just 2 tonnes within five months of fighting.

Yet this collapse masks a more sinister reality; an estimated 100 kg of gold now vanishes each day across Sudan’s borders — approximately 60 tonnes since April 2023. This illicit flow is not incidental leakage, it is the engineered financial architecture of a seemingly unstoppable war machine.

Consider the mechanics of this deadly economy. Miners, often working in perilous conditions under the coercive control of armed groups, extract the ore. Each gram that is extracted, from artisanal pits in Darfur or industrial concessions along the Nile, converts directly into imported artillery, foreign drones, and militia salaries.

Control over mining sites, particularly those concentrated in specific geographical zones, is fiercely contested, as vital as possession of any strategic city. The Sudanese Armed Forces, which holds key production areas, imposes taxes and levies, funneling the proceeds through state-adjacent structures. Its rival, the Rapid Support Forces, operates extensive parallel networks, utilizing cross-border connections to move and monetize its share.

A significant portion of the gold moves through neighboring countries, often under murky arrangements involving state actors, or at least tolerated

by them. The final destinations are international markets, via a major global hub that acts as a financial clearinghouse for both sides. There, the conflict gold is refined, legitimized and sold, its origins obscured. The proceeds are then cycled back, often through complex financial channels or purchases of essential war materiel. Weapons, fuel, and even food supplies for fighters are procured abroad using these funds, shipped back across borders, sometimes through the same neighboring countries, and distributed to the front lines.

This transnational flow transforms Sudanese gold into tangible instruments of death and displacement within Sudan itself. With official exports from SAF-controlled territories generating \$1.6 billion in 2024 alone, and more than 60 percent of production from key mining states being smuggled, gold becomes the grease for a devastating conflict “economy” that has displaced nearly 9 million people.

Moreover, the commodity’s path through free-trade zones of neighboring countries and foreign refineries demonstrates the ways in which regional commercial policies actively incentivize predation. Duty exemptions and tax reductions in neighboring countries have transformed cross-border smuggling from an ancillary activity into the core revenue strategy for both of the primary belligerents in the conflict, locking the nation into a self-perpetuating cycle in which mineral wealth finances state collapse. The profound tragedy lies in the complicity and

enabling environment created by influential external actors. Key regional powers, driven by short-term economic gain and competing strategic agendas, have become indispensable patrons.

One state, acting as the indispensable partner of the Sudanese Armed Forces, processes vast flows of illicit gold through its territory. Reports indicate 80-90 percent of Sudanese gold bypasses official channels, draining state revenues while financing the Sudanese Armed Forces’ \$1 million daily war expenditure. This smuggling pipeline, enabled by lax oversight and political complicity, directly subverts Sudanese sovereignty.

Simultaneously, a second external actor functions as the financial engine for the Rapid Support Forces. By providing market access and liquidity, this patron transforms the Rapid Support Forces-controlled gold into immediate capital. Its gold refineries absorbed more than 46 tonnes of Sudanese gold in 2023 alone, worth about \$2.8 billion at current prices, embedding conflict commodities into global markets. This is not passive trade, it is active conflict financing. The Rapid Support Forces’ territorial losses from last year would have triggered financial collapse without this uninterrupted cash conversion.

These dual pipelines create a perverse equilibrium. Gold generates more than \$1 billion annually for the warring parties, ensuring military spending consumes resources needed for the 25 million Sudanese people requiring aid.

While the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces deploy gold revenues to import drones, ammunition, and fuel, Sudan’s healthcare system has collapsed to about 70 percent nonfunctionality, while civilian deaths mount, as a direct consequence of economically sustainable warfare.

International responses and sanctions remain fundamentally inert against Sudan’s conflict-gold architecture. The targeting of isolated entities, such as seven firms blocked by the US Treasury in June 2024, ignores the complex transnational system that is sustaining the war. This system operates through three integrated channels: smuggling corridors across Chad and Libya; sophisticated financial clearinghouses; and state-facilitated transit routes through neighboring countries, where 80-90 percent of the gold bypasses official scrutiny.

In a nutshell, sanctions against individual commanders or shell companies constitute little more than policy theater. The resilience of the gold trade lies in its networked adaptability; routes shift within weeks, front companies regenerate, and regional banking systems enable instant gold-to-cash conversion.

When the US sanctioned the Sudanese Armed Forces-linked firms in 2024, the Rapid Support Forces-aligned networks simply rerouted exports through South Sudan and the Central African Republic, demonstrating the immunity of the ecosystem to atomized pressure.

Until policymakers dismantle the entire architec-

ture — by demanding that regional trading hubs close beneficial ownership gaps in gold exchanges and sanctioning the refiners laundering conflict minerals — the war will continue.

The language of strategic patience and alliance maintenance rings hollow when juxtaposed against the entrenched, billion-dollar illicit gold ecosystem sustaining Sudan’s civil war, which is responsible for creating the massive humanitarian crisis we see today.

More than simply a missed opportunity, this is an active choice, one that permits blood-soaked commerce to flourish in exchange for diplomatic comfort and regional ambiguity. To date, financial institutions and refineries downstream have barely flinched. There has been no sweeping divestment, no collapse in buyer confidence, no multilateral embargoes. Regulatory institutions have failed not because of lack of capacity but because of an unwillingness to act, constrained by politics not logistics.

The international community must now confront the full supply chain — from the mines controlled by armed groups, through the smuggling routes across borders, to the foreign markets and financiers that launder its proceeds and facilitate the conversion into weapons — and impose coordinated, high-impact costs on all nodes, especially the external actors profiting from the chaos. Otherwise, Sudan’s gold will continue to flow and the war will continue to burn. The mineral wealth that could rebuild the nation remains its curse, fueling a conflict measured in graves rather than grams.

# US getting creative in search for Armenia-Azerbaijan peace deal

Luke Coffey

US President Donald Trump’s Oval Office meeting with NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte on Monday drew considerable attention for what appeared to be a shift in tone on Ukraine. But amid the headlines, another noteworthy — yet underreported — statement emerged. During a media Q&A, Trump declared that his administration was now close to finalizing a long-term peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

This is no small claim. Armenia and Azerbaijan have been in some form of conflict since the collapse of the Soviet Union. What began as fighting in the early 1990s led to a frozen conflict and an Armenian occupation of a sizable chunk of Azerbaijani territory. This conflict exploded into a full-scale war in 2020, which ended in an Azerbaijani victory and the deployment of Russian peacekeepers to the region. By 2023, Azerbaijan had completed the liberation of

all its territory taken by Armenia in the 1990s, Russian peacekeepers departed, and Baku and Yerevan started peace talks.

However, a major sticking point remains. As part of the ceasefire agreement brokered in November 2020, Armenia committed to “guarantee the security of transport connections” between Azerbaijan proper and its Nakhchivan exclave via Armenia’s Syunik Province. However, no progress has been made on implementing this pledge.

For Baku, the so-called Zangezur Corridor is a strategic priority. There is no direct land route connecting Azerbaijan to Nakhchivan and access through Armenia would resolve this logistical challenge. Baku has consistently stated that it does not seek Armenian territory, but merely a secure transport link.

Similar arrangements exist elsewhere in the world without raising sovereignty concerns. For instance, the US relies on transit through

Canadian territory to access Alaska from the American mainland via the Alaska Highway. Likewise, Oman maintains a transit route through the UAE to connect with its Musandam exclave on the Strait of Hormuz — without infringing on Emirati sovereignty. In both cases, sovereignty remains respected, while practical transit needs are met.

For Yerevan, however, the proposal has become politically toxic. Many Armenians fear that implementing the corridor would weaken their sovereignty or lead to the perception of territorial compromise. These domestic concerns, coupled with broader regional anxieties, have complicated any effort at compromise. Iran, in particular, has pressured Armenia against accepting such an agreement, driven by its long-standing geopolitical rivalry with Azerbaijan.

So, what gives the Trump administration confidence that a final peace is within reach?

To be fair, the Biden

administration deserves credit for bringing both sides to the negotiating table in recent years. Trump has largely continued this process. Around the time of Trump’s comments, the US ambassador to Türkiye floated an unusual idea: America could lease and manage the 43km stretch of road in Syunik for 100 years to guarantee its neutrality and security.

Although Yerevan quickly rejected the suggestion, the fact that such creative proposals are being considered reflects an active American diplomatic effort behind the scenes. It also illustrates how this seemingly small strip of land has become symbolic of broader regional dynamics.

Russia, long the dominant powerbroker in the South Caucasus, has been largely sidelined in the current talks. This reflects Moscow’s diminishing influence, which stems from several factors: its overreach

in Armenia, intervening in that country’s domestic affairs; recent tensions with Baku over the arrest of Azerbaijani nationals in Russia; and the downing of an Azerbaijan Airlines plane over the North Caucasus earlier this year by Russian air defense missiles. Russia’s faltering war effort in Ukraine has further diminished its credibility across the region.

Iran strongly opposes the Zangezur Corridor. There are two key reasons for this. First, such a route would facilitate greater connectivity between Türkiye and Central Asia — reducing Iran’s own relevance as a transit country. Second, it would diminish Tehran’s influence over Azerbaijan. Currently, Baku relies on Iranian airspace and infrastructure to reach Nakhchivan. If the Zangezur Corridor were to become operational, Iran would lose this leverage.

Türkiye, meanwhile, sees

the corridor not just as a logistical link but as a manifestation of a larger geopolitical and ideological vision. The road and rail connections through Armenia would link Anatolia to the Turkic states of Central Asia — Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and beyond. This would physically tie together a broader Turkic world, which Ankara seeks to strengthen through forums like the Organization of Turkic States.

For the US, the Zangezur Corridor reflects a broader dilemma: how to engage effectively in a strategically important but geographically distant and complex region like the South Caucasus. While Trump touts his record of avoiding new wars, it is worth remembering that the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War erupted during his first term in 2020. That conflict, and the ceasefire it produced, laid the foundation for today’s geopolitical situation in the region.

Still, Trump’s administra-

tion has invested considerable diplomatic energy into peacemaking — from Ukraine to the Middle East to Africa. The Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict offers another opportunity to “make a deal.” But like most issues in the South Caucasus, the reality is far more complicated than it may first appear.

That is why the US leasing a corridor through Armenia, while innovative, is unlikely to gain traction. It faces domestic resistance in Yerevan, legal and sovereignty concerns, and geopolitical opposition from Russia and Iran. Yet the broader goal — peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan — is both worthwhile and achievable.

Normalization between these two neighbors would have cascading benefits. It would pave the way for diplomatic ties between Türkiye and Armenia, which would open new trade, energy and transportation opportunities across the South Caucasus. Armenia, long

excluded from regional infrastructure projects due to its conflict with Azerbaijan, would stand to gain significantly. This comes at a time when Armenia’s economy is under pressure and its foreign policy orientation is slowly drifting away from Russia and toward Europe.

For Washington, a stable South Caucasus aligns with US interests. It would enhance regional connectivity and reduce vulnerabilities in NATO’s energy security — especially important given Europe’s increasing reliance on Caspian energy resources as an alternative to Russian supplies.

Whether the Trump administration can ultimately broker a lasting peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan remains uncertain. But it deserves recognition for trying. With sustained effort, strategic creativity and regional buy-in, the US has a real chance to help end one of the post-Soviet world’s longest unresolved conflicts.





# PAJCCI expresses concern over slow processing in visa issuance to Afghan traders

## F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI) has expressed its deep concern over sluggish processing in issuance of visa by Pakistan to Afghan businessmen.

In a press statement issued here on Sunday, Director PAJCCI Afghan Chapter, Ahmad Shah who is also an Afghan businessman said that he had applied for Pakistan visa in February 16, 2025, but still the application is under process.

“Although I have arranged all the necessary required documents and updated them on websites of concerned departments, but there is zero progress on my application still after passage of almost five

months,” Ahmad Shah complains.

PAJCCI office bearers also mentioned reports about payment in dollars for early issuance of visa to Afghan businessmen and ordinary citizens.

He alleges that visa of Pakistan for Afghans is a big source of income for some corrupt officials and in this regard also mentioned some media reports.

If the visa applicant approach some travel agents in Kabul and must decide rate with them, he will get the visa within 24 to 48 hours after submission of the application, claims Afghan businessman.

While those applicants who don't pay to the agents, then their visa will not be issued for several months, he continued.

Director PAJCCI Afghan

Chapter, Ahmad Shah requested government to take notice of this issue and seek details over delay in issuance of his own visa which he applied around five months earlier and still is waiting to visit Pakistan for business related issues.

He said Afghan nationals and businessmen are already under deep stress and pressure due to serious economic losses due to possible deportation in the wake of Pakistan's policy about Afghan refugees.

He said thousands of Afghan nationals and businessmen wanted to visit Pakistan for settlement of their valuable assets to avoid selling of the same at throwaway prices in wake of ending of the deadline set by the government for Afghans.

Supporting the concerns

of Ahmad Shah, Senior Vice President (SVP) PAJCCI Pakistan Chapter, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi made a request for solving these issues that are creating hurdles and sever hardships for Afghan business community.

He said Afghans have set up businesses in Pakistan with investment in billions of rupees and need time and frequent visits to settle them before implementation of Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan.

He also suggested for setting aside business from politics with the objective of tapping the vast economic potential of trade in the region through which the collective problem of poverty can be overcome by creating hundreds of thousands of commercial and livelihood opportunities on both sides of the border.



LAHORE: People buying bags from a vendor's roadside stall in city.

## Haroon offers condolences to Abuzar

LAHORE (APP): Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar here Sunday visited the residence of Mian Abuzar Shad, President of Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), to express heartfelt condolences on the sad demise of his sister.

He offered Fateha for the departed soul and extended his deep sympathies to Mian Abuzar Shad and his family in this moment of grief.

LCCI Senior Vice President Engineer Khalid Usman, Vice President Shahid Nazir Chaudhry, former presidents Mian Anjum Nisar and Muhammad Ali Mian, former Senior Vice President Ali Hussam, Khawaja Shahzaib Akram, Naem Mir, Sohail Zia Butt, and several other notable figures from the business community were also present.

All participants prayed for the forgiveness and high ranks of the departed soul and for patience and strength for the bereaved family.

They expressed solidarity with Mian Abuzar Shad, stating that the business community stands firmly with him in this time of sorrow.

## Auto Policy to energize growth

ISLAMABAD (INP): In a bid to revamp Pakistan's automotive landscape and align it with the global sustainability trends, the government has initiated stakeholder consultations for the forthcoming Auto Policy 2026, with a strong emphasis on liberalized vehicle imports and a strategic push for EVs under the National Electric Vehicle (NEV) Policy 2025-2030.

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan recently chaired a high-level meeting in Islamabad with the Car Dealers Importers Association, highlighting the importance of industry participation in shaping the future direction of automotive policy.

He reaffirmed Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's vision of encouraging a more open and competitive import system for vehicles, aimed at enhancing consumer choice and encouraging local manufacturers to elevate quality standards and explore export opportunities.

## Mills urge govt to deregulate sugar industry

LAHORE (APP): All sugar mills have urged the government to completely deregulate the industry.

A general body meeting of the Pakistan Sugar Mills Association (PSMA) was held on Sunday, said a press release issued here. A spokesman for PSMA said that the association requests the federal government to consider deregulation of the sugar sector as has been done by the provinces in the case of sugarcane.

The sugar industry is the second largest agro-based industry in Pakistan after textiles.

During the crushing season, it generates direct and indirect business activity of Rs1000 billion in agriculture, transport, allied industry, wholesale and retail markets. It pays around Rs 225 billion in direct and indirect taxes to federal, provincial and local governments and provides 4\$ billion worth of import substitution to the national economy, he added.

The sugar industry utilizes its indigenous energy by using bagasse through which an allied steel industry has also been established and generated power is being exported to the national grid. With conducive policy interventions an industrial chain using byproducts of sugarcane would come up, as happened in many other countries, he added. He said that the current potential of bioethanol was enough to replace 7% of total gasoline consumption in the country. “Two very important agro based sectors i.e. rice and maize were deregulated sectors and only rice exports are fetching nearly 5 billion dollars. There is no restriction on import and export of rice as well as maize in Pakistan. Both sectors work on the principles of free economy and are working well.”

The spokesman said that rice and maize growers get international prices which encouraged investment in research and development activities resulting in better yields. The government should adopt a permanent policy on deregulation of the sugar sector so that it keeps contributing to the national economy through import substitution, generating overall business activity, employment, tax revenue and substantial foreign exchange earnings due to regular export of sugar surplus, he said.

He said that the sugar industry has pleaded deregulation in several meetings with the government and also in the last Sugar Advisory Board meeting held on July 17.

He said that formation of a committee by the federal government on deregulation of the sugar sector was a welcoming step and it was hoped that like other agricultural sectors, the sugar sector would be given the opportunity to utilize its full potential for the sake of national development.

## NPO launches productivity enhancement initiative

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Productivity Organization (NPO) on Saturday launched a significant productivity enhancement initiative for the gloves manufacturing sector in Sialkot.

Titled “Enhancing Operational Efficiency Through Lean Manufacturing Techniques,” the project aims to strengthen Pakistan's industrial competitiveness and support key export-oriented sectors, said a news release.

The initiative is being implemented in collaboration with the Pakistan Gloves Manufacturers & Exporters Association (PGMEA) and with technical support from the Asian Productivity Organization (APO), Japan.

As part of this project, an international productivity expert, George Wong from Singapore, has arrived in Sialkot to conduct on-site assessments and tailored consultancy sessions for selected beneficiary companies recommended by PGMEA.

The project adopts a phased approach, comprising face-to-face site visits, customized workshops, and follow-up technical sessions to ensure sustained improvements in operational efficiency.

The NPO official high-

lighted that this intervention is specifically designed to introduce advanced Lean Manufacturing concepts to the local industry, aiming to reduce waste, optimize processes, and bolster global competitiveness.

“We are confident that this project will serve as a model for sector-specific productivity enhancement, enabling our manufacturers to meet stringent international quality and efficiency standards,” the official added.

The project's initial phase involves a five-day program in Sialkot, including individual diagnostics at company premises followed by a two-day joint workshop to build collective understanding of Lean tools. Subsequent phases will involve online engagements and another round of on-ground technical sessions focusing on implementation.

The project is expected to have a significant impact on the gloves manufacturing sector in Sialkot, enabling local manufacturers to improve their productivity, reduce costs, and increase their competitiveness in the global market.

During a meeting with Waseem Shahbaz Lodhi, Senior Vice President of the Sialkot Chamber of

Commerce & Industry, and another meeting with Annas Raheel, Chairman PGMEA, both leaders expressed their appreciation for the collaborative efforts of NPO and APO in bringing international expertise to Pakistan's doorstep.

They emphasized that such initiatives are vital for sustaining export growth and reinforcing Pakistan's reputation as a reliable supplier in the global gloves market.

The NPO continues to work closely with sectoral associations, chambers, and international partners like APO to build a more resilient and competitive industrial landscape in Pakistan.

This project reflects the government's commitment to fostering productivity-led growth and supporting key export-oriented sectors.

The launch of this initiative is a significant step towards enhancing the productivity and competitiveness of Pakistan's gloves manufacturing sector.

With the support of international experts and collaboration with local industry stakeholders, the project is expected to have a lasting impact on the sector's growth and development.

# Quetta Airport Runway Project wins prestigious FIDIC award

## F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Pakistan Airports Authority's landmark project, Quetta International Airport Runway Reconstruction, has received the FIDIC Asia Pacific Award for Engineering Excellence at the FIDIC Asia Pacific Conference 2025, held in Islamabad.

This distinguished accolade recognizes the successful delivery of

Pakistan's longest and structurally largest rigid runway, executed in sectional phases on an operational joint-user airfield. Remarkably, the project was delivered with zero claims, zero safety incidents, and no closure of operations, setting a new benchmark in aviation infrastructure development.

The award was jointly conferred upon the Pakistan Airports Authority and the

Project Consultants in recognition of their effective collaboration, technical expertise, and commitment to safety and efficiency throughout the project life-cycle. The upgraded runway was completed at an estimated cost of Rs. 5 billion, and received its first flight - PK-3250 from Islamabad - on 31st May 2023.

Further underscoring the project's significance, Ms. Palomino Elvira, a FIDIC-

accredited international mediator and advisor on global construction contracts, has extended an exclusive invitation to present the Quetta runway reconstruction as a case study at upcoming FIDIC conferences in South Africa and France later this year. This recognition marks a proud moment for Pakistan's aviation and engineering sectors, placing PAA's excellence on a global stage.

# Nisar stresses need for alternate energy to tackle climate challenges

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Nasir Mansoor Qureshi on Sunday underlined the critical importance of shifting towards alternate energy solutions to meet Pakistan's energy needs and strengthen climate resilience.

Addressing the PAEA National Conference on Alternate Energy and Climate Resilience, he

emphasized that the adoption of green and renewable energy sources was essential not only for reducing reliance on fossil fuels but also for ensuring long-term economic and environmental sustainability.

He noted that alternate energy offers an efficient and viable pathway to power Pakistan's growth while mitigating the devastating impacts of climate change.

Highlighting recent climate-related disasters, including floods and extreme heat, the ICCI President stressed the need for urgent national efforts to address climate vulnerability. “Pakistan must move decisively towards cleaner energy solutions to safeguard its future and build a climate-resilient economy,” he remarked.

He reiterated that the Chamber is fully committed

to working with industrial sectors, policy forums and development partners to promote green energy, drive innovation and combat the multifaceted challenges facing the economy.

“ICCI will continue to play its role in fostering a sustainable energy transition and in positioning Pakistan as a responsible, forward-looking green economy,” Qureshi concluded.

## Over-invoicing promotes corruption, hurts economy

LAHORE (APP): Coordinator to the Federal Tax Ombudsman Saif Ur Rehman on Sunday expressed serious concern over the rising trend of over-invoicing on imports, warning that the practice is causing billions of rupees in losses to the national exchequer and poses a significant threat to the country's economic stability.

Talking to a delegation of the business community leaders, here, Saif Ur Rehman explained that over-invoicing involves the artificial inflation of prices on import invoices, allowing companies to illegally transfer capital abroad, evade taxes, and claim unlawful rebates. He stressed that such illicit financial flows not only drain foreign exchange reserves but also widen the trade deficit and severely hamper revenue collection efforts.

# RCCI expresses concerns over 16% GST on rent

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) has expressed strong reservations over recent policy measures announced by the Punjab government, including the imposition of a 16% sales tax on commercial property rent and the introduction of arrest powers for non-compliance with the newly mandated minimum wage.

RCCI President Usman Shaukat, in an official statement issued on Sunday, criticized the recent decisions of Punjab Revenue Authority (PRA) “This new tax regime will significantly raise the cost of doing business for tenants, particularly retailers, across Punjab,” he said and added that the decision will discourage investment, push legitimate businesses into the informal sector, and further strain an already struggling retail and real estate market.

Shaukat further said that the new tax would exacerbate the ongoing slowdown in the property and retail sectors, both of which are still reeling from post-pandemic economic challenges.

“Such measures are counterproductive and will undermine business confidence in the province”, he said.

In addition, the RCCI president voiced strong opposition to a clause in the recently passed Punjab budget that allows for the arrest of business owners failing to implement the new minimum wage of Rs. 40,000.

“This coercive approach is deeply concerning and must be withdrawn immediately,” he said. He observed that this would open the door to potential

misuse by enforcement authorities and would only lead to harassment of legitimate businesses.

While acknowledging the importance of fair wages, Shaukat emphasized the need for economic policymaking to be grounded in current market realities.

“With national inflation now at a historic low of 6%, the rationale behind such a steep wage hike is questionable. A more balanced and consultative approach is needed to ensure economic growth, job creation, and industrial sustainability”, the RCCI president.

The RCCI called on the Punjab government to review both measures and engage in meaningful dialogue with the business community to ensure that policies promote, rather than hinder the economic development.

neither debated transparently nor tested through pilot phases. The sudden imposition of unchecked arrest powers, aggressive cash handling limits, and unrealistic digital compliance rules has pushed the entire business landscape into uncertainty,” Nisar warned.

“You cannot reform an economy by intimidating its engine. What the government has misjudged is the deep-rooted unity of Pakistan's trading and industrial community.”

He pointed out that even law-abiding businesses with a clear tax history are now rethinking their operations due to the fear of misuse by the enforcement arms of the Federal Board of Revenue. Coupled with hasty implementation of SRO 350 and SRO 709, which mandate complex

electronic invoicing and tracking requirements, the situation has left traders vulnerable to penalties without preparation.

Anjum Nisar said the nationwide protest was not confined to any single region or sector. “From mega industrial hubs in Lahore to small-town commercial centers in Punjab should be a wake-up call. We are talking about a total industry halt—a shutdown of production, supply chains, and sales from top to bottom,” he said.

While acknowledging the establishment of a grievance redressal committee by FPCCI and the Ministry of Finance, BMP criticized the lack of urgency in addressing the issues. “At this stage, verbal commitments are not

enough. The government must issue written notifications immediately reversing or suspending the most dangerous aspects of these laws,” Nisar insisted.

The Businessmen Panel emphasized that the business community has always been in favor of responsible reforms and progressive digitization. However, it cannot support a system that is imposed overnight, without education, infrastructure, or practical rollout plans. “Pakistan's economy does not run on apps and directives. It runs on trust, predictability, and dialogue,” he added.

He said BMP had repeatedly presented constructive suggestions, including timelines for documentation, gradual onboarding of digital systems, and protections against harassment.

“Unfortunately, the state continues to legislate from a distance, without consulting the very people who will bear the brunt of these policies,” Anjum Nisar lamented.

He warned that if the Finance Act is not amended in the coming days, the economic consequences could extend beyond business closures to investment flight, job losses, and reduced exports. “Pakistan's productive class cannot afford to operate in fear. We will not be spectators to our own collapse,” Nisar said.

BMP reiterated its complete support for the constitutional right to protest and expressed pride in how peacefully and effectively the strike was observed across the country. “The discipline and unity shown

on July 20 have restored our belief that business owners can still come together for the nation's economic future. But that unity must now be respected—not ignored,” the chairman said.

The Businessmen Panel demanded that the government issue official notifications to immediately withdraw Sections 37A and 37B, revise SRO 350 and SRO 709 with stakeholder input, and suspend punitive cash transaction rules until a proper mechanism is agreed upon. “We are not seeking confrontation. We are demanding correction,” Mian Anjum Nisar said. “If the government fails to act now, the business community will be forced to reconsider how—and whether—it continues to operate under such conditions.”

# BMP warns government as nationwide traders' strike shakes confidence

## F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has strongly condemned the continuation of controversial fiscal amendments introduced under the Finance Act 2025, asserting that Saturday's successful shutdown across Punjab and the rest of the country signals a deep rupture in the government's contract with the business community.

Addressing the wave of frustration engulfing markets from Lahore to Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Sialkot and beyond, BMP Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar noted that this collective shutdown was not a routine protest—it was a definitive vote of no-confi-

dence in the state's current economic direction. Traders, industrialists, wholesalers and retailers across Pakistan voluntarily ceased operations to register their dismay at the coercive new powers granted to tax officials under the revised law.

Mian Anjum Nisar stated that Sections 37A and 37B of the Income Tax Ordinance—empowering tax officers with arrest and prosecution authority—violate the constitutional guarantees of fair treatment and due process. He said these clauses are more reflective of a police state than a participatory economy and have triggered panic throughout formal businesses already struggling with rising costs and limited liquidity.

“These measures were





In brief

Pak team to receive Rs8.2m

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's victorious under-16 men's volleyball team will each receive Rs 600,000 in cash awards following their historic win at the Asian U-16 Championship, the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) announced on Sunday. Under the PSB's updated 2024 Cash Award Policy, annual continental gold medallists in team events are granted 30% of the individual award, amounting to Rs 600,000 per player. With a 12-member squad, this translates to Rs7.2 million in total for the players. Additionally, PSB's policy allocates 50% of the team award to the coaching staff, bringing the coach's share to Rs1,000,000. Together, the total approved payout for the squad and coaching staff is Rs 8.2 million. Pakistan claimed the continental trophy in Thailand by defeating Iran 3-2 in a dramatic final, remaining unbeaten throughout the tournament. Khuram Shahzad, a PSB spokesperson said the awards would be disbursed within days, aligning with the board's initiative to "recognise and financially support sporting excellence across age groups." The payments will go directly to players and coaches named on the official tournament roster after fulfilling the required documentation.

Bublik wins first clay title

GSTAAD (AFP): Alexander Bublik beat past Argentine Juan Manuel Cerundolo 6-4, 4-6, 6-3 in the Gstaad final on Sunday to clinch his first career clay-court title. World number 34 Bublik won on grass at Halle last month and scooped his second title of the season in Switzerland after bouncing back from a first-round loss at Wimbledon. "This is my sixth title and I have played the greats of the game, but this final I will remember as one of the toughest I ever played," said Bublik. "It was complete torture." Cerundolo was playing in his first tour-level final since 2021 having dumped out top seed Casper Ruud in the last eight on Friday. Bublik will climb back into the top 30 on Monday after a resurgence which has seen him win 17 of 22 matches since the start of the Madrid Open in mid-April. He also reached the quarter-finals at Roland Garros.

England call in police

LONDON (Agencies): England are working with police after defender Jess Carter revealed she has been the target of racist abuse during Euro 2025. On Sunday the Lionesses said they would stop the anti-racism gesture of taking a knee before matches as it was "clear we and football need to find another way to tackle racism". Carter added she would take a step back from social media. The Football Association said it was "working with police to ensure those responsible for this hate crime are brought to justice". "From the start of the tournament I have experienced a lot of racial abuse," said Carter, 27. "While I feel every fan is entitled to their opinion on performance and result, I don't agree, or think, it's OK to target someone's appearance or race." As a result of this I will be taking a step back from social media and leaving it to a team to deal with." England teammate Lotte Wubben-Moy said she would be also be coming off social media.



MIRPUR: Fakhar Zaman top-scored for Pakistan with 44 off 34 balls.

# Clinical Bangladesh thump sloppy Pakistan in first T20I

DHAKA (AFP): Fast bowlers Taskin Ahmed and Mustafizur Rahman rocked Pakistan for 110 before opener Parvez Hossain hit an unbeaten 50 as Bangladesh won the first Twenty20 international by seven wickets in Dhaka on Sunday. Taskin finished with 3-22 while Rahman grabbed 2-6 in his four economical overs to dismiss the visitors in 19.3 overs for Pakistan's lowest total against Bangladesh in all T20Is. Parvez smashed five sixes and three boundaries in his 39-ball 56 not out to help the home team chase down the target in 15.3 overs, taking a 1-0 lead in the three-match series. Debutant Pakistan pacer Salman Mirza (2-23) jolted Bangladesh with wickets of Tanzid Hasan (one) and

Litton Das (one) but Parvez and Towhid Hridoy (36) added 73 for the third wicket to ease up the chase. It was only Bangladesh's fourth win over Pakistan in 23 T20Is. For Pakistan, opener Fakhar Zaman top-scored with a 34-ball 44, which included six boundaries and a six, while Abbas Afridi scored 22 and Khushdil Shah 17. Pakistan's previous lowest T20I total against Bangladesh was 127-5 at the same venue in 2021. Litton admitted batting was not easy on a slow pitch. "It's not an easy wicket to bat on, but the way we batted, it looked good," said Litton. "We took early wickets and that's the key point." Pakistan skipper Salman Agha blamed poor batting. "It wasn't enough on the board as we lost

wickets at regular intervals which we have to talk about before the second game," said Agha. Sent into bat, Pakistan had a disastrous start, with half the side dismissed for 46 in the eighth over with Saim Ayub (six), Mohammad Haris (four) and Agha (three) falling cheaply. Hasan Nawaz fell without scoring and Mohammad Nawaz made just three. Zaman, dropped on four and 30, added 24 for the sixth wicket before he was run out after being sent back by Khushdil Shah but was caught out of his crease. Shah and Abbas took Pakistan past the 100-mark during their 33-run stand for the seventh wicket. The remaining matches are on Tuesday and Thursday, also in Dhaka.

## Women's Tug of War C'ship held in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD (APP): The two-day 7th All Sindh Inter-Division Women's Tug of War Championship was successfully organized in Hyderabad under the auspices of the Sindh Government's Sports and Youth Affairs Department and the Sindh Olympic Association, in which 6 teams from across the province participated.

According to District Sports Officer Hyderabad, Maryam Kerio, a total of 84 players participated in the event, including 12 players from each region.

In addition, 12 team officials and 12 technical officials also played a role in organizing the event.

According to Maryam Kerio, Karachi won the first position with excellent performance in the competitions, the team from Mirpurkhas came second, while the third position went to Hyderabad. Trophies, medals and certificates were distributed among the teams that performed excellently.

The chief guest of the prize distribution ceremony was Ahmed Ali Rajput, Secretary, Sindh Olympic Association, while Maryam Kerio, District Sports Officer, Hyderabad, and Abdul Rahim Rajput, District Sports Officer, Shaheed Benazirabad, were the special guests of honor. The event was hosted and the administrative affairs were supervised by Pervaiz Ahmed Sheikh (Chief Director Physical Education) and Ayesha Everam (Director Physical Education), who played an important role in making the event a success.

On this occasion, District Sports Officer Maryam Kerio said that organizing sports activities for women is our top priority. On this occasion, District Sports Officer Maryam Kerio said that organizing sports activities for women is Such competitions not only improve their physical fitness but also become a means of promoting self-confidence, teamwork and leadership skills. She added that the Sindh government is providing all possible facilities to increase the participation of girls in sports, and in this regard, such events will continue to be organized continuously.our top priority.

# England to host next three World Test Championship finals

LONDON (Agencies): England has been confirmed as the host of the next three World Test Championship finals - in 2027, 2029 and 2031 - following the country's successful staging of the first three such events since 2021.

The decision, which had been on the cards since Lord's played host to South Africa's five-wicket victory over Australia in the third WTC final last month, was ratified at the ICC's annual conference in Singapore this week.

Despite some speculation that the contest could be set for a relocation to India from 2027 onwards, the ICC cited the ECB's "successful track record in hosting recent finals" in confirming its decision.

Richard Gould, the ECB chief executive, said: "We are absolutely delighted that England and Wales has been chosen to host the next three ICC World Test Championship Finals. It's a testament to the passion

that fans in this country have for this treasured format of the game and the willingness of supporters from around the world to travel here for these games. Hosting these finals is a privilege, and we look forward to working with the ICC to build on the success of the previous editions."

The June window, early in the English summer, remains the ICC's favoured time of year for staging the final, in the aftermath of the IPL and at a time of year when few other international fixtures are scheduled at that time of year.

Furthermore, as was demonstrated at Lord's last month, England's ability to sell out venues for neutral fixtures remains unrivalled across the world game. This was also the case when the Kia Oval hosted Australia's victory over India in 2023, and even at the inaugural event in 2021, which was staged in biosecure circumstances at the Hampshire Bowl with limited access

for India's and New Zealand's fans.

Speaking last month about the prospect of hosting the next three events, Gould told ESPNcricinfo:

"We don't think that we've got any absolute right to be the continual host of the WTC [final], but there are advantages to having it here.

"Irrespective of who gets into the final, we will sell it out... We're probably the only member nation within the ICC that could deliver that. We recognise that perhaps others would like to take it around the world at some point... But the worry is if you move it, end up with two neutral teams, and don't get a crowd, the whole thing could devalue and deflate pretty quickly."

The atmosphere at Lord's was noted at the last WTC final, with the ICC's chair, Jay Shah visibly enthused by the sense of occasion that England's most famous venue afforded the event.

# Usyk destroys Dubois to reclaim undisputed crown

LONDON (BBC): Oleksandr Usyk further cemented his place as one of boxing's greats by stopping Daniel Dubois in round five to become a three-time undisputed heavyweight champion.

The Ukrainian put on a masterclass in front of 90,000 fans at Wembley Stadium to dash Dubois' dreams of being the first Briton to unify the division in the four-belt era.

Usyk, 38, put Dubois down twice in the fifth and the Londoner was unable to return to beat the count the second time round.

He also stopped Dubois in 2023 and extended his perfect record as a professional to 24 victories.

"I'm sorry [Dubois], it's sport. My people wanted this win," Usyk told DAZN.

"Nothing is next. It's enough. Next, I want to rest. My family, my wife, my children, I want to rest now. Two or three months, I want to just rest."

Dubois - who beat Anthony Joshua to defend his IBF title in September - tasted defeat for the third time in 25 contests as a professional, with each of those losses coming inside the distance.

Usyk reclaimed the IBF title, which was stripped from him just weeks after unifying the division in 2023, and added it to his WBA (Super), WBO and WBC belts.

"I have to commend him on the performance, I gave everything I had. Take no credit away from that man, I'll be back," Dubois told Dazn.

"I was just fighting, trying to pick up round by

round. It is what it is."

The great and good of the boxing world turned out to watch the momentous occasion, with Roy Jones Jr and Frank Bruno among those at ringside.

WBO interim heavyweight champion Joseph Parker was also keeping a close eye on proceedings as he seeks a date with the champion next.

Usyk, who has called the UK his second home, was welcomed warmly after Dubois had also been cheered to the ring.

It took no time for the fight to spark into life as the Briton doubled up on his jab but it was clear Usyk wasn't going to be a sitting target.

The former undisputed cruiserweight champion was far too slick, ducking under the jab and punishing his rival regularly.

# Dominant Marquez cruises to MotoGP win

BRNO (AFP): Marc Marquez won the Czech MotoGP on Sunday for his eighth victory in 12 races this season and fifth in a row, extending his commanding lead in the world championship.

The factory Ducati rider beat Marco Bezzecchi on an Aprilia by almost two seconds, while Pedro Acosta on a KTM came in third in his first race podium finish of the season.

Marquez had a fifth straight perfect weekend, winning both the sprint on Saturday and Sunday's race. The 32-year-old Spaniard now leads the world championship with 381 points, 120 ahead of his younger brother Alex who crashed, and 168 ahead of Ducati teammate Francesco Bagnaia.

"It has been a super first part of the season and especially these last races," Marquez said. "I feel better and better and I'm riding super good," he added.

Bagnaia started from pole in bright sunshine but only retained the lead until the second lap when Bezzecchi eased past him, with Marquez following suit soon afterwards.

Acosta did the same to settle down in third after getting a boost from a second-place finish in Saturday's sprint. Marquez glided past Bezzecchi in lap eight as the runaway trio kept building up their lead, and as so often this season kept widening the gap comfortably.

The three stayed put until the finish line, although fourth-placed Bagnaia gave Acosta a hard time pressing from behind. "The first lap was unbelievable," said Bezzecchi.

"I had so much fun in the first half of the race but unfortunately when Marc passed me I immediately saw that he had something more." "I tried to attack but he was strong. Anyway, I made a

fantastic performance, I'm very, very happy," added the Italian.

'Long journey' Acosta relished his Brno podium finishes after spending much of the year battling a forearm injury.

"The last time that I was in the podium was in Thailand last year. It was a really long journey to come back here," said the 21-year-old Spaniard. Reigning world champion Jorge Martin collected his first points after finishing seventh in the first race he has completed this year.

Martin sat out the first three races following two pre-season crashes and then crashed again during his comeback race at Qatar, missing another seven events. Marquez took 40min 04.628sec to complete the 21 laps on the resurfaced 5.4-kilometre Brno circuit returning to the MotoGP calendar after a five-year break due to financial woes.

# Wellens wins stage as Pogacar keeps Tour de France lead

CARCASSONNE (AFP): Tim Wellens of Team UAE won a baking and hilly stage 15 of the Tour de France at Carcassonne on Sunday after a 45km solo rampage towards the walled citadel.

Overall leader Tadej Pogacar held on to the overall lead with a 4min 13sec advantage on Jonas Vingegaard, who had to fight to catch up when caught behind an early mass fall.

Wellens had been part of an early break that was whittled down to five before the Belgian champion' sudden acceleration caught the others napping.

This was a fifth win for Team UAE with Pogacar previously having won four on a thoroughly dominant Tour for the team.

Wellens was so far ahead at the finish line he had time to high five dozens of Belgian fans on the run in on the eve of the Belgian national holiday.

Wellens has also won stages on the Giro d'Italia and the Vuelta a Espana.

The remaining 167 riders embarked towards



Carcassonne Sunday on yet another nervy stage.

After a mass fall early on with Florian Lipowitz and Vingegaard involved, the Pogacar group raced on, leaving two-time winner Vingegaard and a clique of 30 riders to exhaust themselves catching up.

Pogacar entered the Pyrenees on Thursday tucked in at second to sur-

prise yellow jersey Ben Healy but emerged with two more stage wins and a four minutes advantage atop the overall standings in his bid for a fourth Tour de France title. Monday is a the final rest day before the 2025 edition soars into the Alps on Tuesday's stage 16 with the 15.8km ascent of Mont Ventoux at 7.9 percent gradient to its 1901m high summit.

pressing him, trying to make him feel old. But he has some good legs -- a lot of the tank and a lot of fight left in him.

Pacquiao, meanwhile, said that he hoped to continue fighting, and would be open to a rematch with Barrios. "Of course, of course," he replied when asked if he wanted to continue his career and face Barrios again. "That's the only legacy that I can leave behind -- to give inspiration to the Filipino people and to be proud wherever you are."

Barrios, for his part, added he was open to facing Pacquiao again. "I would love to do it again," he said during a ring interview. Pacquiao, whose last win came in 2019, had been regarded as a heavy underdog against his taller, rang-

LAS VEGAS (AFP): Manny Pacquiao's bid to make a fairytale return to boxing at the age of 46 ended in disappointment on Saturday, as the Filipino icon was held to a draw by defending WBC welterweight champion Mario Barrios in Las Vegas.

Barrios, 30, retained his belt despite being dominated for several rounds by Pacquiao, making a comeback to the ring after a four-year retirement. Barrios was awarded the fight 115-113 by one judge, with the other two cards scoring it 114-114. The result drew a subdued reaction from the MGM Grand Garden Arena crowd, who had roared on Pacquiao during a cagey, hard-fought contest.

At times, it seemed as if Pacquiao was poised to

write another improbable chapter in his 30-year professional career as he used all of his guile and experience to frustrate Barrios.

But Barrios rallied furiously over the final three rounds -- he was deemed the winner of those rounds on all three cards -- to do just enough to force a result that sees him retain his title. "I thought I won the fight," Pacquiao said afterwards. "I mean, it was a close fight. My opponent was very tough. But it was a wonderful fight."

"I was trying to find a way to finish the fight but my opponent was so tough. He threw punches in combination and with defense, so it was hard." Barrios, meanwhile, felt he had done enough to deserve the draw. "I thought I pulled it out," Barrios said. "But I still tip

my hat to Manny. It was an honor to share the ring with him, somebody with so much experience who has accomplished so much in this sport. We left everything in the ring, nothing but love and respect."

Barrios admitted he had been awed by Pacquiao's remarkable reserves of energy and stamina. "That's crazy -- his stamina, he can still crack and he's still strong as hell. His timing, his rhythm, everything. He was still a very awkward fighter to figure out," he said.

Rematch offer Barrios said he had been made aware that he needed to up his workrate to force the result over the closing rounds. "I knew I had to step it up to try to and solidify a win," Barrios said. "I was really



ier opponent from Texas.

But the Filipino eight-division champion, one of the most beloved fighters of the era, showed little sign of being troubled for long periods. Fighting in flurries and landing crisp combina-

tions throughout, Pacquiao consistently looked the busier fighter during the early and middle rounds.

Barrios, by contrast, appeared tentative, reluctant to risk going toe-to-toe early on against the experi-

enced Filipino. Yet for all of Pacquiao's craft, he was unable to seriously hurt Barrios, who regrouped impressively in the later rounds to connect with several jabs and do just enough to force the draw.





## In brief

### HRCP journal reviews issues

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The July issue of "Jehd-e-Haq," the journal of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), reviews key human rights issues, including a detailed analysis of the federal and provincial budgets for 2025-26. The journal analyzes direct and indirect sources of income. This issue also includes a special report on Balochistan, highlighting the province's ongoing issues and the Rs250 billion development budget. The commission aims to amplify the voices of those most affected by these allocations. Another key article investigates the case of Sana Yousaf, who vehemently denies the allegations against her in a mysterious case titled "Death Smiled on Screen." HRCP continues its commitment to advocating for justice and raising awareness about human rights concerns across Pakistan. The July issue will be an important resource for policymakers, activists, and anyone interested in understanding the country's complex human rights landscape.

### Six liquor suppliers held

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested six liquor suppliers, illegal arm holders and recovered 40 liters of liquor, arms and ammunition from their possessions here on Sunday. According to police, Bani police held four liquor suppliers and recovered 30 liters of liquor from their custody. Similarly, Pirwadhai police detained another liquor supplier and recovered 10 liters of liquor from him. While, Mandra police nabbed arm holder and confiscated arms and ammunition from his possession. Police have registered separate cases and further investigation was in progress. Divisional SPs commended police team and said that action strict action will be continued against liquor suppliers and illegal arm holders without any discrimination.

### ITP issues traffic plan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Traffic Police (ITP) on Sunday issued a comprehensive traffic plan for the 24th Muharram al Haram procession, which will commence from Haidri Shah's residence, pass through Madni Road and Express Highway, and culminate at the Sain Boota Darbar Imambargah. Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Captain (R) Zeeshan Haider told APP that the mourning procession would begin from the house of Haidri Shah and proceed via Madni Road and the kacha track of the Express Highway before concluding at the Sain Boota Darbar Imambargah. He said that during the procession, Express Highway and Khanna Service Road would remain closed for all types of traffic. He advised citizens to use alternative routes including Murree Road, Park Road, and Lehtar Road to avoid inconvenience. He said that the service road from Faizabad to Rawalpindi via Express Highway would also be closed, and commuters were directed to use Kuri Road, Airport Road, and Khanna-Lehtar Road as alternative routes. CTO Zeeshan urged citizens to cooperate with traffic police officials and avoid unnecessary travel near the procession route. He also appealed to the public to refrain from illegal parking and ensure vehicles are parked only in the designated parking spaces. CTO emphasized that cooperation with traffic personnel is essential to maintaining smooth flow and ensuring public safety during the religious event.



ISLAMABAD: A view of the spillways of Rawal Dam being opened as a precautionary measure following a rise in water levels due to recent heavy rains. —APP Photo

## Rawal Dam spillways closed after six hours

ISLAMABAD (APP): The district administration on Sunday opened the spillways of Rawal Dam after continuous rains raised the reservoir's water level to 1,748 feet. According to the spokesman of ICT administration, this was only four feet below the dam's maximum storage capacity of 1,752 feet, prompting the need to release water to prevent overflow risks. Officials confirmed that after discharging water for around six and a half hours, the water level in the dam dropped to 1,746 feet. The spillways were then closed as the situation stabilized. The decision to open the spillways was taken in coordination with various departments, including the district administration, Rescue 1122, and the Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA). These teams were deployed at key locations, including bridges, streams, and vulnerable points downstream, to manage the flow of released water and ensure public safety.

Assistant Commissioner of Nilore monitored the entire water release process, supervising operations at the dam and overseeing the safety measures on the ground. Magistrates, Rescue 1122 teams, ambulances, and union council staff remained stationed on different bridges and near the banks of streams throughout the water discharge period. The administration also remained in contact with the Pakistan Meteorological Department to track rainfall patterns and assess further risks. According to officials, the dam's spillways are only opened when the reservoir nears its storage limit to manage water pressure and avoid possible damage to the dam structure. Authorities assured that despite the heavy rains, no major flooding or emergency was reported downstream due to timely coordination and monitoring. However, residents living near water channels were advised to stay alert for any updates from the district

administration in case of further rain. The Rawal Dam not only supplies water to Islamabad and Rawalpindi but also plays a critical role in managing seasonal rains. The management of the dam, along with weather monitoring, is part of the broader effort to mitigate risks of urban flooding in the twin cities during the monsoon season. The district administration said it will continue to monitor the situation closely and take preventive measures in line with future weather forecasts. The public has been asked to cooperate with authorities and follow safety instructions to avoid any untoward incident. Earlier in the day, the Meteorological Department had forecast more rain in the region, raising concerns over the rising water levels in dams and rivers. The administration, however, reassured that all precautionary steps are in place to tackle the impact of continued rainfall.

## Ahsan Iqbal calls for agricultural revival, long-term planning

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal has stressed the urgent need to revitalize Pakistan's agricultural sector, pointing out that the devolution of powers under the 18th Constitutional Amendment has not been implemented in its true spirit, especially with regard to agriculture. Talking to the media during a visit to a cotton research farm located on Defence Road Lahore on Saturday, the planning minister said that although the 18th Amendment transferred authority and resources to the provinces, agriculture has not received the attention it deserves. "After the 18th Amendment, agriculture became a provincial subject, and it was the responsibility of the provinces to uplift the sector. Unfortunately, they failed to deliver tangible progress," he said.

He was accompanied by renowned agricultural expert Engineer Javed Saleem Qureshi, who has developed a new variety of cotton seed after 25 years of extensive research and experimentation. Prof. Ahsan Iqbal said, "Due to lack of focus and commitment at the provincial level, we could neither improve per-acre yield nor introduce high-quality seeds for key crops. Our research institutions also failed to play an active role." The minister stressed the need for concrete planning to boost agricultural productivity, especially in critical crops like cotton, canola, and rice. "We must now plan for the next ten years with clear goals. Time is slipping by, and unless we act decisively, we will continue to lag behind. Competing with the world requires us to function as a united and forward-thinking nation." He said that the absence

of long-term national planning for the next 10 to 20 years is a serious concern. "Pakistan must achieve self-sufficiency in agriculture. We cannot afford to rely on imports for essential crops any longer," he added. During the visit, Ahsan Iqbal lauded the groundbreaking work of Engineer Javed Saleem Qureshi, who has introduced a climate-resilient cotton seed variety capable of thriving in temperatures up to 50°C. The new seed, developed and successfully tested in Lahore while considering the impact of climate change, has the potential to boost cotton yield from the current 15 maunds per acre to an impressive 40-50 maunds per acre. "This is nothing short of an agricultural revolution," the minister remarked. "The government will fully support experts from the private sector who bring such innovations, and we will provide all possible cooperation to

ensure their success." He also pointed out the immense potential in other crops such as canola, noting that increasing domestic production of canola oil could save the country billions of dollars in foreign exchange currently spent on imports. In response to a question regarding recent heavy rains, the minister said that the federal government has formed a committee comprising representatives from the federation and all four provinces to assess the damages. He added that the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) is currently collecting data to determine the scale of impact and future response strategies. Ahsan Iqbal said the government is fully committed to supporting agricultural innovation and emphasized that agriculture must become the cornerstone of Pakistan's economic self-reliance in the coming years.

## Islamabad trails Rawalpindi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Food Authority faces serious operational challenges in carrying out effective food safety enforcement, hampered by limited staff, minimal infrastructure, and the absence of essential testing facilities. In sharp contrast, the Rawalpindi Food Authority operates with significantly better resources, including more vehicles, trained personnel, and fully equipped labs—enabling it to enforce food safety regulations more efficiently across the district. Both the Islamabad and Rawalpindi Food Authorities are tasked with regulating an estimated 30,000 food businesses each. However, the difference in their capacity to enforce food safety standards is striking. The Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) operates with just one field vehicle and 10 technical staff members. It lacks a food testing laboratory, training institute, mobile food labs, and a designated public relations officer. While the number of non-technical staff is report-

ed to range between 20 and 50, the authority's limited technical expertise and lack of mobility severely restrict its operational reach. Meanwhile, the Rawalpindi Food Authority (RFA) is equipped with 10 vehicles, 30 technical staff, a dedicated food testing lab, training school, and two mobile testing labs—allowing for routine field inspections and on-the-spot sampling. Speaking to this reporter, IFA's sources, acknowledged the constraints: "Our team covers the city as best as possible with the available resources. We're committed to ensuring food safety despite the limitations." However, food vendors in various parts of Islamabad, particularly Farooqia Market (F-6), say that in addition to operational shortages, the licensing process is being disrupted by external interference. Multiple shopkeepers alleged that Khalid Chaudhry, identified as a former member of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce, discourages businesses from obtaining

food licenses. They claim he uses the name of the Chief Commissioner to apply pressure and has reportedly misbehaved with inspection teams. "His interference delays the process and affects everyone," said a local trader. "He's making it difficult for us to comply with the law." The shopkeepers have called on relevant authorities to investigate and take disciplinary action against any individuals obstructing the food authority's work, warning that such behavior undermines regulatory efforts and public safety. The difference in capacity between the two food authorities highlights the need for urgent resource allocation. Public health experts stress that trained personnel, mobile testing units, and a permanent food lab are essential for timely inspections and quality control in the capital. Until such resources are provided, food safety regulation in Islamabad will remain limited—leaving both enforcement teams and the public at a disadvantage.

## Anti dengue campaign accelerated

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Health Authority has intensified efforts to counter the dengue fever spread with a special focus on Union Councils (UCs) Dhok Munshi and Chak Jalal Din, identified as high-risk areas for the virus. Both the UCs had experienced severe dengue attacks last year and were declared as high risk zones. Comprehensive anti-dengue operations, including indoor and outdoor surveillance, are being actively carried out to curb the potential outbreak. As part of the campaign, 113 indoor teams—58 in Dhok Munshi and 55 in Chak Jalal Din along with 63 outdoor sanitary patrols, 38 in Dhok Munshi and 25 in Chak Jalal Din were deployed to inspect homes and public spaces. The teams conducted thorough checks for dengue larvae, promptly eliminating any detected breeding sites. Indoor Residual Spraying (IRS) was also performed in affected households to halt the virus's reproduction.

## PTI lost voter's support in KP: Ikhtiar Wali

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister's Coordinator for Information on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Affairs, Ikhtiar Wali Khan, on Sunday said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has no longer enjoys full support from its own MPAs in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Speaking to a private news channel, he said that public frustration were

growing in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa over governance lapses and alleged corruption in KP. Responding to a question, he said that the formula for Senate elections had been agreed with PTI to curb horse-trading. "Had the Senate elections been held through open balloting, PTI would have secured even fewer seats than those allotted under the

agreed formula," he said. Criticizing CM today's role, he said that the Chief Minister's failure to ensure the oath taking of new members before the Senate elections was a violation of constitutional responsibility. He criticized the KP government for once again evading its constitutional role and attempting to undermine the democratic process.

## Senator Rubina Khalid condemns honor killing

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Senator Rubina Khalid Sunday strongly condemned the brutal killing of a young couple in Balochistan over their choice to marry of their own free will. "I strongly condemn the murder of the young

couple for choosing to marry by their own will," she said in a statement. Calling the act "an unforgivable crime," Senator Khalid stressed that such heinous acts are nothing less than terrorism. "Islam and the Constitution of Pakistan empower women to make decisions about their own

lives," she stated, urging society to respect individual freedoms. Expressing hope for swift justice, she said, "We expect that the perpetrators will be punished soon." Senator Khalid emphasized the need to build a society that upholds freedom of choice and respects the right to life and dignity.

## Rescue 1122 put on high alert for possible flooding

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rescue 1122 Rawalpindi has been put on high alert on Sunday as heavy rains are expected in Rawalpindi and Islamabad starting from July 21. The emergency preparations have been completed to deal with any possible situation. According to Rescue 1122 media coordinator Muhammad Usman Gujjar, Code Red has been enforced in Rawalpindi. All staff holidays have been cancelled, and rescue teams have been deployed in low-lying areas. Heavy machinery and emergency

equipment have also been dispatched to key points. In view of possible urban flooding, emergency drills have been carried out, and Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) have been activated to assist the public. The Rescue Control Room is now operating 24/7 to monitor all activities and ensure timely response. Rescue 1122 has issued important safety instructions for the public. The people were instructed to stay away from nullahs, rivers and electricity poles during rain. They were asked not to take shelter

under weak or damaged roofs and move to safe places in case of urban flooding. Parents were advised to keep children away from water channels and danger zones. In case of any emergency, call the Rescue Helpline 1122 immediately. Special alert has been issued for residents living around Nallah Lai, as the area is prone to flooding during heavy rain. Rescue 1122 spokesman said that all officers and staff are on duty in the field and fully prepared to help the people during the monsoon spell.



ISLAMABAD: Ali Hassan Habib, President of Adventure Foundation Pakistan, and Aftab ur Rehman Rana, Vice President, present a shield to H.E. Marilina Armellini, Ambassador of the Italian Republic to Pakistan, during the closing ceremony of the 21st National Children's Mountain Conservation Meet-2025 and Children's Mountain Forum, held under the theme 'Climate Change and its Impact on the Mountain Environment,' at a local hotel.

## Islamabad to Kohala bridge a treat

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad to Kohala Bridge in Azad Kashmir has become a major attraction this summer, drawing visitors with its picturesque landscapes and serene environment, providing a perfect getaway for those looking to escape the hustle and bustle of urban life and immerse themselves in nature. Speaking exclusively to PTV News, a tourism department official discussed the Islamabad to Kohala Bridge's growing appeal, highlighting how its stunning surroundings are attracting more tourists, both from within the region and beyond, thereby contributing to the area's increasing tourism influx. "The Islamabad to Kohala Bridge has become a symbol of natural beauty, attracting not only local tourists but also travelers from across the country", said a seller. This summer, it has witnessed a surge in visitors who are eager to explore its scenic views and enjoy the outdoors," the representative said. The area has become especially popular for fam-

ily outings, with many visitors opting to spend quality time by the river, enjoy boating activities, or take part in hiking trails nearby, said a local. Citizens, including families and children have shared their delight in visiting the area. One visitor from Rawalpindi mentioned how their children loved playing by the river and enjoying the cool breeze, while another family expressed how refreshing it was to find a place that offered both tranquility and adventure. Many others remarked on the cleanliness of the environment and the welcoming atmosphere, making it a perfect getaway for families looking to escape the routine. The growing number of tourists has also given rise to local businesses, with several eateries and shops flourishing in the area, further enhancing the overall experience for visitors. A visitor from came from Lahore shared how their children were thrilled by the river and enjoyed a peaceful picnic by the bridge, while another family highlighted how

refreshing it was to spend time away from the city's hustle and bustle. Another group of visitors said they found the spot perfect for family bonding, with everyone from kids to adults enjoying the tranquil atmosphere and fresh air. One family from Islamabad mentioned how their children had a blast exploring the surroundings, while another visitor from Karachi said their family took a long walk along the bridge, soaking in the natural beauty and enjoying a peaceful day away from the city. The spot has become a favorite for families looking to spend quality time together in a serene environment, said another Muhammad Aslam a visitor. One visitor from Lahore mentioned how much their family enjoyed the peaceful setting, but also voiced the need for additional facilities. "It's a beautiful spot, but there could be more amenities like clean restrooms, seating areas, and better food options for families who come here to spend the day," the visitor suggested.



5 killed, 11 hurt in clash

PUL-I-KHUMRI (Pajhwok): At least five people were killed and 11 other, including a woman and several other local residents, were wounded during an armed clash between two families over a property dispute in Baghlan on Sunday. The police headquarters quoted Baghlan-i-Markazi district police chief Mullah Mohammad Zia Tawus as saying the incident took place in Shahr-i-Kohna area of the Baghlan-i-Markazi district on Sunday morning around 5:30 a.m.

1,500 refugee families returned

KABUL (BNA): Over 1,500 Afghan refugee families have returned to their homeland from Iran and Pakistan in a single day on Saturday. The High Commission for Addressing Migrants' Issues reported that a total of 1,567 families, comprising 9,842 individuals, were forcibly repatriated. These returnees entered Afghanistan through various key border and transit routes, including Islam Qala-Herat, Ab-risham-Nimroz, Spin Boldak-Kandahar, Torkham-Nangarhar and Bahramcha-Helmand.

Top five achievers of 1404 Kankor exam

KABUL (TOLONews): The National Examination Authority on Sunday announced results of 1404 (solar year) nationwide university entrance exam (Kankor).

This year's Kankor was held in two categories: General and Religious Schools.

Sayed Musa, son of Seyed Dawood Sadat, secured the first position in the 1404 Kankor with a score of 356.574.

In this exam, Mohammad Nazir, son of Mohammad Taher, also scored 356.574 and ranked second; Hamza, son of Abdul Latif, ranked third with 353.533; Azmatullah, son of Bismillah, ranked fourth with 353.283; and

Wakman, son of Amirullah, came fifth with 353.283.

It is worth noting that both Seyed Musa and Mohammad Nazir graduated from Pamir Nowin Private High School, Hamza from Ghulam Haidar Khan High School, and Azmatullah from Ibrahim Khalilullah High School. All of them have been admitted to the Faculty of Medicine at Kabul Medical University. Wakman, who ranked fifth, graduated from Surdag High School and has been admitted to the Faculty of Medicine at Nangarhar University.

On the other hand, Faisal, son of Kalamuddin,

scored 316.066 and ranked first in the Religious Schools category. He graduated from Imam Mohammad bin Hasan Shaybani Darul Uloom in Kabul and has been admitted to the Faculty of Law and Political Science at Kabul University.

At the same time, Abdul Baqi Haqqani, head of the National Examination Authority, stated during the results announcement ceremony that 100,548 individuals participated in this year's Kankor exam.

Haqqani added that out of this number, 51,181 individuals have been admitted to higher and semi-higher education institutions.

Taliban dismiss 23 faculty, staff

KABUL (Amu TV): Taliban have dismissed at least 23 faculty and staff members from Kabul Polytechnic University in recent days, according to sources familiar with the matter.

The dismissals include 10 professors and 13 administrative employees, several of whom were informed without prior explanation, sources told Amu TV.

The Taliban-appointed head of the university has reportedly warned remaining faculty that academic promotions will now be contingent on "production of goods," though the directive's specifics remain unclear.

The Taliban-run Ministry of Higher Education has yet to publicly comment on the firings.

The latest dismissals follow an earlier round of terminations in May, when dozens of male and female staff at Kabul Polytechnic were removed from their posts. At the time, Taliban officials cited a national order to reduce staffing levels across government-run institutions.

A source familiar with that process said the move was carried out under a broader directive approved by Taliban leader Hibatullah Akhundzada, which called for a 20 percent reduction in public sector employment, including the education system and the Taliban's own security forces.

The cuts are not limited to Kabul. In mid-May, more than 200 university employees were dismissed from public institutions in the southeastern provinces of Khost and Paktia, according to academic and administrative sources.

At Sheikh Zayed University in Khost, 120 faculty and staff members were removed in a single day, a source at the institution said. Most held advanced degrees and had previously worked under the former government.

In neighboring Paktia, three sources confirmed that 90 employees at the province's public university — including instructors, clerical workers, and hospital staff — were also let go.

The wave of dismissals has raised concerns among Afghan academics about the future of higher education under Taliban rule.

Afghanistan expands regional role

KABUL (TOLONews): In its annual report, Afghanistan's Ministry of Economy criticized the political behavior of some countries regarding Afghanistan's economic development.

According to the Ministry's Deputy for Technical Affairs, some countries did not want Afghanistan to take part in the region's economic progress.

He said the Islamic Emirate is working to integrate Afghanistan's economy with the region through an economy-centered policy.

Abdul Latif Nazari, the Deputy Minister of Economy, stated: "Some countries, whose names I won't mention — tried to isolate Afghanistan from international political and economic changes and focused on increasing our country's dependency. However, thanks to our political intelligence, we were able to integrate our economy with the region's."

Nazari added that Afghanistan is now actively participating in major regional projects such as TAPI, CASA-1000, and China's Belt and Road Initiative.

He emphasized that such projects can help secure Afghanistan's position in the regional economy.

Nazari also described reports by international organizations on food insecurity and unemployment in Afghanistan as exagger-



ated, claiming that the food situation has improved compared to the past.

He further said that the reduction or suspension of foreign aid has not significantly impacted the Afghan economy, and efforts are underway to ensure Afghanistan no longer depends on foreign assistance.

He noted: "The issue of food insecurity, which is raised by some foreign media outlets, is exaggerated from our perspective. The food security situation has improved in Afghanistan, and employment opportunities have also seen progress compared to before."

According to ministry officials, in the past year,

370 development projects and 873 subsidiary projects were implemented nationwide, funded through domestic revenues.

In the same period, 140 non-governmental organizations, six of which are foreign, received operating licenses from the Ministry of Economy.

The ministry's spokesperson, Abdul Rahman Habib, added: "Last year, we monitored 370 development projects of budgetary institutions and 873 subsidiary projects at the provincial level. These were funded through internal revenues and the development budget, with the goal of improving project

quality, preventing deviations, and avoiding delays in completion."

Abdul Salam Ashrafi, Head of Coordination for Non-Governmental Organizations, said: "Our request to NGOs is to take advantage of this valuable opportunity to focus on those living in remote areas, who have not received attention for the past forty years."

The Ministry of Economy also stated that special committees have been established to address the problems of returnees, and 109 projects, costing 309 million Afghans, are being implemented in the areas of healthcare, employment, education, and housing.

No pensions for four years: Kabul retirees protest again

KABUL (TOLONews): Nearly four years after not receiving their pension entitlements, a number of retired and homebound civil servants are once again calling on the authorities to address their rights.

One such individual, Zia Gul, who is 50 years old and lives with his disabled son, is demanding access to his pension. She shares the hardship of her life: "I live in a single room and pay 5,000 Afghans in rent. A

widow whose son earns just 250 Afghans a day, should she pay the rent or feed her family? What can she do?"

Several other retired workers have once again gathered in front of the Pension Fund Office to protest delays in the disbursement of their pension payments.

These individuals, many of whom served in government institutions for years, say that the suspension of their benefits for over four

years has made it extremely difficult to meet their basic living needs.

Abdul Rauf, another retiree, said: "It's been four years and I still haven't received my pension. We've come here hoping that someone might show mercy to the elderly and the poor. We have children to care for, and these entitlements must be given."

Abdul Baqi, who faces a similar situation, said: "A representative from the

Ministry of Finance came and told us that by Saturday, our files would be processed. He said, 'My word is the minister's word.'"

Over the past four years, pensioners have repeatedly gathered in front of various government offices in Kabul to press for their rights. However, the caretaker government has yet to announce a clear timeline for when these pension payments will be issued.

Polio vaccination drive launched

KABUL (Ariana News): Afghanistan has launched a new nationwide polio vaccination campaign aimed at immunizing children under the age of five against the debilitating disease, Afghanistan Polio-Free Organization announced Sunday.

The campaign, which began on July 20, will be carried out across multiple provinces and districts, and includes the administration of Vitamin A supplements alongside oral polio vaccines.

Health officials say the initiative is designed not only to prevent the spread of polio but also to strengthen children's immune systems and improve overall child health.

"The campaign aims to protect children under the age of five from the debilitating effects of polio," the organization stated, urging families to cooperate fully with health workers to ensure that no child is left behind.

Ambassador advocates for justice in Rezayi case



KABUL (BNA): Fazl Mohammad Haqqani, the ambassador of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in Iran, has reiterated the commitment to pursuing justice for Amir Taha Rezayi, a young Afghan man tragically murdered by two Iranian citizens.

During a recent visit to

the family of Rezayi in Tehran, Ambassador Haqqani expressed his heartfelt condolences and shared in their grief over the brutal incident.

He emphasized the importance of holding the perpetrators accountable, stating that the case has been formally raised with

the relevant authorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The embassy of Afghanistan continues to advocate for the rights and safety of Afghan citizens abroad, highlighting the ongoing diplomatic efforts to address such serious issues.

‘Not a single foreign soldier present in Afghanistan’



KABUL (Pajhwok): Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs Maulvi Amir Khan Muttaqi says not a single foreign military personnel is present anywhere in Afghanistan and the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan does not want any foreign military presence in the country.

His remarks came in response to repeated claims by US President Donald Trump regarding Bagram Airbase. Trump has asserted on multiple occasions that Bagram Airbase was now under the control of Chinese forces and that the previous US administration should not have relinquished such a strategically important base.

However, addressing a graduation ceremony of dozens of diplomats at the Institute of Diplomacy under the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs, Muttaqi responded: "Recently, US President Donald Trump has repeatedly claimed that foreigners have allegedly taken control of Bagram Airbase."

He added: "We remind them that they must try to understand Afghanistan, the Afghan people, and—most importantly—the Islamic Emirate and its leadership. If the caretaker government had been willing to tolerate the presence of foreign forces, then what were the past 20 years of sacrifices and hundreds of thousands of martyrs for? If Afghans were ready to accept foreign military presence, they would have accepted the former Soviet Union. There would have been no mass migration or suffering."

He stated that had

Afghans been open to foreign military presence, they would have accepted the troops of the United States, NATO and nearly 50 other countries.

However, neither the Islamic Emirate nor the Afghan people accept any foreign military presence on Afghan soil.

Muttaqi stressed that this matter should be taken seriously by President Trump and other nations.

He said IEA maintains political, diplomatic and economic relations with other countries, but there is absolutely no foreign military presence in Afghanistan—a fact known to all.

He concluded: "We assure the entire world that there is not a single foreign soldier from any country present anywhere in Afghanistan."

Clean water out of reach for remote Khost village residents

KHOST CITY (Pajhwok): Residents of Babark Tana village in the Ali Sher district of southeastern Khost province say they have been lacking access to clean drinking water for years and as a result, they are forced to rely on stagnant, contaminated water from a local stream.

Shayesta Gul, a local farmer, told Pajhwok: "We've been using water from the stream for years. Even animals drink from it. This is our fate—this is how we live." He added that the lack of access to clean water has become a daily hardship. Women, children, and the elderly spend hours searching for water.

"There's a severe drought. There's no water at all. Children and women constantly roam from one place to another in search

of water," he said. "No one has ever dug a well for us." Babark Tana is located approximately 50 kilometers from Khost city, near the Durand Line. Most of its residents rely on livestock as their primary source of livelihood.

**Drought, displacement**  
Another resident, Noor Gul, who has spent much of his life raising livestock, said: "When it rains, the entire village depends on rainwater—because we have no other source. Whatever little water is available is usually dirty and unsafe."

He added that the ongoing drought has caused serious concern among the community, as all their basic needs—including drinking water—are solely dependent on rainfall.

Several residents of this remote village report suf-

fering from various illnesses due to the lack of clean drinking water.

Dawood, another local resident, said that the water crisis has even forced some families to leave the area.

"Animals drink this water, and we use it too, which causes many diseases. We urge the government to seriously consider our need for clean water," he said.

Din Mohammad, a tribal elder from the village, expressed frustration over years of neglect by both the previous and current governments.

"No government has ever paid attention to this area," he said. "The people here are poor. They cannot afford to dig wells or build water systems themselves."

He urged the authorities: "We need the government to take action—dig wells,

install boreholes, and build water reservoirs. There should also be a separate water system for livestock."

Officials' response

Local officials acknowledge the challenges residents face in accessing clean water but maintain that considerable efforts have been made in this regard.

Mestaghfar Gurbaz, spokesperson for the Khost governor, told Pajhwok that since the return of the Islamic Emirate, the provincial administration has prioritized access to clean water.

He noted that numerous charitable and humanitarian organizations had cooperated with the government to provide clean water to thousands of households in Khost city and surrounding districts.

KABUL (Pajhwok): Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Pakistan last week signed an agreement on feasibility study of the 'Trans-Afghan railway project. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees arrived in Kabul today amid continued forced deportation of Afghan refugees from Iran and the UN allocated \$10 million in aid for refugees.

**Casualties**  
Six people were killed and another was injured in various incidents of violence in Afghanistan last week. Unidentified assailants killed five members of a family in Ghazni and injured a child, local officials had said.

The Police Headquarters in eastern Nangarhar prov-

ince said that a young man was killed in a dispute over a ludo game in the Kama district of the province.

In the previous week, three people had been killed in separate incidents in Afghanistan.

Before the regime change in August 2021, hundreds of civilians, insurgents and security forces would get killed and injured every week.

Delegations from Uzbekistan and Pakistan visit Kabul

Last week, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Pakistan signed an agreement on the feasibility study of the 'Trans-Afghan' railway project in Kabul.

Foreign ministers from the three countries also held

trilateral talks on political consultations and emphasized establishing strong relations between these countries. They also stressed the need for regional stability, economic connectivity and the development of joint trade.

According to reports, the meeting emphasized that the potential of the region should be fully utilized through continuous cooperation to bring about lasting prosperity to the nations of the region.

UN refugee chief in Kabul amid forced deportations

Iran has recently stepped up forcibly deporting Afghans in huge numbers. Afghan refugees are also being deported from

Pakistan. Last week, reports said about 30,000 Afghans are being deported from Iran every day.

Acting Minister of Refugees and Repatriation Maulvi Abdul Kabir said the forced return of a large number of refugees had affected the country's economic and social situation, seeking the international community's assistance in this regard.

Meanwhile, experts termed the forced return of refugees a violation of human rights and called on the United Nations to take action to stop this process.

UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Roza Otunbayeva, said that the return of Afghan refugees from

Iran had increased alarmingly; stressing serious need for cooperation and assistance with them.

"If this situation continues, it will become difficult to address the problems of these refugees,"

Last week, Arafat Jamal, the head of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Afghanistan, met with the Deputy Prime Minister for Administration, Maulvi Abdul Salam Hanafi, and said that the organization has allocated \$10 million in cash assistance for returning Afghan refugees and is trying to attract more assistance.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi arrived in Kabul on Saturday to

assist the problems of Afghan refugees.

Filippo Grandi said the purpose of his visit was to meet officials of the Islamic Emirate and the Afghan people in order to understand the situation of returnees and explore joint solutions. While acknowledging the global financial crisis, he said UNHCR would continue its efforts and support for Afghan returnees as before.

Sheikh Kalem-ur-Rahman Fani, Deputy Minister of Finance and Administration of the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation said that addressing the problems of refugees was a shared responsibility of all.

He expressed hope that the visit of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees would play a positive role in integrating the returning refugees and attracting assistance for them.

**Data leak in Britain**  
According to reports, the information of Afghans who cooperated with British forces has been leaked. The leaked data includes documents of about 19,000 Afghans. A report in the Daily Telegraph newspaper also claimed that after the disclosure, investigation and prosecution of these people in Afghanistan had intensified.

However, Hamdullah Fitrat, Deputy Spokesperson of the Islamic Emirate, said the general amnesty decree provided protection to everyone and so far no

one had been arrested or killed for their past actions or under prosecution.

He added: "The reports of tracking down these people after the disclosure of the list are false and inaccurate. The intelligence agency has no need to monitor those already pardoned. All relevant documents and information about these people are available in the Ministries of Defense and Interior and the intelligence agency. We do not rely on documents leaked by the British."

Fitrat added: "No retaliatory actions are being taken by the Islamic Emirate. No individual or authority has the right to pursue, harass, or harm anyone for their previous affiliations."



# Russia is open to peace with Ukraine but insists on achieving its goals

MOSCOW (AP): Russia is open to peace with Ukraine but achieving its goals remains a priority, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Sunday, days after U.S. President Donald Trump gave Moscow a 50-day deadline to agree to a ceasefire or face tougher sanctions.

Peskov and other Russian officials have repeatedly rejected accusations from Kyiv and its Western partners of stalling peace talks. Meanwhile, Moscow continues to intensify its long-range attacks on Ukrainian cities, launching more drones in a single night than it did during some entire months in 2024, and analysts say the barrages are likely to escalate.

“President (Vladimir) Putin has repeatedly spoken of his desire to bring the Ukrainian settlement to a peaceful conclusion as soon as possible. This is a long process, it requires effort, and it is not easy,” Peskov told state TV reporter Pavel Zarubin.

“The main thing for us is to achieve our goals. Our goals are clear,” he added. The Kremlin has insist-

ed that any peace deal should see Ukraine withdraw from the four regions that Russia illegally annexed in September 2022, but never fully captured. It also wants Ukraine to renounce its bid to join NATO and accept strict limits on its armed forces — demands Kyiv and its Western allies have rejected.

In his nightly address Saturday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said his officials have proposed a new round of peace talks this week. Russian state media on Sunday reported that no date has yet been set for the negotiations, but said Istanbul would likely remain the host city.

Trump threatened Russia on July 14 with steep tariffs and announced a rejuvenated pipeline for American weapons to reach Ukraine, hardening his stance toward Moscow after months of frustration following unsuccessful negotiations aimed at ending the war. The direct Russia-Ukraine negotiations in Istanbul resulted in several rounds of prisoner exchanges but little else.

Trump said he would implement “severe tariffs” unless a peace deal is reached within 50 days. He provided few details on how they would be implemented, but suggested they would target Russia’s trading partners in an effort to isolate Moscow in the global economy.

In addition, Trump said European allies would buy “billions and billions” of dollars of U.S. military equipment to be transferred to Ukraine, replenishing the besieged country’s supplies of weapons. Included in the plan are Patriot air defense systems, a top priority for Ukraine as it fends off Russian drones and missiles. Doubts were recently raised about Trump’s commitment to supply Ukraine when the Pentagon paused shipments over concerns that U.S. stockpiles were running low.

Elsewhere, Ukraine’s air force said it shot down 18 of 57 Shahed-type and decoy drones launched by Russia overnight into Sunday, with 7 more disappearing from radar.

Two women were injured in Zaporizhzhia, a southern Ukrainian region

partly occupied by Russia, when a drone struck their house, according to the regional military administration. Two more civilians were injured in Ukraine’s northeastern Kharkiv province, after a drone slammed into a residential building, local Ukrainian officials said.

Later Sunday, drones struck a leafy square in the center of Sumy, wounding a woman and her 7-year-old son, officials said. The strike also damaged a power line, leaving some 100 households without electricity, according to Serhii Krivosheienko of the municipal military administration.

Meanwhile, Russia’s Defense Ministry said its forces overnight shot down 93 Ukrainian drones targeting Russian territory, including at least 15 that appeared to head for Moscow. Ten more drones were downed on the approach to the capital Sunday, according to Mayor Sergei Sobyenin. He said that one drone struck a residential building in Zelenograd, on the outskirts of Moscow, damaging an apartment but causing no casualties.



MAZRAA, Syria: Bedouin fighters, right, gather as Syrian government security forces, left, block them from entering Sweida province, in Busra al-Harir village, southern Syria, Sunday.

## Oath on reserved seats a dark chapter in politics: Saif

E.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information, Barrister Dr. Saif, has stated that the opposition parties’ decision to take oath on reserved seats will be remembered as one of the darkest chapters in the country’s parliamentary history. He said that by misusing the 26th Constitutional Amendment, a dagger has been thrust into the heart of democratic politics.

Dr. Saif remarked that the parties rejected by the people in comparison to PTI have now been handed PTI’s reserved seats, which is a blatant insult to the public mandate. He termed

the appropriation of these seats as a severe blow to the credibility of parliamentary politics, holding what he described as “conscience-less politicians” responsible for this act.

He further stated that had the opposition possessed moral courage, it would have refused the reserved seats.

“The opposition, despite winning, remains dissatisfied, while PTI, despite the imposed defeat, is content owing to the unwavering support of the people,” he said. The people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, he added, have clearly expressed their trust in PTI by electing its representatives and rejecting others.

Referring to the oath-

taking ceremony at the Governor’s House, Barrister Dr. Saif said that the event symbolized taking oath over the “corpse of democracy.”

He clarified that the Speaker of the Provincial Assembly had not cancelled the swearing-in ceremony but merely postponed it until July 24 due to the lack of quorum.

He accused the Election Commission of misrepresenting facts and stated that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government strongly condemns this misrepresentation. According to him, by conducting the oath ceremony at the Governor’s House, democratic traditions have been disregarded.

Dr. Saif went on to allege that the Election Commission is acting on the directives of an illegitimate federal government and is bent on dismantling PTI. He warned that the Chief Election Commissioner would be held fully accountable for all unconstitutional and unlawful actions.

Concluding his remarks, the Information Advisor said that the Chief Election Commissioner will also have to answer for the rigging in the February 8 elections. He condemned the ongoing manipulation of the Constitution and the law, asserting that those responsible for these violations will soon be held accountable.

## Iranians told to use less water as heatwave worsens shortages

TEHRAN (AFP): Iranian authorities have urged residents to limit water consumption as the country grapples with severe shortages amid an ongoing heatwave, local media said on Sunday.

Water scarcity is a major issue in Iran, particularly in arid provinces in the country’s south, with shortages blamed on mismanagement and overexploitation of underground resources, as well as the growing impact of climate change.

On Saturday, the national meteorological service said Iran was experiencing its hottest week of the year

so far, with temperatures exceeding 50- degrees Celsius in some areas.

Government spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani announced in a post on X on Sunday that Tehran province would observe a public holiday on Wednesday due to the ongoing heatwave.

“In light of the continued extreme heat and the necessity of conserving water and electricity, Wednesday ... has been declared a holiday in Tehran Province,” she wrote.

Temperatures in Tehran reached 40°C on Sunday,

with a further rise to 41°C forecast for Monday, according to meteorological reports.

Tehran city council chair Mehdi Chamran urged people to “conserve water to avoid drops in supplies”, according to the ISNA news agency.

Authorities across Iran have issued similar appeals in recent days, asking residents in several provinces to limit water usage.

Tehran’s provincial water management company called to reduce usage by “at least 20 per cent” to help ease the shortages.

In a statement, it said

that “the reservoirs of the dams supplying water to Tehran are currently at their lowest level in a century”, following years of steady decline in rainfall.

Javan, a conservative newspaper, reported on Saturday that authorities had reduced water supplies in parts of the capital in a bid to mitigate the crisis, resulting in “water outages lasting between 12 and 18 hours” in some areas.

Energy Minister Abbas Aliabadi apologised on Sunday over reduced water supplies, saying that the move comes “to better manage resources”.

## Trump, Xi might meet ahead of or during October APEC summit

WASHINGTON (Reuters): U.S. President Donald Trump might visit China before going to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit between October 30 and November 1, or he could meet Chinese leader Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the APEC event in South Korea, the South China Morning Post reported on Sunday citing multiple sources.

The two countries have been trying to negotiate an end to an escalating tit-for-tat tariff war that has upended global trade and supply chains.

The two sides have discussed a potential meeting between the leaders in the region this year, but they have not confirmed a date or location yet, according to a person familiar with the matter.

Trump has sought to impose tariffs on U.S. importers for virtually all foreign goods, which he says will stimulate domestic manufacturing and which critics say will make many consumer goods more expensive for Americans.

He has called for a universal base tariff rate of

10% on goods imported from all countries, with higher rates for imports from the most “problematic” ones, including China: imports from there now have the highest tariff rate of 55%. Trump has set a deadline of August 12 for the U.S. and China to reach a durable tariffs agreement.

A spokesperson for Trump did not respond to a request for comment about the reported plans for a meeting with Xi in the autumn. The two countries’ most recent high-level meeting was on July 11, when U.S. Secretary of

State Marco Rubio and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi had what both described as a productive and positive meeting in Malaysia about how trade negotiations should proceed. Rubio said then that Trump had been invited to China to meet with Xi, and said that both leaders “want it to happen.”

On Friday, China Commerce Minister Wang Wentao said China wants to bring its trade ties with the U.S. back to a stable footing and that recent talks in Europe showed there was no need for a tariff war.

He raised concerns over the deteriorating law and order situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and said that the provincial government had utterly failed to contain terrorism. He pointed to the increasing frequency of violent incidents and growing insecurity among citizens as evidence of the government’s inability to maintain peace.

He also painted a bleak picture of the province’s education and health-care sectors, saying that both systems are in disarray. Major hospitals in Islamabad are overwhelmed with patients from KP, which highlights the lack of basic facilities within the province, he added.

## KP assembly quorum exploited with ulterior motives: Talal

FAISALABAD (APP): Minister of State for Interior and senior PML-N leader Senator Talal Chaudhry said on Sunday that Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Assembly was playing dirty games to sabotage the very spirit of Constitution, and a deep-rooted conspiracy had been hatched intentionally to exploit the quorum with ulterior motives to deviate from set procedure of Senate elections.

Talking to the media, he alleged that the PTI, as usual, intended to sell out seats to the billionaires by allotting them tickets after taking kickbacks from the aspirants of the Senate seats. He accused the KP Assembly speaker of defying clear court orders

by deliberately preventing oath-taking of newly-elected members by using the excuse of quorum. He termed it a grave constitutional violation and said that the speaker’s conduct not only undermines authority of the judiciary but also sabotages democratic processes in the province.

He said that delay in administering oath to members on reserved seats is not spontaneous but part of a calculated political conspiracy. “The excuse of quorum was planned long ago and the media had already exposed it,” he added.

Referring to the ongoing delay in constitution of Senate, he said PTI’s policies were reckless and non-seri-

ous. He raised concerns over the deteriorating law and order situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and said that the provincial government had utterly failed to contain terrorism. He pointed to the increasing frequency of violent incidents and growing insecurity among citizens as evidence of the government’s inability to maintain peace.

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## Integrating youth into digital economy PITP become model initiative: Sharjeel

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh government has announced a record budget of Rs42 billion for universities and digital training programs for youth. It has also launched the second phase of the People’s IT Program, allocating Rs1.4 billion, the highest amount among all provinces in the country.

He said that the People’s Information Technology Program (PITP) has become a model initiative for integrating youth into the digital economy.

Memon said that under the first phase of the People’s IT Program, 13,565 students have been trained in modern IT fields so far. Additionally, 300 high-performing students have been awarded Google Chromebooks and laptops

through a merit-based and transparent process.

He said that the second phase of the IT Program has been launched with an allocated budget of Rs1.4 billion. Under this expanded phase, 35,000 students will receive advanced training in 12 high-demand IT sectors.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that a record Rs42 billion has been allocated for government universities in the financial year 2025–26, the highest among all provinces. He added that the Sindh government has made history in the education sector and is taking steps to equip the new generation with modern technology.

He said that the new

building of the Food Engineering Department at NED University has been constructed at a cost of Rs96.481 million, while the International Boys Hostel was completed at a cost of Rs67.11 million and has been opened for students. These projects, he added, are clear evidence of the improvement in higher education infrastructure.

He further said that the Sindh government is not only providing educational opportunities to the youth but also preparing them for practical life, enabling them to play a positive role in the country’s economy. He added that these initiatives are a guarantee of the province’s development and a brighter future of its youth.

## Senate by-election for Punjab seat today

LAHORE (APP): A by-election for a vacant Senate seat from Punjab will be held today (Monday, July 21, 2025).

The seat fell vacant following the demise of Senator Sajid Mir.

According to the Provincial Election Commission on Sunday, the polling will take place at the Punjab Assembly Hall, which has been officially designated as the polling station for the election.

The Provincial Election Commissioner Punjab will serve as the returning officer for the by-poll. Members of the Punjab Assembly will cast their votes to elect the new Senator.

All MPAs have been directed to bring their official assembly identification cards to participate in the voting process.

Polling will be conducted from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM without any interruption.

## Iran offers support, condolences

ISLAMABAD (APP): Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan, Dr. Reza Amiri Moghadam on Sunday expressed deep sorrow over the tragic loss of lives caused by heavy monsoon rains across various regions of Pakistan, offering condolences and reaffirming Iran’s readiness to assist.

In a message posted on his official account on social media platform ‘X’ (formerly Twitter), the ambassador wrote, “Extremely dejected to learn that the heavy monsoon rain claimed the lives of hundreds of my dear Pakistani brothers and sisters and injured many more people in different regions. May Allah Almighty bestow blessings on the souls of the deceased and place them in Jannah.”

Dr. Moghadam extended his condolences to the government and people of Pakistan, particularly to the grieving families who lost loved ones. He also offered prayers for the swift recovery of those injured in the floods.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran is ready for any assistance to the government and people of the brotherly and neighboring country of Pakistan,” he stated, adding, “Our hearts and souls are with our brothers and sisters in this time of grief.”

As rescue and relief efforts continue across flood-hit areas, Iran’s gesture of solidarity highlights the strong humanitarian bond and close bilateral ties between the two neighboring nations.

## Syria’s armed Bedouins withdrawn from city

MAZRAA, Syria (AP): Syria’s armed Bedouin clans announced Sunday they had withdrawn from the Druze-majority city of Sweida following week-long clashes and a U.S.-brokered ceasefire, as humanitarian aid convoys started to enter the battered southern city.

The clashes between militias of the Druze religious minority and the Sunni Muslim clans killed hundreds and threatened to unravel Syria’s already fragile postwar transition. Israel also launched

dozens of airstrikes in the Druze-majority Sweida province, targeting government forces who had effectively sided with the Bedouins.

The clashes also led to a series of targeted sectarian attacks against the Druze community, followed by revenge attacks against the Bedouins.

A series of tit-for-tat kidnappings sparked the clashes in various towns and villages in the province, which later spread to Sweida city, the provincial capital.

Government forces were redeployed to halt renewed fighting that erupted Thursday, before withdrawing again.

Interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa, who has been perceived as more sympathetic to the Bedouins, had tried to appeal to the Druze community while remaining critical of the militias. He later urged the Bedouins to leave the city, saying that they “cannot replace the role of the state in handling the country’s affairs and restoring security.”