

Mountaineer Sadpara dies
F.P. Report

GILGIT: Local climber Iftikhar Sadpara has died, and three foreign mountaineers, were injured after an avalanche struck Camp 1 at the world's second-largest mountain, K2, in the Shigar district of Gilgit-Baltistan. The avalanche occurred on July 18 at around 2:30 pm at Camp 1 of K2, which is located approximately 500 meters ahead of the base camp.



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ISLAMABAD: Content creator, Talha Ahmad met Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

PM meets young content creator Talha
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday met and appreciated Talha Ahmad, a young digital content creator, for his talent.

During a meeting, the prime minister lauded Talha Ahmad for his successful content at the digital platform, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. In recognition of his talent, the prime minister awarded him with an honorary shield, besides giving away an electronic tablet.

The prime minister observed that young people, including children, in the country were proving their mettle worldwide and Talha Ahmad was one of such examples, possessing immense talent. On the occasion, Talha Ahmad expressed his gratitude to the prime minister for appreciation and encouragement.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif congratulated Pakistan Air Force on winning awards at the Royal International Air Tattoo (RIAT) air show held in the United Kingdom.

He praised the professional skills of the leadership, pilots and technicians of the Pakistan Air Force for the excellent performance of the JF-17 Thunder Block C and C-130 of the Pakistan Air Force. He said, "By the grace of Allah, the vision of the leadership of the Pakistan Air Force and the professional skills of the pilots and technicians are making Pakistan's name shine all over the world."

The Pakistan Air Force practically proved its mettle by shooting down six enemy aircraft in May 2025, he recalled. He said the successes of the Pakistan Air Force were a reflection of the fact that the defence of Pakistan's airspace was in strong hands.

The professionalism of the Pakistan Air Force will be exemplified for the world because of its excellent performance in the largest and longest air war of the 21st century, he added.

Moreover, the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that for the first time in 14 years, Pakistan had posted a \$2.1 billion annual current account surplus, and the largest after 22 years, which is a historic milestone.

21 dead in Iran as coach overturns

TEHRAN (AFP): At least 21 people were killed and nearly 30 injured when a coach overturned in southern Iran on Saturday, state media reported. The accident, the cause of which remains unclear, occurred near Kavara, a town about 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) from the capital, Tehran.

"Unfortunately, 21 deaths have been recorded," Kavara Hospital director Mohsen Afrasiabi told state television, adding that 29 people were injured. Iranian media showed images of a coach lying on its side on a mountain road. Iran has a poor road safety record, with nearly 20,000 deaths from traffic accidents in the 12 months to March, according to official news agency IRNA.

Nine terrorists killed in Hangu, DPO, SHO injured

F.P. Report

HANGU: A counter-terror operation by security forces in Hangu has resulted in the death of nine terrorists and injuries to four officers, including the District Police Officer (DPO) and a Station House Officer (SHO).

The operation, targeting Indian-backed militant elements of the group known as "Fitna-e-Hindustan," was launched following intelligence regarding the presence of insurgents in the region.

The offensive, described as large-scale and ongoing, began in areas including Zargari and Shinwari, where militants had reportedly taken refuge in mountainous terrain. Authorities imposed a curfew across the district, with additional deployments of security forces positioned at key locations to prevent any further militant movement or retaliation.

According to police officials, a fierce gun battle erupted in Shinwari during which DPO Muhammad Khalid and SHO Doaba Police Station, Nabi Khan, were wounded. Both were rushed to the District Headquarters Hospital for immediate treatment. Hospital authorities confirmed that DPO Khalid sustained four bullet wounds and has since been moved to Peshawar for further care, while SHO Nabi Khan suffered minor injuries.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police and Frontier Corps (FC) have expanded the operation to flush out remaining militant elements. The police spokesperson confirmed that multiple terrorists were injured, and the crackdown would continue until

all threats were neutralised.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Saturday paid tribute to the police forces for killing nine Khawarij in a security operation in Hangu. He prayed for the speedy recovery of DPO Muhammad Khalid, who was injured in the operation.

Under the leadership of brave officers like Muhammad Khalid, the police and security forces will together completely eradicate terrorism from the country, he said adding, "The government and security forces are determined to completely eradicate terrorism from the country."

President Asif Ali Zardari commended the police force for killing four Khawarij terrorists during Hangu operation. The president also prayed for the early recovery of injured District Police Officer (DPO) Muhammad Khalid and SHO Nabi Khan, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release.

The president said that terrorists wanted to sabotage peace and stability which could not be allowed, adding the nation was united and the scourge of terrorism would be defeated at all costs. He also reiterated the resolve that the State would continue its efforts with full force to root out terrorism.

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Saturday paid rich tribute to the security forces for their successful operation against the "Fitna-e-Hindustan" terrorists in Hangu.

Commending their bravery, the Governor expressed deep appreciation for the sacrifices made in the line of duty. He directed the authorities to

ensure the provision of best possible medical treatment to the injured, including Hangu DPO Khalid Khan, Lieutenant Colonel of the Thall Scouts, Bomb Disposal Squad official Asad, and others wounded during the operation. Governor Kundi said that the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are proud of their security forces and stand united with them. He also offered prayers for the swift recovery of the injured personnel.

Mortar explosion kills minor girl, injuring four boys: A mortar shell explosion near the Angoor Adda border in Birmal tehsil, South Waziristan Lower, tragically claimed the life of 13-year-old Jada Bibi, daughter of Gul Sadin. Two of her siblings, Waleemullah (15) and Rizaullah (4), were also injured in the blast.

Additionally, Hazratullah and Khanzada, both sons of Zawar Din, sustained injuries in the same incident. All injured individuals were transported to the District Headquarters Hospital in Wana, where they remain under medical treatment.

According to sources, the affected house reportedly belongs to the uncle of Maulana Rafiuddin, the General Secretary of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI). The incident has sparked grief and outrage among political and social circles, who have strongly condemned the loss of innocent life and property. They have called on the authorities to take immediate measures to ensure the safety of civilians amid the ongoing security situation.

President reaffirms support for Kashmir's freedom struggle

ISLAMABAD (DNA): President Asif Ali Zardari on Saturday paid tribute to the unwavering resolve of the Kashmiri people on the occasion of 'Accession to Pakistan' Day.

The day marked the historic resolution passed on July 19, 1947 in which the people of Kashmir expressed their will to accede to Pakistan. In his message, the president said on July 19, 1947, the brave people of Kashmir passed the historic resolution for accession to Pakistan.

"Accession to Pakistan Day is a shining symbol of

the collective will of the Kashmiri people and their natural and eternal bond with Pakistan," President Secretariat Press Wing, in a press release, quoted the president as saying President Zardari also lauded the Kashmiri people's ongoing struggle for self-determination, despite decades of Indian oppression.

Despite India's ongoing tyranny and repression, the people of Kashmir continued their just struggle with resilience and courage, he said, adding their sacrifices had become a global sym-

bol of freedom, resistance, and sacrifice.

Reaffirming Pakistan's longstanding stance, the president said they would continue to provide their firm moral, political, and diplomatic support to the Kashmiri people till they were granted their right to self-determination in accordance with the United Nations Security Council resolutions. He also expressed firm belief by saying that the struggle of the Kashmiri people would not go in vain as one day, they would be free from the Indian illegal occupation.



HANGU: Injured District Police Officer, Khalid Khan shifting to CMH Kohat for treatment. — F.P. photo

PTI to take action against dissenting party members

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has decided to take strict disciplinary action against dissenting party members over the upcoming Senate elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

According to sources, the party has made it clear that any member defying party decisions will face immediate consequences, including expulsion from PTI. Speaking to media, Barrister Gohar Ali confirmed the decision and revealed that the dissenting members were called for a meeting yesterday (Friday) but failed to show up. "The Chief Minister and I waited for them, but they did not come," he said.

He added that the matter was referred to the party's political committee, which, after thorough consultation, directed the dissenting candidates to withdraw their nominations. "The deadline for withdrawal is tomorrow at 12 PM. If they fail to comply, action will be taken under party discipline," Gohar warned.

He emphasised that the dissenting candidates also hold party positions, and defying the political committee's decision constitutes a violation of PTI's internal code of conduct. PTI faced internal disagreements and resistance during the Senate elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, as veteran workers and leaders who were overlooked in the selection process announced protests.

According to sources, several leaders including Irfan Saleem, Ayesha Bano, Waqas Orakzai, and Khurram Zeeshan were displeased with the party lead-

Disgruntled PTI leaders reject withdrawal calls

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Disgruntled leaders of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) have vowed to contest the upcoming Senate elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), scheduled for July 21, and rejected the withdrawal calls. The resolve was expressed during a meeting of disgruntled PTI leaders, which was attended by Khurram Zeeshan, Irfan Saleem, and Ayesha Bano.

Speaking during the meeting, Khurram said that this issue goes far beyond Senate elections, noting that he would not withdraw, bow, or compromise. Slamming the PTI KP leadership for a political alliance with the opposition, he asked: "Is this what our leader envisioned?" Saleem echoed Khurram's remarks, saying that they stand by principles and will remain so. "We will contest and never become part of this flawed system," he added.

ershing and protested over the distribution of Senate tickets. The protesting leaders claimed that the party failed to uphold the principles of justice by ignoring long-time workers. The political committee of on Friday unanimously approved unopposed senate election in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, media reported.

According to a declaration issued after the PTI political committee meeting, all candidates in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Senate election will be elected unopposed while disgruntled PTI covering candidates have withdrawn their nomination papers after settling their issues with the party leadership. After consultation with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa parliamentary party, a unanimous decision was made to prefer unopposed elections in order to put an end to the shameful practice of vote buying and selling.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa parliamentary party was given the authority to decide the electoral procedure by the PTI

founder, and the party's top leadership expressed full confidence to their decision. The finalised candidates include Murad Saeed, Faissal Javed, Mirza Khan Afridi, and Pir Noorul Haq Qadri for the general seats. Rubina Naz has been nominated for the women's reserved seat, Azam Swati for the technocrat seat, and Mishaal Yousafzai has been nominated to fill the seat vacated by former senator Sania Nishtar.

As a result of the unopposed elections, PTI will secure six Senate seats, while the opposition will get five seats. Among the opposition, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) will each get two seats, and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) will get one seat. Senate elections for 11 seats from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will be held on July 21. The seats include seven general seats, two reserved for women, and two designated for technocrats and religious scholars (Ulema).

Trump says 5 jets were shot down in India-Pakistan conflict

WASHINGTON (APP): US President Donald Trump has said he believes up to five military aircraft were shot down during recent conflict between India and Pakistan that erupted following the Pahalgam attack in April. Trump, who made his remarks at a dinner he hosted for some Republican US lawmakers at the White House, did not specify which side's jets he was referring to.

The US leader said: "In fact, planes were being shot out of the air. Five, five, four or five, but I think five jets were shot down actually." The hostilities between the nuclear-armed

neighbours followed an attack in April that New Delhi blamed — without any evidence — on Pakistan-based militants, a charge Islamabad firmly denies.

In retaliation, the Pakistan Air Force swung into action and shot down five Indian fighter jets in aerial battles — including three advanced French-made Rafales. While officially India has refused to confirm the loss of aircraft but when asked by a Bloomberg correspondent in June if Pakistan was accurate in its claim that upto "six Indian jets" were downed, India's Chief of Defence Staff Anil Chauhan responded, "what is important is

why they went down," appearing to confirm losses without specifying a number.

A ceasefire was reached on May 10. Trump has repeatedly claimed credit for helping to bring about the truce, saying US pressure on both sides led to de-escalation. However, India has publicly disagreed with that version of events, stating the ceasefire was achieved through direct communication between New Delhi and Islamabad, without third-party involvement.

In his remarks to Republican senators on Friday, Trump said: "You had India, Pakistan, that was going... in fact, planes were

being shot out of the air...four or five. But I think five jets were shot down actually...that was getting worse and worse, wasn't it?" That was looking like it was going to go, these are two serious nuclear countries, and they were hitting each other," he said.

"But India and Pakistan were going at it, and they were back and forth, and it was getting bigger and bigger. And we got it solved through trade. We said 'You guys want to make a trade deal. We're not making a trade deal if you're going to be throwing around weapons and maybe nuclear weapons. Both very powerful nuclear states,' Trump

said. He said his administration achieved more in six months than almost any other administration could accomplish in eight years.

"Something I'm very proud of, we stopped a lot of wars, a lot of wars. And these were serious wars," Trump said. Since May 10, Trump has repeatedly asserted several times on various occasions that he "helped settle" the tensions between India and Pakistan and that he told the nuclear-armed South Asian neighbors that America will do a "lot of trade" with them if they stopped the conflict. On June 18, President



Trump hosted Pakistan Army Chief Asim Munir for a lunch meeting at the White House.

Pak extends airspace ban on Indian planes

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Airports Authority has issued a recent notice to Airmen (NOTAM), prolonging the Pakistan airspace ban on Indian aircraft for one more month, which will now be effective until August 23, 2025.

This will be the fourth continuous extension since the first suspension on April 23, after the escalated tensions between India and Pakistan over the Pahalgam incident in Indian-occupied Kashmir (IOK). According to the NOTAM, the Indian aircraft restriction applies to all planes registered in India, including those that are leased or chartered, and covers both civilian and military flights. The continued disturbance in regional connectivity is compelling Indian airlines to redirect flights, leading to higher fuel expenses and longer travel times. According to Industry experts, estimated losses surpassing \$8.2 billion due to rerouting and manufacturing delays. The Pakistan airspace ban was earlier put in place after India postponed the Indus Waters Treaty and launched missile strikes during Operation Sindoor.

In response, Pakistan launched Operation Bunyanum Marsoos, which increased military tensions until a ceasefire was achieved through US diplomatic intervention on May 10. Instead of the ceasefire, foreign relations remain stressed, and the Indian aircraft restriction continues to operate as a strategic response. Pakistan's Civil Aviation Authority has stated that the restriction will remain in place pending further review. The Pakistan airspace ban will not only affect Indian carriers but also raise issues about Pakistan's dependability as a regional air transit hub.

Aviation analysts warn that prolonged restrictions could discourage international partnerships and impact long-term route planning. Earlier in the day, Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi rejected backdoor diplomacy with India, declaring that no secret discussions are ongoing between the two nations. In a casual discussion with journalists, Mohsin Naqvi discussed the openness in Pakistan's foreign policy and highlighted the country's moral stand on regional matters.



LAHORE: Youth Forum for Kashmir Lahore organizes a grand rally to mark Pakistan Accession Day. —APP Photo

PTI MPA alleges political victimization over demolition of legal property

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) MPA Aurangzeb Khan, accompanied by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Higher Education Meena Khan Afridi and other party members, held a joint press conference at the Peshawar Press Club, where they strongly condemned the demolition of Khan's property in Murree, alleging it was an act of political victimization.

Speaking to the media, MPA Aurangzeb Khan claimed that he is constructing a high-rise building under the name "Oshlay Cottages" on a 20-kanal property situated on Bank Road, Murree. He asserted that all necessary No Objection Certificates (NOCs) had been obtained from the Murree Municipal Corporation, the Environmental Protection Agency, and other relevant departments. Despite this, he alleged that the Punjab government, under political pressure, had used heavy machinery to demolish the building — even though the Supreme Court of Pakistan had allowed the project.

Khan further stated that the land adjacent to his project belongs to Maryam Nawaz Sharif's daughter and son-in-law, who, according to him, are exerting pressure on him to switch his political allegiance from PTI to Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). Upon his refusal, he claimed, efforts were made to obstruct his legally approved project.

Highlighting his financial losses, Aurangzeb Khan said he had made a \$4 million investment from the United Arab Emirates, but due to political interference, his foreign investment is now at risk. He warned that such actions send a negative signal to foreign investors about the lack of protection and fairness in Punjab, especially for those not affiliated with the ruling party.

Minister Meena Khan Afridi echoed these concerns and emphasized that the issue would be taken up in the provincial cabinet. He warned that if foreign investors linked to PTI are not given due protection in Punjab, reciprocal actions could be taken in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Khan appealed to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, President Asif Ali Zardari, Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, Chief Justice of Pakistan, and the higher judiciary to intervene in the matter. He demanded the formation of a joint action committee to investigate the case and ensure justice is served.

He stressed that the project in Murree would have generated employment and boosted local development but was now being sacrificed at the altar of political rivalry. "If justice is not ensured," he warned, "foreign investors will continue to lose faith in Pakistan's legal and investment systems."

Blood bank sealed

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Blood Transfusion Authority (PBTA) has sealed the UPH Blood Bank and Plasma Center located in Fatehgarh after uncovering serious legal and medical violations during a surprise inspection.

According to PBTA Secretary Dr. Abdul Rehman, who led the inspection on Saturday, blood was being collected from donors without doctors' prescriptions or any verified patient need. A review of donor records revealed multiple irregularities.

Authorities also found that plasma was being sent abroad without the necessary approval from the PBTA, a clear breach of legal protocols.

The inspection further revealed that the blood bank, meant to operate as a non-profit service, was instead being run as a commercial enterprise.

In a shocking disclosure, two well-known private hospitals in Lahore have also been identified as being involved in this illegal blood trade.

Dr. Abdul Rehman stated that strict action will be taken against all those involved to ensure the safety and ethical regulation of blood transfusion services across the province.

1,594 people rescued during monsoon in Punjab: Dr. Rizwan

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Emergency Services Department Secretary Dr. Rizwan Naseer has said that Punjab Emergency Service (Rescue 1122) is on high alert across the province in line with the special directives of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif to ensure a timely and coordinated response during the ongoing monsoon and flood season.

Addressing a press briefing at the Directorate General Public Relations (DGPR), here on Saturday, Dr. Rizwan said that the proactive preparedness of departments and the Chief Minister's prior instructions for removal of encroachments helped safeguard several areas from urban flooding. He informed that Rescue 1122 teams have so far rescued 1,594 people since June 25 in flood and rain-related emergencies.

These operations have been supported by the deployment of over 100 rescue boats, 312 rescuers, outdoor motor engines, and other critical emergency equipment in vulnerable and low-lying areas of the province. Of the total rescued, 780 individuals were saved during intense rainfall emergencies, with 449 of them suffering serious injuries and being shifted to hospitals. Tragically, 119 people lost their lives.

Additionally, 444 individuals were evacuated in advance from flood-prone districts including Mianwali, DG Khan, Layyah, Rajanpur, Nankana, Narowal, and Jhelum. Rescue teams also facilitated the safe transportation of 370 individuals and 202 animals to safer locations.

Dr. Rizwan further said that despite the ongoing flood-related operations, Rescue 1122 continues to respond to more than 6,500 routine emergencies across Punjab each day. Since June 25, a total of 369 building collapse incidents have been reported, along with 23 cases of electrocution, 62 rain-related traffic crashes, 21 incidents of drowning, 7 cases of slipping, 4 lightning strikes, 3 landslides, 3 manhole falls, and 16 miscellaneous emergencies.

Of the 119 fatalities recorded, 81 were due to the collapse of weak and dilapidated buildings, followed by 11 deaths from electrocution, 9 in road accidents, 6 from falling into manholes, 5 from drowning, 4 from lightning strikes, 2 from slipping, and one death due to a landslide. The highest number of fatalities occurred in Lahore, with 27 deaths, followed by 15 in Faisalabad, 11 in Sheikhupura, 10 in Rawalpindi, 9 in Okara, and 7 in Bahawalnagar.

Expressing serious concern over the collapse of 369 buildings during the recent rains, Dr. Rizwan appealed to citizens to remain vigilant. He said that all government institutions are working tirelessly to ensure public safety, but community cooperation is essential. He urged people to avoid contact with electric poles, wires, and appliances during rain, stay clear of low-lying areas, and regularly inspect rooftops and drainage systems to minimize risks. He also advised the public to check weather forecasts before traveling to flood-prone or hilly regions to avoid emergencies.

Dr. Rizwan said that the Punjab Emergency Service remained fully committed to protecting lives and property, and he praised the dedication of Rescue 1122 teams who were serving the public round-the-clock.



LAHORE: Traffic wardens issuing the fine tickets to motorcyclists over the violation of not warning the helmet at Shah Almi Chowk. —INP Photo

CM discusses development, overseas Pakistanis' issues with PML-N leaders

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif held a detailed meeting with Member National Assembly (MNA) Chaudhry Naseer Ahmed Abbas and President PML-N Japan Malik Noor Awan, here on Saturday.

Matters related to mutual interest, ongoing development projects, and the issues faced by overseas Pakistanis were discussed during the meeting.

Malik Noor Awan apprised the CM of the growing trend of investment by overseas Pakistanis, particularly in light of the improved law and order situation in Punjab.

He also briefed her on the services and challenges faced by the Pakistani community residing in Japan.

CM Maryam Nawaz said that the PML-N believes in politics of service, not slogans. "We are utilizing all available resources to ensure equitable development and the welfare of every citizen," she said.

She highlighted that under the Model Village Project, rural communities are being equipped with city-like, high-quality infrastructure and facilities. She further shared that 12,000 kilometers of roads have already been constructed or rehabilitated, with a target of 18,000 kilometers by December 2025. Additionally, more than 10 million patients have benefitted from mobile field hospitals and clinics operating at the community level.

The CM said that the role of overseas Pakistanis in the development of our beloved homeland is unforgettable, adding that overseas Pakistanis are a proud asset of the country, and the Punjab government is committed to resolving their issues while expanding investment opportunities that allow their hard work to contribute directly to national prosperity.

Both MNA Ch. Naseer Ahmed Abbas and Malik Noor Awan lauded the people-centric initiatives of the Punjab government. They praised the Chief Minister's hands-on leadership and the tangible progress made in a short span of time.

MNA Ch. Naseer Abbas remarked that Under CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif's dynamic leadership, Punjab is setting new benchmarks in public service. Malik Noor Awan said that Overseas Pakistanis deeply appreciate the CM's vision and tireless dedication, which has renewed their confidence in the province's future.

He also emphasized that the overseas community is optimistic that the Punjab government will continue to prioritize their concerns and facilitate greater engagement in national development.

Rally held to mark Kashmir's Accession to Pakistan Day

LAHORE (APP): A grand rally was organized by Youth Forum for Kashmir Lahore to mark Kashmir's Accession to Pakistan Day, here on Saturday.

The rally witnessed enthusiastic participation from people belonging to various political, social, and religious backgrounds, as well as members of civil society. The rally commenced from NADRA Office Egerton Road and concluded in front of the Lahore Press Club. Participants carried banners and placards bearing pro-Kashmir slogans, voicing solidarity with the Kashmiri people and demanding an end to Indian occupation.

Addressing the rally, Chief Organizer of Youth Forum for Kashmir Lahore Tariq Khan Ghouri said that Kashmir's Accession to Pakistan Day is being observed not only in Pakistan but also by Kashmiris and supporters of the Kashmiri cause around the globe.

He recalled that on July 19, 1947, the people of Jammu and Kashmir had passed a historic resolution in favor of accession to Pakistan, thereby linking their future with the Islamic Republic. "This day is a powerful reminder of the deep-rooted, natural bond between Kashmir and Pakistan," he said. "The hearts of Kashmiris have always beaten in unison with Pakistan, and their love for this country runs through their veins like blood."

Tariq Ghouri said that India has utterly failed to suppress the Kashmiri people's unwavering resolve through force. "Even after decades of brutal occupation, the Kashmiri people continue to await their UN-mandated right to self-determination," he said.

He paid glowing tribute to the unyielding courage, sacrifices, and resilience of the oppressed people of Indian-Occupied Kashmir. Their struggle has become a global symbol of resistance, sacrifice, and the pursuit of freedom, he added.

He said Pakistan's firm commitment to continue extending political, moral, and diplomatic support to the Kashmiri people on every platform. "We salute the unmatched sacrifices of our Kashmiri brothers and sisters and pledge today to continue this just struggle until the final goal of freedom is achieved." Tariq Ghouri said that the day is not far when the Kashmiri people will be free to decide their own future, in accordance with their aspirations and international promises made to them.

Police arrests 162, seizes drugs

LAHORE (PPI): Under the Chief Minister's "Safe Punjab" initiative, a massive crackdown on crime across the province has resulted in the arrest of hundreds of individuals for offenses ranging from drug smuggling to traffic violations. Police arrested 162 individuals in drug-related crimes, registered 161 cases, and seized a large quantity of narcotics.

Over 500 search operations were conducted across the province, during which more than 20,000 individuals were questioned and 70 suspects were arrested. Law enforcement agencies also took action against electricity theft, arresting 91 individuals and registering 182 cases.

In addition, authorities continued their campaign against kite flying, detaining 12 individuals and registering an equal number of cases. Traffic police also remained active, issuing over 27,000 driving licenses and nearly 48,000 traffic tickets, resulting in fines of 41 million rupees. Over 11,000 citizens benefited from 14 different services provided at police service centers.

PFA discards adulterated milk

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Food Authority (PFA) launched a major crackdown at the entry points of Lahore to inspect milk carrying vehicles.

Dairy safety teams checked 200 vehicles transporting milk into the city and imposed fines of over Rs200,000 on 20 violators. Food safety teams examined more than 218,000 litres of milk, out of which 2,500 litres of adulterated milk was discarded on the spot after failing field tests.

PFA Director General Muhammad Asim Javid told media on Saturday that discarded milk was found to be contaminated with water and had low fat content, posing serious risks to public health. Operation was conducted at key city entry points including Gajumatta, Saggian, Babu Sabu, Shahdara, Multan Road and Adda Plot.

He said that the adulterated milk was intended for supply to various housing societies in Lahore. Supplying contaminated milk is a serious offence and only milk meeting quality standards is allowed into the city, he added.

Govt seals 41 dangerous buildings in Karachi ahead of heavy rains

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Sindh government has completed preparations to protect the lives and property of the public during the monsoon rains and has canceled the leave of staff in local government institutions.

Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon, has said that deputy commissioners and chairmen of local government institutions have been directed to make arrangements for the immediate drainage of rainwater.

In a statement, he said that the Sindh government has taken emergency measures to safeguard the lives and property of citizens during the monsoon rains. He added that deputy commissioners and chairmen of local government institutions have been directed to ensure the immediate drainage of rainwater, particularly in low-lying areas.

He added that the leave of staff in local government institutions has been canceled, and their 24-hour presence has been made mandatory to ensure immediate action in any emergency situation.

Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the Sindh government has identified 59 dangerous buildings in Karachi's old city area, of which 10 have been declared national heritage. He added that the technical committee of the Sindh Building Control Authority, comprising expert structural engineers, is continuously conducting surveys across the city to identify more buildings that may pose a threat to citizens.

So far, 41 extremely dangerous buildings have been evacuated and sealed to ensure the safety of human lives.

He said that in view of the expected rains, a rain emergency center has been established at the SBCA, which is operational 24 hours with technical staff on duty. Citizens can contact the SBCA at 99232355 and 99230393 in any emergency or seek assistance through the SBCA website at www.sbca.gos.pk.

Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the Sindh government is giving top priority to public safety and that no negligence will be tolerated during the monsoon. He appealed to citizens to vacate dangerous buildings immediately and cooperate with the government to prevent any major loss of life or property.

No-Bird Zones: Major restrictions imposed in various areas of Lahore

LAHORE (APP): Various areas of Lahore have been declared as No-Bird Zones through ring fencing to protect aircraft, Chief Wildlife Ranger (CWR) Mubeen Elahi told APP that implementation has begun on the strict instructions of the Punjab government, adding, Wildlife Protection Force has been mobilised under the supervision of Chief Wildlife Ranger.

He said that the Punjab government's message about the grand operation was shared with stakeholders and relevant groups. To a query, Mubeen Elahi said various areas of Lahore have been declared No-Bird Zones through ring fencing, that include Lahore Eastern Bypass, Manawan Hospital, PKLI, Chungi Amar Sadhu, Ichhra and Chah Miran.

He said that district administration and Environmental Protection Force's grand operation continue in the no-bird zone, adding Wildlife Protection Force has also launched a grand operation.

A complete ban has been imposed on littering in the outskirts of airports, and the use of garbage bins has been made mandatory. Slaughterhouses and poultry farms operating without environmental protection measures will be closed, and environmental laws will be strictly enforced on the leather business, he said.

Furthermore, a ban has also been imposed on throwing food at birds on rooftops, courtyards and public places, while keeping and flying pigeons has also been banned. Violations will be subject to arrests, severe punishments and fines.

Muslim world's apathy on Israeli atrocities is deplorable: Hanif

KARACHI (PPI): Chairman of Nizam-e-Mustafa Party and former Federal Minister of Petroleum Dr. Haji Muhammad Hanif Tayyab strongly condemned the silence of the international community on the devastating situation in Gaza, saying that the Muslim world's apathy towards Israeli atrocities in Gaza is deplorable.

Addressing a gathering at Madina Masjid in Khudadad Colony, he cited official figures of over 57,000 deaths and 150,000 injured since the start of Israeli attacks in October 2023. Independent investigations suggest the death toll could exceed 100,000.

Millions of Palestinians are now homeless, lacking basic resources like food, clean water, and medical aid. Thousands of children are reportedly dying of hunger. Dr. Tayyab criticized the alleged apathy of the United Nations, human rights groups, and interfaith organizations towards the humanitarian crisis.



PESHAWAR: Former Senator and MPA Aurangzeb Khan Orakzai addressing a press conference.

‘Victimization of traders in name of anti-encroachment campaign intolerable’

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The former governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali condemned harassment of traders in the name of ongoing anti-encroachment operation, on Saturday.

The former governor stated that it is deeply concerning that under the guise of anti-encroachment operations, the business community in Peshawar is being subjected to economic persecution and undue harassment.

He strongly condemned such actions and makes it clear that no one has the

right to sabotage peace in the city or target the livelihoods of hardworking traders.

He said that we fully support the removal of illegal encroachments for the betterment of the city, it must be done within the framework of law, with mutual respect, and without exceeding administrative authority.

He said the traders of Peshawar are an integral part of our economy and society, and treating them like adversaries will only create mistrust between the administration and the people.

The recent incident involving Shehzad Ahmad

Siddiqui, Provincial Spokesperson of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Traders Association, who was wrongfully arrested and detained for hours without cause, is shameful and unacceptable, he added.

The former governor demand an immediate public apology from the authorities, disciplinary action against those responsible, and a firm assurance that future actions will only be carried out after proper consultation with trader leadership.

He further added that during his tenure as Nazim-e-Ala Peshawar, he personally

oversaw several anti-encroachment initiatives but always with the cooperation and dignity of the trader community intact. That spirit of respect must continue. The provincial government must avoid policies and tactics that create division and resentment among the business community, he said.

The former governor Haji Ghulam Ali state that he stand united with the traders of Peshawar and will not allow any unlawful or discriminatory action against them. Their voice matters, and their rights must be protected at all costs.

First phase of Tirich Mir trekking expedition completes

PESHAWAR (APP): The first phase of Tirich Mir base camp trekking expedition organized by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) has been successfully completed.

Under the directives of KP Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, a group of 20 trekkers, supported by the Tirich Mir Backpackers Club Pakistan, completed the 7-day trek.

They had started their journey from Chitral in 4x4 jeeps to the scenic Shagrom Valley and then continued trekking through the Shenyak Camp, Shoghor

Biasum, Astore Naland ultimately reached the Babu Base Camp.

The trekking expedition route was Shagrom to Shenyak Camp, 12.7 kilometer, Shenyak Camp to Shoghor Biasum, 9.1km, Shoghor Biasum to Astore Nal Valley, 9.7km, Astore Nal to Babu Base Camp, 8.7km, Altitude of Babu Base Camp, 4,720 meters above sea level.

The second group of male trekkers would depart on July 25 followed by an women group on August 8 making this a landmark initiative for inclusive adventure tourism in the region.

KPCTA Director General Habibullah Arif said that this initiative would open doors for emerging mountaineers and significantly boost tourism and the local economy especially in Chitral. He praised the courage of trekkers hailing from various regions including KP, Islamabad, Punjab and other areas of the country.

This is the first time the government has officially supported a summit expedition to Tirich Mir, the highest peak in the Hindu Kush range, marking a new chapter in Pakistan's adventure tourism. Over 500 male and

100 female had applied to participate in the summit and trekking expeditions.

The initiative is expected to attract not only local climbers but also international mountaineers, establishing Tirich Mir as a major destination on the global mountaineering map.

It may be mentioned that the KP provincial government had announced a waiver of royalty fees for the year 2025–26. These fees typically range from \$2,500 to \$4,000. This initiative is expected to benefit not only Chitral and KP but also Pakistan's economy in the long run.

Three killed in Chamkani firing

PESHAWAR (APP): Three people including two brothers were killed in a firing incident by unknown assailants near Chamkani-Tarnab Farm area here on Saturday.

According to police reports, the victims were riding a motorcycle near Jaranda Lara, Chamkani Tarnab Farm, when they were fired upon by motorists. As a result, all three individuals died on the spot. The deceased have been identified as Rukhsar Khan, Sadiq Ali and Naheed Khan.

Police said the killings were result of an old enmity. The perpetrators managed to escape the scene after committing triple murder.

Police have registered a case and launched an investigation into the incident.

PAJCCI welcomes trilateral agreement

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Senior Vice President (SVP) Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI), Zia ul Haq Sarhadi has welcomed signing of trilateral agreement to build rail link between Pakistan, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan.

“The project will facilitate regional, transit, and bilateral trade among participating countries besides supporting both passenger and freight services,” Zia commented.

In a press statement issued here on Saturday, Zia Sarhadi who is also Executive Member SCCI said it’s a very welcoming development that a railway link will be developed for

connecting Afghanistan and Central Asian states with sea ports of Pakistan.

It merits a mention here that on July 16, 2025 Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan signed the Framework Agreement on the Joint Feasibility Study for the Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (UAP) Railway Project in Kabul.

“This strategic railway line, approximately 681 kilometers long, will pass through Afghanistan and connect Central Asian countries to the markets of South Asia, providing a new and shorter trade route between North and South Asia,” Zia added.

Zia said the agreement for laying of a railway line was reached between the three regional countries in 2023,

to build a rail link, which will pass through Termiz in Uzbekistan, Mazar-i-Sharif and Logar in Afghanistan and enter Pakistan via the Kharlachi border crossing in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The project on completion will usher in a trade revolution in the region by economically benefitting all the partners besides other countries and people, he expressed the hope.

The project can generate billions of dollars in annual revenue and create thousands of direct and indirect job opportunities in the region.

Zia appreciated the economic vision of Prime Minister, Shabaz Sharif that will prove highly beneficial for Pakistan in the coming years.

Opp leaders hold meeting at Governor House on Senate polls, reserved seats

PESHAWAR (APP): A joint meeting of opposition party leaders was held at the Governor House on Saturday, chaired by Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi.

The meeting brought together prominent figures including JUI’s central leader Senator Maulana Atta-ur-Rehman, Opposition Leader in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Dr. Ibadullah, PPP Parliamentary Leader

Ahmad Karim Kundi, JUI Deputy Parliamentary Leader Maulana Lutf-ur-Rehman, PPP Provincial President Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha, General Secretary Shazi Khan, PPP Senate candidates Rubina Khalid and Talha Mahmood, and JUI Senate candidates Maulana Attul-Haq Dervish and Dilawar Khan.

Iqbal Wazir from Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Parliamentarians, opposition

members of the provincial assembly, and other senior party leaders were also present.

The meeting focused on the swearing-in of MPs holding reserved seats in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly and the current political scenario surrounding the upcoming Senate elections.

Attendees discussed various aspects of the situation and developed a joint strategy moving forward.

During the meeting, the participants strongly criticized the delay in administering the oath to members on reserved seats, terming it a violation of democratic norms and constitutional rights.

The leaders also expressed their commitment to working collectively to uphold parliamentary traditions and prevent any attempts to manipulate the democratic process in the province.

Governor pays tribute to forces for operation

PESHAWAR (APP): The Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Saturday paid rich tribute to the security forces for their successful operation against the “Fitna-e-Hindustan” terrorists in Hangu.

Commending their bravery, the Governor expressed deep appreciation for the sacrifices made in the line of duty.

He directed the authorities to ensure the provision of best possible medical treatment to the injured, including Hangu DPO Khalid Khan, Lieutenant Colonel of the Thall Scouts, Bomb Disposal Squad official Asad, and others wounded during the operation.

Governor Kundi said that the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are proud of their security forces and stand united with them. He also offered prayers for the swift recovery of the injured personnel.

Right of self-determination: Muqam reiterates support for Kashmiris struggle

PESHAWAR (APP): Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan and SAFRON, Engineer Amir Muqam on Saturday reiterated strong support for the legitimate struggle of the Kashmiri people for their right to self-determination and the historic decision to accede to Pakistan.

In a special message on the occasion of day of accession to Pakistan, Engr Amir Muqam highlighted the significance of the day, saying that 19th July 1947 was a decisive turning point in the history of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, when a unanimous resolution was

passed to accede to Pakistan, based on religious, cultural, and geographical affiliations.

He said, “despite fighting three wars with India, Pakistan has always maintained its principled stance for a peaceful resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with United Nations Security Council resolutions.”

Engineer Amir Muqam strongly condemned the decades-long Indian military occupation of Jammu and Kashmir, calling it a blatant violation of the fundamental rights of the Kashmiri people.

“India’s continued

oppression and ongoing human rights violations have not weakened the spirit of the Kashmiri people, but rather strengthened their resolve to join Pakistan.”

He reaffirmed Pakistan’s unwavering commitment to continue providing moral, political, and diplomatic support to the Kashmiri people until they achieve their right to self-determination as per UNSC resolutions.

“On this historic day, we pay tribute to the sacrifices of the Kashmiri people and assured them that Pakistan will never abandon their cause,” he added.

PAF shines at RIAT 2025, wins two top awards

F.P Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Air Force has once again upheld its proud tradition of bringing glory to the nation on the international stage. At the world-renowned Royal International Air Tattoo 2025, held in the United Kingdom, PAF achieved an extraordinary feat by securing two coveted trophies among the world’s leading air forces. During the Air Chiefs’ Conference at RIAT-2025, PAF’s professional excellence and the exquisite paint schemes of its aircraft were widely appreciated by global air force leaders. Numerous dignitaries praised PAF contingent for its high standards of discipline, operational readiness and impressive representation of Pakistan on an international forum.

On this remarkable achievement, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force, extended his heartfelt congratulations to PAF contingent stating that keeping the nation’s flag high has always been the hallmark of Pakistan Air Force. Winning these prestigious awards is a testament to our professionalism, technical expertise and relentless pursuit of excellence.

He also commended the entire team for showcasing Pakistan’s true potential with pride and dignity. PAF’s state of the art JF-17 Thunder Block-III, making its maiden appearance at this prestigious airshow, was awarded the “Spirit of the Meet” Trophy, a rare honor conferred upon the aircraft that best embodies the ethos, spirit and excitement of RIAT. Following



the recent Pakistan-India conflict, a heightened sense of anticipation prevailed across the United Kingdom, with aviation enthusiasts and defence experts eagerly awaiting the debut of Pakistan Air Force’s 4.5 generation JF-17 Thunder Block-III.

The award signifies the technological brilliance and operational capability of the JF-17 program, while also showcasing Pakistan’s growing aerospace excellence on global stage. Adding to this moment of national pride, PAF C-130H Hercules, adorned in a striking and artistically crafted special livery reflecting this year’s theme of Eyes in the Skies, secured the distinguished “Concours d’Elegance” Trophy for the best-maintained and most aesthetically presented aircraft at RIAT-2025. The meticulous craftsmanship and impeccable presentation

of the iconic aircraft reflected the outstanding proficiency and unwavering commitment of PAF’s personnel.

JF-17 Thunder Block-III, with its cutting-edge capabilities and striking aesthetics, emerged as a centerpiece of the display line while the distinctively painted C-130 garnered significant attention, earning widespread acclaim from spectators and international delegations alike.

Pakistan Air Force has a rich history of success at RIAT, having previously won multiple honors in 2006, 2016 and 2018, further reinforcing its reputation as a world-class air arm consistently demonstrating excellence in aviation. PAF’s outstanding performance at RIAT-2025 not only cements its standing among leading global air forces but also serves as a source of immense pride for the entire Pakistani nation.

Bridging the divide: From rivalry to unity in South Asia

Inam Ullah

In the 21st century, economic integration is no longer a choice, but a necessity. Nowhere is this imperative more pressing than in South Asia, where the time-tested rivalry between India and Pakistan has long hindered regional cooperation. Yet, as we gaze across the globe, we find a striking contrast in Europe - a continent once ravaged by war, now united in a single, integrated market, bound by a shared destiny. Can South Asia forge a similar path? Can the region’s bitter divisions be overcome, and a united, prosperous future be forged? The answer is YES, by drawing inspiration from Europe’s remarkable

transformation.

The European Union’s (EU) shared market economy and integration are a testament to the region’s ability to put aside centuries of hostility and warfare. In the aftermath of World War II, European leaders recognized the need for a unified Europe to prevent future conflicts this led to the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, which eventually evolved into the EU.

The EU’s integration process was driven by the desire for peace, stability, and economic prosperity. By creating a shared market economy, EU member states aimed to increase economic interdependence, reduce trade barriers, and

promote economic growth. This approach has been highly successful, with the EU becoming one of the world’s largest and most integrated economies.

One of the key lessons that the South Asian region can draw from the EU’s experience is the importance of economic integration in promoting peace and stability. By increasing economic interdependence, South Asian countries can reduce the likelihood of conflict and promote a sense of shared prosperity. This can be achieved through the creation of regional trade agreements, investment in regional infrastructure, and the promotion of people-to-people exchanges.

Another important lesson

is the need for strong institutions and governance structures to support regional integration. The EU’s success is in part due to its robust institutional framework, which includes the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the European Court of Justice. South Asian countries can learn from the EU’s experience in building strong institutions that can support regional integration and promote cooperation.

The EU’s experience also highlights the importance of gradualism and flexibility in the integration process. The EU’s integration process has been gradual, with member states taking small steps towards greater integration over time. This approach has

allowed the EU to adapt to changing circumstances and to address the concerns of member states. South Asian countries can learn from the EU’s experience in adopting a gradual and flexible approach to regional integration.

Despite the many successes of the EU’s integration process, there are also important lessons to be learned from its challenges. One of the key challenges facing the EU is the need to balance the interests of member states with the need for greater integration. This has led to tensions between member states and has highlighted the need for greater flexibility and adaptability in the integration process. South Asian countries can learn from the

EU’s experience in managing the tensions between national interests and regional integration.

In addition to economic integration, the EU has also promoted political integration and cooperation among its member states. This has included the creation of a common foreign and security policy, as well as cooperation on justice and home affairs. South Asian countries can learn from the EU’s experience in promoting political cooperation and integration, and can explore ways to deepen regional cooperation on key security and political issues.

The EU’s experience also highlights the importance of civil society and people-to-people

exchanges in promoting regional integration. The EU has a strong tradition of civil society engagement and people-to-people exchanges, which has helped to build a sense of European identity and citizenship. South Asian countries can learn from the EU’s experience in promoting civil society engagement and people-to-people exchanges, and can explore ways to deepen regional cooperation and integration through these channels.

In conclusion, the EU’s shared market economy and integration offer important lessons for the South Asian region. By promoting economic integration, building strong institutions, and adopting a gradual and flexible approach to regional

integration, South Asian countries can reduce the likelihood of conflict and promote a sense of shared prosperity.

Additionally, the EU’s experience highlights the importance of political cooperation, civil society engagement, and people-to-people exchanges in promoting regional integration.

As South Asian countries look to deepen regional cooperation and integration, they can draw on the EU’s experience and lessons learned. By doing so, they can promote a more peaceful, stable, and prosperous region, and can help to create a brighter future for the people of South Asia.

(The author is a Lecturer at NUML, Peshawar Campus)



In brief

JI hold protest in Karak F.P. Report

KARAK: Jamaat-e-Islami protested in Karak city against the increase in petroleum products, inflation and unrest. Demanded immediate withdrawal of the increase in oil prices and measures to establish peace in the area. According to the details, Jamaat-e-Islami took out a rally from Pir Uddin Shah Mosque to Saddam Chowk. It took the form of a rally in Saddam Chowk, to which Acting District Ameer Dr. Izhar-ul-Haq, General Secretary Ijaz Qamar, and Chairman of the Public Aid Committee Abdul Sadiq Dr. Moinuddin addressed and said that due to the increase in oil prices every day, everything has become expensive and out of reach of the people. The country is under the control of the sugar mafia. First, billions were earned by exporting sugar from the country and now billions are being earned by importing sugar. 140 rupees per kg of sugar has crossed 200 rupees. The speakers said that the increase in petrol prices every fortnight is unbearable, while at present the law and order situation in the entire province and Karak is deteriorating. Murders are happening every day. The murderers are unknown. If they are found out, they are not arrested. Meanwhile, improvement in traffic discipline In light of the recent visit of District Police Officer Karak Shabbaz Elahi and the clear instructions issued for improvement in the traffic system, traffic staff have been alerted for more effective implementation of traffic rules across the district. The aim of these measures is to maintain discipline on the roads and significantly reduce the accident rate.

500 unfit eggs recovered F.P. Report

MARDAN: A team from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety Authority, Mardan recovered 500 unfit eggs during a raid at a bakery production unit located in the suburban area of Gali Bagh. The spoiled eggs were being used in bakery items. The bakery was heavily fined for preparing sub-standard and unhygienic food, and the contaminated eggs were destroyed. A heavy fine was also imposed on the owners for violating food safety regulations and for employing workers without medical certificates. Meanwhile, a shop in the Baghdadah Bazaar was fined due to poor hygiene conditions. Licenses were issued to new food businesses, along with strict instructions for improvement. On this occasion, Assistant Director Mardan, Rujia Nawaz, stated that shopkeepers dealing with food items must focus on cleanliness and implement food safety procedures in their businesses, otherwise strict legal action will be taken.

Workshop held F.P. Report

FAISALABAD: To earn the forex, it is essential to promote international standards in textile, agriculture and food sector. It was said by the speakers at a workshop titled, "Driving Sustainability through International Standards Certifications in Textile, Agriculture and Food Sector" organized by the Young Peace and Development Corps (YPDC), Office of the Senior Tutor, in collaboration with ETKO International. The Entrepreneurship Club (TEC) and Volunteers Leading Governance Forum (VLGF).

Govt orders registration of hotels on Swat river bank

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has directed the Tourism Department to register hotels in tourist areas, particularly those located on the banks of the Swat River, to ensure tourist safety. The move comes after a tragic incident on June 27, in which 13 tourists lost their lives in a flash flood.

However, the President of the Swat Hotel Association, Haji Zahid Khan, has expressed reservations, stating that hotels in Swat have already obtained local licenses and see no need for additional registration. Khan also

highlighted that there are over 1,200 hotels in Swat that have been registered with the district administration, and many have suffered damages in the past without receiving government assistance.

Professor Azharuddin, head of the Ecotourism Department in Swat, has welcomed the government's decision, but emphasized the need for the tourism department to also support the growth of the hotel business in the area.

Journalist and tourist Shahzad Naveed has raised concerns that the government's action comes after a tragic incident, and wonders why such measures

were not taken earlier, given the number of hotels built on the riverbanks without restrictions.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tourism Department Director Habibullah Arif has assured that the government will strictly implement the law and collect details of hotels on the riverbanks. The government has already launched Operation encroachments against hotels built on the riverbanks, demolishing many and imposing a five-year ban on new constructions. The government's efforts aim to prevent such incidents in the future and ensure tourist safety in Swat's tourist areas.

Alleged gang leader killed in encounter

Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: Police were involved in a fierce shootout with a notorious robbery gang in the premises Akbarpura police station late at night. The police claimed that the gang's leader was injured during the exchange of fire and later succumbed to his injuries while being taken to the hospital.

According to the police, the Station House Officer (SHO) Akbarpura police station, Faisal Khan, was leading a team of policemen at checkpoint. When they spotted a suspicious

motorcycle with three individuals riding on it, they signaled them to stop. However, the riders opened fire on the police and attempted to flee. The police chased them and retaliated with firing, injuring the gang's leader, Hamza Ullah.

The police recovered arms from the possession of the injured gang leader. He was identified as Hamza Ullah, son of Mazhar, a resident of Afghanistan, currently living in Tilla Band, Peshawar. The police stated that Hamza Ullah was a highly wanted individual, with cases registered

against him at the Akbarpura police station.

The injured gang leader, Hamza Ullah, was taken to the hospital but died on the way. The police claimed that his accomplices, identified as Wasim and Obaid, escaped under the cover of darkness.

The police have registered a case and started an investigation. Teams have been formed to arrest the absconding suspects, and raids are being conducted at various locations. The police are working to gather more evidence and bring the perpetrators to justice.

443 livestock cards provided breeders

F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: Under Chief Minister's farmer-friendly vision, the Livestock Card Scheme is being successfully implemented in Toba Tek Singh, in line with the province-wide initiative.

According to statistics released by the Livestock Department, in the first phase of the scheme, 443 farmers in the district were issued Chief Minister Punjab Livestock Cards. These beneficiaries have so far withdrawn over Rs. 49.48 million through the scheme. For the second phase, applications from 810 farmers have already been received and are currently under processing.

The scheme offers interest-free loans of up to Rs. 27,000 per animal, feed purchase subsidies, preventive vaccinations and sprays against livestock diseases, and access to mobile veterinary services.

According to Additional Director of Livestock, Dr. Hina, the core objective of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's initiative is to provide direct financial assistance to small-scale farmers, helping increase their income and improve the productivity of their animals. Farmers benefiting from the programme

have expressed gratitude to the Chief Minister, stating that the scheme has significantly eased their financial burdens and enabled them to adopt more modern methods of animal care.

Assistive Devices distributed among persons with disabilities: On the special directives of Punjab Chief Minister Punjab assistive devices were distributed among persons with disabilities in Toba Tek Singh under the "Assistive Devices Program" to facilitate their daily lives.

A ceremony in this regard was held at the auditorium of Government Boys College Toba Tek Singh, where a total of 77 deserving individuals from across the district received mobility and support equipment including rollators, walking frames, mobile toilet chairs, elbow crutches and cane sticks. The distribution included 4 rollators, 15 walking frames, 24 mobile toilet chairs, 16 elbow crutches and 18 cane sticks.

Assistant Commissioner Munawar Hussain Kamalana Sial, Deputy Director Social Welfare Rana Muhammad Kashif, District Information Officer, officials from the Social Welfare Office, and PML-N leaders Haris Amjad, Mian Farukh Iqbal, Rana

Qayyum and others attended the event. Addressing the ceremony, Assistant Commissioner Munawar Hussain said that these are not merely devices but a step towards restoring dignity and independence for persons with disabilities.

He added that CM Maryam Nawaz has launched a special welfare package worth Rs 1 billion for the rehabilitation of differently-abled individuals an exemplary gesture of compassion, humanity, and responsibility by the government.

PML-N leader Haris Amjad remarked that the state is like a mother, and CM Maryam Nawaz has practically proven this through her inclusive policies. He stated that the government is becoming a support system for the disabled and is actively working to alleviate their hardships such empathetic leadership is rare, he added. Beneficiaries and their families expressed deep gratitude to CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif, terming the initiative a source of hope and relief. The distribution of assistive devices has been widely appreciated by the public as a meaningful step towards inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities.

Man accused of killing policeman shot dead F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: A man who was accused of killing police constable Hamidullah was shot dead while in police custody, police said.

The police said the man had killed Constable Hamidullah with a knife on June 18. According to intelligence reports, the suspect had received training from the banned group Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

The suspect was arrested by the police and was taken to the crime scene for identification when he attempted to snatch an SMG (sub-machine gun) from a police officer. During the scuffle, the weapon discharged and the bullet hit the suspect, killing him on the spot. Police have started a full investigation into the incident to find out more details.

Monsoon tree plantation campaign inaugurated F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: Lakki Marwat deputy commissioner Zeeshan Abdullah inaugurated the monsoon tree plantation campaign by planting fruit saplings on the premises of the university on Saturday.

The varsity's faculty members, students and forest department officials were present on the occasion. They also took part in the plantation activity and sowed fruit plants. The deputy commissioner asked the teachers and students to grow more and more plants and take care of them.

He said that increasing green cover was inevitable to combat climate change and global warming, improve the environment and control environmental pollution. "Forests are one of precious natural resources and all of us should play an active role to promote afforestation and discourage deforestation", he added.

Meanwhile, several permanent structures were razed during an anti-encroachment operation in Titterkhel town of Lakki Marwat district on Saturday. An official of the district administration said that the operation was launched on the instructions of deputy commissioner Zeeshan Abdullah under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister's public service agenda.

He said that local residents, especially traders had occupied the state owned land along both sides of the busy highway and had built shops and residential constructions on it. "The illegal constructions were hindering smooth flow of traffic on the main artery between Bannu and DI Khan, besides causing inconvenience for the general public", he maintained.

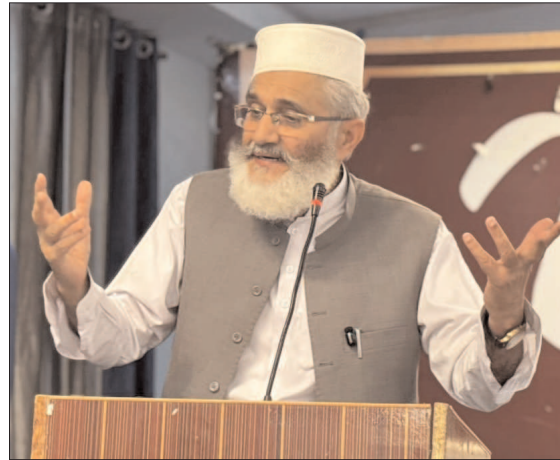
All political parties in power, competing only in corruption: JI

Haleem Asad

LOWER DIR: Former Jamaat-e-Islami chief Sirajul Haq has said that all political parties are currently part of the government one way or the other, but instead of working for public welfare, they are competing in corruption, mismanagement, and the accumulation of IMF loans.

He was addressing the district convention of the Pakistan Islamic Medical Association (PIMA) Lower Dir, held in Timergara on Saturday. Siraj added that VIP culture and poor governance had become the norm, while horse-trading in the Senate has turned into a routine practice. Meanwhile, political leaders are offering their services to global powers, he alleged.

The event was also addressed by Jamaat-e-Islami Lower Dir emir Maulana Asadullah and PIMA district president Dr. Muslih ud Din. "The real solution to the world's



problems lies in the system of Khilafat (Caliphate). During the Ottoman era, countries like Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan enjoyed independence and dignity. Today, although there are 58 Muslim countries, the Ummah is in dire need of awakening", Siraj remarked.

He emphasized that Jamaat-e-Islami members have a proud history rooted in honesty, integrity, and public service. "If people

truly want progress in the country, they must support Jamaat-e-Islami," he urged. The former senator recalled that Jamaat-e-Islami had once made Khyber Pakhtunkhwa debt-free. "We established an integrated network of irrigation channels, agricultural research centers, hospitals, libraries, and educational institutions across the province, many of which still exist today," he added.

KUST signs MoU with PIHS

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: In a significant step toward academic and research collaboration, Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST) and Prime Institute of Health Sciences (PIHS), Islamabad, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at fostering mutual cooperation in the fields of education, research, and training.

The MoU was formally signed by Professor Dr. Syed Zafar Ilyas, Vice Chancellor of KUST, and Mr. Abdul Wajid, Chairman of PIHS. The signing ceremony was attended by senior officials and representatives from both institutions, reflecting a shared vision for academic excellence and societal impact.

Under this partnership, the two institutions will collaborate on faculty and student exchange programs, internships, and clinical training opportunities. The agreement outlines joint initiatives in disciplines such as Nursing, Physiotherapy, Public Health, and Allied Health



Sciences, promoting collaborative teaching, research, and academic activities.

Furthermore, both institutions have committed to organizing seminars, workshops, short courses, faculty development trainings, and service-learning programs. These initiatives aim to enhance academic capacities and promote knowledge-sharing across various domains. The institutions will also share laboratory facilities, infrastructure, and academic resources where feasible to maximize the impact of their collaboration.

The MoU also includes mutual efforts in curriculum development tailored to modern healthcare

needs, professional certifications, and teaching support across key disciplines such as Medicine, Nursing, Physiotherapy, Public Health, and Hospital Management. Emphasis will be placed on joint research projects, academic conferences, faculty development programs, and community health-focused initiatives.

This MoU will initially remain effective for a period of three years, with both parties reserving the right to terminate the agreement with prior notice. To ensure smooth implementation, focal persons have been designated by both institutions to oversee collaborative activities and maintain regular coordination.

Crush & Mining Association demands operationalization of plant

Amjad Ali Afridi

JAMRUD: The Crush and Mining Association Khyber held a press conference at the Jamrud Press Club, appealing to the local administration to allow the crushing machines to operate until alternative locations are provided, as per the Peshawar High Court's decision.

The local administration had closed down over 40 crushing machines in Jamrud due to public pres-

sure. The association's president, Nawab Shah Afridi, termed the closure of the machines as "tyranny" and stated that thousands of people directly and indirectly earn their livelihood from these machines.

The association's president demanded that the machines should not be closed until alternative locations are provided, as per the court's decision. He stated that the association is fully complying with all SOPs (Standard Operating

Procedures) and that the machines should be allowed to operate until alternative arrangements are made.

The association's president warned that if the administration closes the machines despite the court's orders, thousands of owners, workers, and employees will take to the streets and stage a protest in front of the Assistant Commissioner's office and the Chief Minister's House.

Truth can never be suppressed!

Qadeer Ahmed Ansari

THERE is an unshakable principle of nature: truth can never be suppressed, and those who stand on the side of righteousness always emerge victorious. People may conspire endlessly, hurl countless accusations—but above all is a divine power that sees and knows everything. This reality is reflected in the story of District Hub in Balochistan, which remained neglected politically and developmentally for more than 40 years.

The people were deprived of basic necessities while their elected representatives enjoyed power without ever addressing their grievances. Hub, once considered the largest industrial zone of Balochistan, was brought to the brink of collapse due to political apathy and disinterest. The once-thriving Hub Industrial Estate fell into ruin. But as the saying goes, "No matter how long the night, the dawn always comes," and for District Hub, that dawn came in the form of Mir Ali Hassan Zehri.

His victory in the 2024 elections as a Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) candidate was more than a political win—it was a triumph for the oppressed and long-deprived people of Hub. It was the result of thousands of heartfelt prayers from people who had been waiting for a true leader for years. Mir Ali Hassan Zehri proved through his words

and actions that with sincerity and empathy, any dream can be transformed into reality. Immediately after assuming office, he disregarded differences of race, language, or political affiliation and secured billions of rupees in development projects for the entire district—many of which have already been successfully completed. Whether it was the construction of roads, improvement of schools, access to clean drinking water, or establishment of health centers—tangible change has been witnessed across all sectors. He also personally helped solve problems by utilizing his own resources—an act rarely seen in modern politicians.

He activated the Benazir Income Support Program in Hub, enabling thousands of families to benefit. He personally arranged ambulances and launched NADRA's mobile registration services, providing immense relief to the residents. Numerous other welfare initiatives have also been initiated under his leadership, helping the people emerge from four decades of darkness into a phase of rapid development and prosperity. Yet, as is often the case, those who work for the people inevitably threaten vested interests. Unfortunately, Mir Ali Hassan Zehri had to face slan-

der, false accusations, and character assassination. From baseless claims of land grabbing to malicious propaganda, the attacks were relentless. But no matter how much truth is buried—it always rises to the surface.

He faced these accusations with courage and responded through his public service. One by one, the allegations were proven false. A clear example is the public apology issued in 2020 by the former Deputy Commissioner West Karachi, Fayaz Alam Solangi, who admitted in newspapers that the allegations he made were false and driven by personal animosity. This alone is proof that: "No matter how much the accuser wishes ill—only what God wills, happens." This incident is also a testament to the fact that those who stand with truth are destined for success. Zehri's developmental, humanitarian, and welfare efforts silenced his critics. Today, the people of Hub proudly call him "Mohsin-e-Hub".

Beyond his constituency, Mir Ali Hassan Zehri serves as a senior leader of PPP and spokesperson of President Asif Ali Zardari for Balochistan. As the Provincial Minister for Agriculture and Cooperatives, he is working tirelessly to mod-

ernize agriculture in Balochistan. His vision is to make the province self-sufficient in agricultural production. His wife, Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri, also stands beside him in service to the people. Whether during natural disasters or human crises, the couple has never left the people alone. Educational institutions in Hub are now functional, hospitals are improving, roads are being built, and the revival of the industrial zone is progressing. All this has been made possible by the leadership of Mir Ali Hassan Zehri, who has prioritized the needs and pain of the people and worked tirelessly for their welfare. No amount of propaganda or accusations can hide the truth. God knows all—and only truth prevails in the end. His popularity and service record are a clear message to his opponents: when God is with someone, no one can harm them.

Mir Ali Hassan Zehri believes that the PPP lives in the hearts of the people, and under the wise leadership of President Asif Ali Zardari and the energetic guidance of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the party continues to serve the people day and night. He has said repeatedly that power means nothing to him—his only mission is to serve the people. He has vowed to transform Hub

into a model district, and that day is not far when Hub will become a shining example of development, prosperity, and public welfare not only in Balochistan but across Pakistan.

The city of Hub has entered a new era. Hope, progress, and development now define its future. Those adversaries who believed that false accusations could shake public confidence must now understand: "No matter how much the accuser wishes ill—only what God wills, happens." Under his leadership, the destiny of Hub has changed. He is not just a politician—he is a servant of the people. His initiatives span clean water, education, healthcare, road construction, sanitation, sports facilities, employment for youth and women—real projects that are visible and functional. Once-dark areas of Hub are now glowing with light.

Hub has undergone a complete transformation. Every sector—education, health, infrastructure, employment, women's rights, youth empowerment—is showing signs of significant progress. Zehri has proven that service driven by sincerity and pure intentions always leads to success. Regardless of how much noise opponents make, or how many allegations they throw—the people know the

truth. And most importantly, God knows everything.

For Mir Ali Hassan Zehri, power is not a priority—it is merely a means to serve. Whether in power or not, his politics is centered on the people. He is committed to making Hub a model district, and no obstacle can stop him. The people now have hope, because they have a leader who not only makes promises—but fulfills them. In Mir Ali Hassan Zehri, Hub has found the leader it had been waiting for over four decades.

It must be said that if every MPA, MNA, and public representative across the country starts working sincerely for their constituencies like Mir Ali Hassan Zehri has for Hub, then surely Pakistan can progress evenly. What's needed is self-reflection, a sense of responsibility, and fulfilling the trust that the people have placed in their representatives. It is the duty of all elected officials to follow the example of Zehri and the numerous welfare projects underway in Hub, to provide every facility and basic right to the people.

Mir Ali Hassan Zehri and his team work around the clock with the mission to make Hub a model district of Balochistan. Their politics is solely focused on public service. Today, the people of Hub are confident that their voices are being heard and their issues resolved—and that is the true measure of success.



DAMASCUS: Destroyed cars sit in the street after powerful Israeli air strikes in Syria.

US deports immigrants to African country of Eswatini

WASHINGTON: The government of the tiny, landlocked African country of Eswatini has confirmed that it received five individuals deported from the United States under President Donald Trump. In a statement, a spokesperson for the Eswatini government said the deportations were "the result of months of robust high-level engagements".

"The five prisoners are in the country and are housed in Correctional facilities within isolated units, 'where similar offenders are kept,'" spokesperson Thabile Mdluli wrote. But she appeared to concede there were human rights concerns about accepting deported individuals whose countries of origin were not Eswatini. "As a responsible member of the global community, the Kingdom of Eswatini adheres to international agreements and diplomatic protocols regarding the repatriation of individuals, ensuring that due process and respect for human rights is followed," Mdluli said. Her statement also indicated that Eswatini would work with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) "to facilitate the transit of the inmates to their countries of origin". The deportations are part of a wider trend under the Trump administration of deporting foreign nationals to countries outside of their own.

The White House has argued that these third-country deportations are necessary for individuals whose home countries will not accept them. But critics have maintained that the

Trump administration is relying on countries with documented histories of human rights abuses to accept deportees, thereby subjecting them to the risk of inhumane treatment. There is also concern that deportations under Trump are happening so swiftly that those facing deportation are unable to challenge their removal in court, violating their rights to due process. A spokesperson from the US Department of Homeland Security, Tricia McLaughlin, revealed the recent deportations to Eswatini, identifying the affected individuals as citizens of Laos, Vietnam, Jamaica, Cuba and Yemen. "A safe third country deportation flight to Eswatini in Southern Africa has landed," McLaughlin wrote on social media. "This flight took individuals so uniquely barbaric that their home countries refused to take them back." She asserted that the deportees had been convicted of crimes like murder, child rape and assault, calling them "depraved monsters" who had "been terrorizing American communities". The Trump administration has likened immigration into the US to an "invasion", and Trump himself has repeatedly tied undocumented people to criminality, though studies indicate they commit fewer crimes than US-born citizens.

Since taking office for a second term in January, Trump has embarked on a campaign of mass deportation. As part of that push, his government has deported alleged criminals to third-party countries like El Salvador

and South Sudan. In March, for instance, the Trump administration deported an estimated 200 Venezuelans to El Salvador, where their heads were shaved and they were incarcerated in the country's Terrorism Confinement Centre (CECOT), a maximum-security prison where conditions have been likened to torture. The Trump administration reportedly paid nearly \$6m for El Salvador to imprison the men. Then, in May, reports emerged that the Trump administration planned to deport immigrants to Libya.

A federal court quickly blocked the deportation, and government officials in Libya denied the reports. But lawyers for the immigrants involved told US media that a flight nearly took off and was instead stalled on an airport tarmac as a result of the court order. Later that same month, a flight did leave the US with eight deportees destined for South Sudan, a country that the US State Department itself concedes has "significant human rights issues". Those concerns include credible reports of extrajudicial killings, torture and "life-threatening prison conditions". The State Department discourages travel to the country. The flight to South Sudan was ultimately diverted to Djibouti after a federal court in Massachusetts determined that the eight men on board were not given an adequate opportunity to contest their deportations. The men were from countries including Laos, Mexico, Myanmar, Cuba and Vietnam. — Ajazeera

Heat melts Alps snow and glaciers, leaving water shortage

PARIS (AFP): June's heatwave has caused French Alps snow and glaciers to melt faster, causing water shortages at mountain shelters just before the summer tourist hiking season gets into full swing. "Everything has dried up," said Noemie Dagan, who looks after the Selle refuge, located at an altitude of 2,673 meters (8,769 feet) in the Ecrins, a mountain range overtowered by two majestic peaks.

The snowfield that usually supplies water to her 60-bed chalet already "looks a bit like what we would expect at the end of July or early August", she said. "We are nearly a month early in terms of the snow's melting." The mountain refuge, lacking a water tank, relies on water streaming down from the mountain. If it runs out it, the shelter will have to close. This happened in mid-August 2023, and could happen again. Dagan's backup solutions to avoid such a scenario

include plastic pipes a kilometre long (0.6 mile) -- installed with difficulty -- to collect water from a nearby glacier close to the Pic de la Grave. But the slopes along which the pipe was laid are steep, unstable and vulnerable to increasingly violent storms ravaging the range.

In the 15 years that she has worked in the sector, Dagan has witnessed "a metamorphosis" of the mountains and glaciers that are "our water towers", she said. "We are basically the sentinels who have seen what is coming." Thomas Boillot, a local mountain guide, said the possibility one day of seeing water supply issues affecting the mountain shelters had "never even crossed our minds". But such cases have increased "and there will likely be more," he added. Some snowfields once considered eternal now melt in the summer, precipitation has become scarcer, and glaciers change shape as they

melt -- factors that combine to disrupt the water supply for chalets. Water used to arrive "through gravity" from snow and ice reserves higher up, but it is going to have to be pumped from below in the future, he said. Scientists say that the impact of climate change is nearly twice as severe in the Alps as it is globally, warning that only remnants of today's glaciers are likely to exist by 2100 -- if they haven't disappeared altogether by then. This year's weather is also dangerous for the 1,400 glaciers in neighbouring Switzerland, where the authorities report that accumulated snow and ice have melted five to six weeks before the usual time.

"Brutal" is the term Xavier Cailhol, an environmental science PhD student and mountain guide, used to describe the impact of the heatwave that he saw on a recent trip to the massif of the Mont Blanc, western Europe's highest mountain. "I started ski-touring on

Mont Blanc in June with 40 centimetres (16 inches) of powder snow. I ended up on glaciers that were completely bare, even as high up as the Midi Peak, at 3,700 meters altitude," he said. A cover of snow helps to protect the ice underneath by reflecting sunlight, he noted. "Above 3,200 meters, it's drier than anything we've seen before," he said. "It's quite concerning for the rest of the summer." A case in point is the accelerated melting of the Bossons Glacier, a massive ice tongue overlooking the valley before Chamonix. It began with a "patch of gravel" which became larger, and "in fact is speeding up the melting at that location" because its dark colour absorbs more heat. The melting of the Bossons Glacier is clearly visible from Chamonix, making it a constant reminder of what is happening to glaciers everywhere. "It's a symbol," said Cailhol.

Iceland volcano erupts for ninth time since 2023

ICELAND (AFP): A volcano erupted in Iceland's Reykjanes peninsula in the southwest, weather authorities said, the ninth eruption to hit the region since the end of 2023.

Live video feeds showed lava spewing out of a fissure in the ground, with the Icelandic Met Office saying that it began just before 4:00 am (0400 GMT). The weather agency later in the day reported that the main fissure was estimated to be 2.4 kilometres (1.5 miles) long, and that a second smaller fissure, about 500 metres long, had opened up nearby.

Due to high levels of gas pollution in the air, residents were advised to stay indoors. Broadcaster RUV reported that the nearby fishing village Grindavik had been evacuated, as had the Blue Lagoon, Iceland's famed tourist spot. Police Commissioner Margret Kristin Palsdottir, told the broadcaster that the evacuation of the some 100 people staying in the village had gone smoothly. Palsdottir also said they had prevented some tourists from entering the area. "Of course, we understand that this is a fascinating event, especially for tourists who are not as accustomed to it as we are," Palsdottir said. Geophysicist Benedikt Ofeigsson told RUV that the eruption didn't seem as big as earlier ones and was in a good location as it wasn't near any infrastructure.

The previous eruption to hit the area was in April, and a risk assessment published didn't expect another eruption until this autumn. When the first volcanic eruption first hit the area in late 2023, most of Grindavik's 4,000 residents were evacuated. Since then, almost all of the houses have been sold to the state, and most of the residents have left. Volcanoes on the Reykjanes peninsula had not erupted for eight centuries when in March 2021 a period of heightened seismic activity began. Volcanologists have warned in recent years that volcanic activity in the region had entered a new era.

RUV said the latest eruption was not expected to impact international flights. A volcanic eruption in another part of Iceland in 2010 caused worldwide travel chaos as the ash spewed into the atmosphere sparked airspace closures in Europe. Iceland is home to 33 active volcanic systems, more than any other European country. It is located on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, a fault in the ocean floor that separates the Eurasian and North American tectonic plates and causes earthquakes and eruptions.

Gulf Coast braces for flooding

FLORIDA (AP): The weather system moving across the Florida Panhandle was showing a greater chance of becoming a tropical depression as it moves toward the northern Gulf Coast, according to the National Hurricane Center. The system has a 40% chance of becoming a tropical depression as it moves west over the Gulf toward southeastern Louisiana, the federal agency said. The severity of its impact will depend on how far it travels offshore, where conditions are ripe for a tropical depression, before reaching Louisiana. The tropical weather will affect Alabama and Mississippi as well.

Regardless of whether the system intensifies, heavy downpours could cause flooding, officials warned. New Orleans is bracing for 3 to 5 inches (8 to 13 centimeters) of rain, but some areas could see as much as 10 inches (25 centimeters), especially near the coast, the National Weather Service said. "While a tropical depression cannot be ruled out near the coast, the main focus remains the heavy rain threat," the agency wrote on X. Volunteers and local elected officials played music as they shoveled sand into bags to hand out to residents in New Orleans at the Dryades YMCA. "My street flooded just the other day when we got a little bit of rain and so I want to just make sure that I'm proactive," New Orleans resident Alex Trapps said as he drove away with sandbags in his car.

Cambodia makes 1,000 arrests in latest crackdown

PHNOM PENH (AP): Cambodia said that an order by Prime Minister Hun Manet for government bodies to crackdown on criminal cybercrime operations being run in the country had resulted in the arrest of more than 1,000 suspects so far this week. Hun Manet issued the order authorising state action for "maintaining and protecting security, public order, and social safety."

"The government has observed that online scams are currently causing threats and insecurity in the world and the region. In Cambodia, foreign criminal groups have also infiltrated to engage in online scams," Hun Manet's statement, said. The United Nations and other agencies estimate that cyberscams, most of them originating from Southeast Asia, earn international criminal gangs billions of dollars annually. More than 1,000 suspects were arrested in raids in at least five provinces, according to statements from Information Minister Neth Pheaktra and police.

Those detained included more than 200 Vietnamese, 27 Chinese, and 75 suspects from Taiwan and 85 Cambodians in the capital Phnom Penh and the southern city of Sihanoukville.

Police also seized equipment, including computers and hundreds of mobile phones. At least 270 Indonesians, including 45 women, were arrested in Poipet, a town on the border with Thailand notorious for cyberscam and gambling operations, the minister said. Elsewhere, police in the northeastern province of Kratie arrested 312 people, including nationals of Thailand, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Myanmar and Vietnam, while 27 people from Vietnam, China and Myanmar were arrested in the western province of Pursat.

Amnesty International last month published the findings of an 18-month investigation into cybercrime in Cambodia, which the human rights group said "point towards state complicity in abuses carried out by Chinese criminal gangs." "The Cambodian government is deliberately ignoring a litany of human rights abuses including slavery, human trafficking, child labor and torture being carried out by criminal gangs on a vast scale in more than 50 scamming compounds located across the country," it said. Human trafficking is closely associated with cyberscam operations, as workers are often recruited under false pretences and

then held captive.

"Deceived, trafficked and enslaved, the survivors of these scamming compounds describe being trapped in a living nightmare - enlisted in criminal enterprises that are operating with the apparent consent of the Cambodian government," Amnesty International's Secretary General Agnes Callamard said. Cambodia's latest crackdown comes in the midst of a bitter feud with neighboring Thailand, which began with a brief armed skirmish in late May over border territory claimed by both nations and has now led to border closures and nearly daily exchanges of nationalistic insults. Friendly former leaders of both countries have become estranged and there have been hot debates over which nation's cultural heritage has influenced the other. Measures initiated by the Thai side, including cutting off cross-border electricity supplies and closing crossing points, have particularly heightened tensions, with Cambodia claiming they were churlish actions of spite to retaliate for its intention to pursue its territorial claims. Thailand said its original intention was to combat long-existing cyberscam operations in Poipet.

Starmer suspends several Labour rebels

LONDON (AFP): British Prime Minister Keir Starmer suspended several lawmakers as he tried to reassert his authority over his ruling Labour party following a rebellion over welfare reforms. Starmer was forced to backtrack on plans to slash disability and sickness benefits earlier this month after dozens of his own MPs threatened to vote against the proposals.

MPs Brian Leishman, Neil Duncan-Jordan, and Rachael Maskell said they had been suspended while the Times newspaper reported that Chris Hinchliff had suffered the same fate. All four voted against the welfare reforms on July 1 after Starmer made his authority-sapping climbdown to avoid a humiliating defeat in parliament. Leishman's office confirmed to AFP that the Scottish MP had been temporarily suspended from the party. Duncan-Jordan, the representative for Poole in southern England, said he understood that voting against the government "could come at a cost, but I couldn't support making disabled people poorer".

Starmer has endured a difficult first year in power and has made several damaging U-turns in recent weeks. Political scientist Steven Fielding said the purge was a bid by Starmer to reinforce party discipline. "He wants to send a signal to all the others that rebelled over the welfare bill and have rebelled on other things that, 'Okay, you've got away with this one, but if you keep going, this is going to be your fate,'" Fielding told AFP. But the University of Nottingham politics professor added it was a risky strategy considering the large numbers of lawmakers who had opposed the welfare reforms. "I think he's going about it in the wrong way. He needs to talk (to) and understand why the MPs are doing this," Fielding told AFP.

Labour did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Starmer's popularity has plummeted since he won a landslide general election result in July last year, ending 14 consecutive years of Conservative rule. Labour now trails Eurosceptic

Nigel Farage's hard-right Reform UK party in many national polls, although the next election is likely four years away. In June, the government reversed a policy to scrap a winter heating benefit for millions of pensioners, following widespread criticism and another rebellion from its own MPs. The same month, Starmer -- a former chief state prosecutor in England and Wales -- announced a national inquiry focused on a UK child sex exploitation scandal after previously resisting calls. The prime minister has a massive majority of about 160 MPs, meaning he should be able to force whatever legislation he wants through parliament. But some in the party complain of a disconnect between Starmer's leadership, which is focused on combating the rise of Reform, and Labour's traditional centre-left principles. Confirming she had been suspended, Maskell urged Starmer to engage with his backbenchers, saying she wanted to see "bridges built" and this would "make him a better prime minister".

Trump admn fires 17 immigration court judges

WASHINGTON (AP): Seventeen immigration court judges have been fired in recent days, according to the union that represents them, as the Trump administration pushes forward with its mass deportations of immigrants in the country. The International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers, which represents immigration court judges as well as other professionals, said in a news release that 15 judges were fired "without cause" and another two. The union said they were working in courts in 10 different states across the country - California, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, Texas, Utah and Virginia. "It's outrageous and against the public interest that at the same time Congress has authorized 800 immigration judges, we are firing large numbers of immigration judges without cause," said the union's President Matt Biggs. "This is nonsensical. The answer is to stop firing and start hiring."

The firings come as the courts have been increasingly at the center of the Trump administration's headline immigration enforcement efforts with Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers arresting immigrants as they appear at court for proceedings. A spokeswoman for the

Executive Office of Immigration Review, which is the part of the Justice Department that oversees the courts, said in an email that the office would not comment on the firings. The large-scale arrests began in May and have unleashed fear among asylum-seekers and immigrants appearing in court. In what has become a familiar scene, a judge will grant a government lawyer's request to dismiss deportation proceedings against an immigrant. Meanwhile, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers are waiting in the hallway to arrest the person and put them on a fast track to deportation as soon as he or she leaves the courtroom.

Immigration court judges are also dealing with a massive backlog of roughly 3.5 million cases that ballooned in recent years. Cases can take years to weave their way to a final determination, with judges and lawyers frequently scheduling final hearings on the merits of a case over a year out. Unlike criminal courts, the government isn't required to provide lawyers to everyone going through immigration courts; immigrants can hire their own lawyer but if they can't afford one they represent themselves - often using an interpreter to make their case. Democratic US Sen.

Dick Durbin of Illinois alleged that one of the judges fired was essentially being punished for talking to him during a visit the senator made a few weeks ago to the Chicago Immigration Court. In a news release, Durbin said the judge "took time to show me the court and explain its functions." He said after the visit, the judge received an email from the Justice Department telling her that all communications with congressional offices should be routed through headquarters and that immigration judges shouldn't be talking directly with members of Congress. "Her abrupt termination is an abuse of power by the Administration to punish a non-political judge simply for doing her job," said Durbin, who's the ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Under recently passed legislation that will use \$170 billion to supercharge immigration enforcement, the courts are set to get an infusion of \$3.3 billion. That will go toward raising the number of judges to 800 and hiring more staff to support them. But the union said that since the Trump administration took office over 103 judges have either been fired or voluntarily left after taking what was dubbed the "Fork in the Road" offers at the beginning of the administration.

Seven arrest warrants issued in global swoop on suspected Russia-linked hackers

ROME/BERLIN (Reuters): Germany and Spain issued arrest warrants for seven suspected members of a pro-Russian hacking group accused of carrying out cyber attacks against critical infrastructure, arms makers, power companies and public authorities.

The warrants resulted from an international operation involving law enforcement and judicial authorities including the US, France, Sweden, Italy, the Netherlands and Switzerland, German prosecutors and pan-European police agency Europol said in separate statements. German prosecutors said they had helped to coordinate the swoop in multiple countries in which 24 premises linked to the hacking group - which called itself NoName057(16) - were searched, including one in Berlin and two in

Bavaria in southeastern Germany.

Germany issued six arrest warrants, five of them public, and Spain issued another. The NoName group had used the Telegram messaging app to enlist over 4,000 volunteers who made their systems available for swamping critical institutions' servers with so-called distributed denial of service attacks, the German prosecutors said. The premises searched included those linked to volunteers in the Telegram group, they said. In the past years the NoName collective, known for promoting Russian interests, has allegedly carried out successful cyberattacks in Ukraine and on government, infrastructure, banking, health services and telecom websites in European countries that

have backed it against Russia.

European authorities are increasingly concerned at the scale of the hybrid threats they say emanate from Russia, which is in the third year of its invasion of Western ally Ukraine. Those threats, which have included killings and alleged bomb plots against institutions and cargo aircraft, have largely been attributed to state actors. Russia has denied the accusation. In this case, prosecutors did not specifically link the suspects to the state. "The aim of the attacks on German targets was to garner media attention and thereby influence political and social decision-making in Germany," prosecutors said in the statement.

The prosecutors and Europol published names and pictures of five of the

people they were seeking, all of them Russian citizens and presumed to be residing in Russia. A further German arrest warrant remains sealed. Prosecutors identified one of the Russian citizens as one of two leading figures in the group it was seeking. Europol said volunteers were recruited through Russian channels, chat groups, social media and messaging apps and that they often invited contacts from gaming and hacking forums. Italian authorities added in a separate statement that sympathisers were given lists of Western targets to hit and provided with the software needed to participate. They added that the organisation - which paid with cryptocurrencies - had a "central line of command and control in the Russian Federation".

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Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

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Peshawar Office: 0300- 9009001

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

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

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

Afghan data leak

IT might have seemed that the revelations around the Afghan database leak could not get any worse, but that has turned out to be untrue. It has now emerged that along with thousands of Afghan names on the list there are also more than 100 names and details of UK Special Forces and Secret Intelligence Service (SIS, aka "MI6") staff. The various formations of the Special Forces include the well-known Special Air Service (SAS) and their maritime counterparts in the Special Boat Service (SBS), as well as other lower profile units such as the Special Reconnaissance Regiment. They and the intelligence officers of the SIS were crucial to operations in Afghanistan and would have worked closely with all British and Afghan forces over a number of years. Though the Taliban claim to have the data, it is unlikely that they are a threat outside Afghanistan, and unlikely to be able to target the British personnel on the list themselves. However it is all but certain that they or others will pass it on and, as with other previously leaked information, our organisations will have to operate on the assumption that any enemy which wants the list will obtain it. It is believed that up to 600 Afghans named on the list are still in Afghanistan and it will be a huge challenge to protect them and evacuate them.

No doubt, during the last two years that the super injunction has run, the Government, MoD and the intelligence and security services will have done all they can to protect those involved. Secrecy and anonymity are crucial to these organisations, but in our digital world where in some cases the keyboard is more powerful than the sword, complete secrecy is getting more difficult, not easier. One assumes that Government organisations believe that mitigation is now in place to protect all these people, and the damage done by further suppression of the facts in this case would be worse than having them made public. It is essential that thorough security checks are carried out on those Afghans already here, to ensure that bad actors have not slipped through the net.

Many are calling for the heads of those responsible for this data breach and no doubt it is not all down to one relatively junior Royal Marine, as suggested by some media outlets. This is where those ultimately responsible, higher up the food chain, must stand up and show their mettle and moral courage. But the most important task now is to ensure our Special Forces and intelligence services can carry on their vital work keeping this country safe, which they do every day of the year. Blame, if needed, is for tomorrow.

Bid to sabotage consensus

THE series of Association of Southeast Asian Nations foreign ministers' meetings that concluded in Kuala Lumpur last week reconfirmed the regional consensus on resolving differences through consultations. So there can be no quibbling about which party is the bad apple in the basket threatening regional peace and stability. On Tuesday, a Philippine Coast Guard ship sailed into the waters near China's Huangyan Island and carried out a series of extremely dangerous and provocative moves, cutting through China Coast Guard ships' sailing routes at high speed multiple times. These unprofessional and reckless maneuvers seriously threatened the safety of the Chinese ships.

Unlike previous incidents where the Philippines portrayed itself as a "victim", this time its actions were clearly aggressive. Manila appeared to stage this provocation after failing to rally ASEAN support in Kuala Lumpur and in alignment with US geopolitical objectives in the South China Sea. It should not be forgotten that during his visit to Beijing in January 2023, President Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines pledged to work with China to unlock the potential of the bilateral relationship. China is the strongest partner of the Philippines, and nothing can hold back the continuation and development of the Philippines-China friendship, Marcos said at the time.

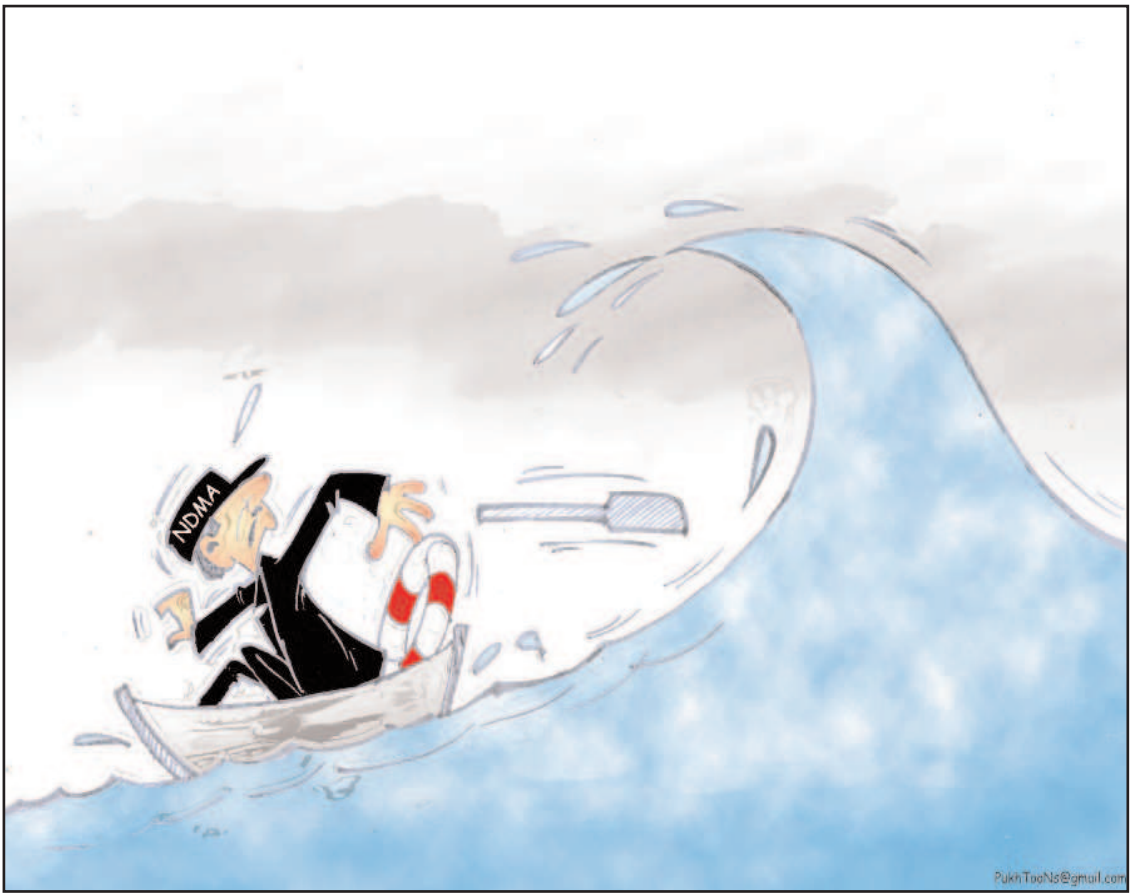
He confirmed the Philippines' commitment to the one-China policy, and said Manila was willing to continue to properly handle the maritime issues with China through friendly consultation. But after China took concrete actions to fulfill its part to translate the outcomes of Marcos' visit into projects in various fields, the Marcos government took a U-turn embracing a one-sided pro-US policy. Since then, Manila has been ceaselessly hyping up the maritime disputes with China and using them to define bilateral relations as a whole, while also trying to persuade regional countries to join its anti-China circus sponsored by Washington. The Marcos government feels no qualms about trying to derail the consensus of the Kuala Lumpur meetings by making a big splash of "commemorating" the ninth anniversary of the null and void "arbitral award" on its maritime claims. That is a telling sign of its desperation to keep itself to the fore in its patrons' eyes.

Among the proposed topics for discussion during his visit is strengthening "peace through deterrence". Philippine Ambassador to the US Jose Manuel Romualdez told the media. That echoed US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's remarks about the US military's plan to ratchet up deterrence against what he falsely called China's "increasingly assertive actions" in the region. Although the US has no territorial claims in the waters, it has repeatedly stated that it is obligated to defend the Philippines citing the two countries' "bilateral security treaty".

As a Chinese military spokesperson warned, the Philippines should realize that its reliance on foreign support to make trouble in the South China Sea will backfire. On the pretext of honoring its alliance with the Philippines, the US is doing nothing but meddling in the South China Sea issue and attempting to threaten and coerce China. Regional countries should be on the alert as Manila and Washington are always causing frictions with their collusion. Compared with other strategic waterways in the world, the South China Sea remains stable despite the intention of the US to make it otherwise. There are no problems with freedom of navigation and overflight. So peace, stability, and cooperation should be the mainstream narrative regarding the waters, as China's foreign minister said in Kuala Lumpur. The Marcos government should give up its illusions and come back to the right track of dialogue and negotiation as soon as possible. The price of renewing its anti-China contract with the US might be more than "one pound of flesh".

Important Notice

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How weaponizing antisemitism is beginning to backfire

Barry Trachtenberg

PROJECT Esther [1], the Heritage Foundation's blueprint for dismantling Palestinian solidarity movements across America, represents one of the most cynical political documents of our time. Named after the biblical queen who saved Jews from annihilation, this 33-page strategy paper outlines a systematic campaign to weaponize accusations of antisemitism against anyone who dares criticize Israel's assault on Gaza.

Despite Project Esther's stated intention to combat anti-Jewish hatred, its true goal is to leverage false claims of antisemitism to prevent Palestinians and their allies from speaking about Israeli war crimes and its genocidal assault. The consequences extend far beyond Palestinian advocacy; Project Esther threatens to strip antisemitism of any meaningful content, transforming it from a term describing attacks on Jews' fundamental place in society into a political cudgel. Yet as this strategy unfolds, clear signs of resistance and pushback suggest its ultimate failure.

Understanding Project Esther requires recognizing what antisemitism historically meant [2]: attacks on Jews' fundamental place in the societies where they lived, rooted in the perception that Jews were essentially alien to the prevailing racial, national, religious, or economic order. True antisemitism targeted Jews as members of a supposedly foreign people whose very presence threatened the social fabric. Project Esther corrupts this understanding by conflating criticism of Israeli government policies with hatred of Jews themselves, thereby diluting the concept's power to identify and combat actual anti-Jewish bigotry.

The document's influence on policy has been swift and devastating. While Project Esther gained prominence under the Trump administration, many of its core strategies were already being implemented during the Biden years. Similar to how global powers' support for Israel's assault on Gaza has upended decades of international law [3] designed to protect vulnerable populations, Project Esther's strategy - ostensibly aimed at protecting Jewish students, faculty, and staff - has led to the dismantling of

diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives [4], the firing [5] of faculty [6] and expulsion of students [7] who are critical of Israel, shackling [8] academic Middle East and South Asian studies programs, and undermining academic freedom and faculty governance [9] mechanisms across American higher education.

This assault on academic freedom extends beyond individual universities to scholarly associations themselves. The American Historical Association's recent experience exemplifies this dynamic perfectly. After AHA members voted overwhelmingly [10] (428-88) to condemn Israeli "scholasticide" in Gaza, the systematic destruction of Palestinian educational infrastructure, the organization's Council vetoed the resolution [11]. This veto represents exactly the kind of institutional capture Project Esther envisions.

The most disturbing aspect of this campaign has been watching institutions preemptively comply with these authoritarian tactics. Whether through what some observers call "anticipatory compliance" or, more likely, those who prioritize perceived financial and legal liabilities over academic freedom over fostering critical intellectual inquiry, too many institutions have abandoned their educational mission in favor of political expediency. The result has been a chilling effect on campus discourse that extends far beyond discussions of Palestine and Israel.

Large cracks in this strategy are becoming increasingly visible, however, suggesting that Project Esther may ultimately backfire. The case of Mahmud Khalil, the Columbia University graduate student abducted by ICE agents for his pro-Palestinian activism [12], illustrates both the authoritarian overreach of the strategy and its legal fragility. Khalil, a legal permanent resident married to a US citizen, was detained for months without criminal charges solely based on his political speech. When federal judge Michael Farbiarz ordered Khalil's release in June [13], calling his continued detention "highly, highly unusual," the ruling represented a significant judicial rebuke to Project Esther's tactics.

Perhaps more significant-

ly, political developments suggest a broader shift in American attitudes toward Israel and antisemitism accusations. Zohran Mamdani's stunning victory in New York City's Democratic mayoral primary [14] provides compelling evidence of this transformation. Despite intense criticism of his positions on Israel, including his support for the boycott movement and refusal to condemn the phrase "Globalize the Intifada," Mamdani defeated former Governor Andrew Cuomo with crucial support from young Jewish voters [15]. Mamdani's victory reflects national polling that many Jews reject the false equation between anti-Zionism and antisemitism. Moreover, the Democratic Party, historically Israel's strongest supporter in American politics, attitudes are shifting. A majority of Democrats now oppose the assault on Palestinians [16], representing a fundamental realignment that threatens Project Esther's underlying assumptions about American political support for Israeli policies and the efficacy of weaponizing antisemitism allegations in this way.

Educational institutions are also beginning to resist Project Esther's influence. The National Education Association's recent vote to cut ties with the Anti-Defamation League [17] represents a watershed moment. The NEA's 7,000-member Representative Assembly voted to reject ADL materials and programs [18], explicitly stating that "despite its reputation as a civil rights organization, the ADL is not the social justice educational partner it claims to be." This decision by America's largest labor union reflects growing awareness that organizations like the ADL have abandoned their original mission of fighting antisemitism in favor of policing criticism of Israel.

As a professor of Jewish history and the Holocaust, I am particularly concerned about how Project Esther actually endangers Jewish safety by misdirecting attention from real antisemitic threats. By focusing exclusively on Palestinian solidarity movements while ignoring white supremacist violence, which accounts for the vast majority of actu-

al antisemitic attacks in America, Project Esther weakens rather than strengthens Jewish security. The document barely acknowledges right-wing antisemitism [19], dismissing groups like the Ku Klux Klan as "relics of the past" despite clear evidence of their continued influence through movements like the Proud Boys and various militia groups.

The strategy's apparent failure stems from a fundamental misreading of American society. Project Esther assumes that Americans will indefinitely accept the conflation of criticism of Israeli policies with hatred of Jews. However, as images of Gaza's destruction have filled our social media feeds and as young Americans witness the systematic dismantling of Palestinian society, this conflation becomes increasingly untenable. When institutions invoke "Jewish safety" to justify censoring opposition to genocide, the cynicism becomes too obvious to ignore.

Looking ahead, Project Esther's mixed legacy, marked by harm to our society's social, legal, and academic institutions and profound principled resistance to those assaults. While it has provided mechanisms to bring enormous harm to higher educational institutions and democratic discourse, the growing cracks in its implementation suggest that Americans, including many Jews, are beginning to see through its manipulation. The document's overreach may ultimately strengthen rather than weaken the Palestinian solidarity movement [20] by exposing the authoritarian tactics being deployed against it.

The path forward requires rejecting Project Esther's false framework entirely. True opposition to antisemitism cannot be separated from opposition to all forms of racism and oppression. As Jews, we are safest when we stand in solidarity with other marginalized communities, not when we allow our historical trauma to be manipulated in service of contemporary injustice. The growing resistance to Project Esther suggests that this understanding is beginning to take hold, offering hope that both Palestinians and Jews might yet find genuine security through justice rather than domination.

AA

There remains a way to make Russia pay for its crimes

Denis Mikhailov

TODAY'S Russia is not merely violating international law - it is openly dismantling its very architecture. Nearly 10,000 individuals have brought cases against the Kremlin and Europe's top human rights courts recently ruled that Russia violated international law in Ukraine.

These rulings have the power to be more than symbolic. Yes, the Kremlin has withdrawn from many international legal institutions and is blatantly ignoring the treaties to which it still belongs. But there is still a lever that can be pulled to impose real consequences for Moscow.

There is evidence that Russia fully understands that it cannot completely ignore international legal norms without consequences. That is why the Kremlin officially demands the cancellation of reparations and war-related payments for Ukraine, as well as the lifting of all sanctions imposed on the country in connection with its war against Ukraine.

But still, Moscow continues its legal nihilism. This poses the challenge of how the international community should respond to a nuclear power that rejects any legal obligation that does not serve its interests. This question extends far beyond Ukraine or internal repression. It threatens the very foundations of the international order - a system based on obligations, accountability and universally accepted human rights principles.

The strategic goal of holding Russia to account should be eventual regime change and the democratization of the country. Coercion works slowly. The tactical goal today must be the implementation of gradual measures that, even against the will of the current regime, could partially or fully contribute to restoring the status of human rights, especially where independent institutions have proved such violations or are plainly evident.

I personally know dozens of Russians - former political prisoners, activists and victims of police violence - whose cases were ruled on in Strasbourg, with Russia found guilty. These individuals have not had their names cleared, received compensation for their suffering, nor received official recognition of the injustice they endured. Russia has not only refused to implement these decisions but has also blocked any domestic path to legal rehabilitation.

Compelling Russia to implement ECHR rulings is not about vengeance. It is about restoring justice, protecting the international legal order, and sending a clear message: authoritarian states cannot violate human rights with impunity. Russia remains a formal party to many international treaties, from the UN Charter to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. However, in recent years, it has deliberately stopped complying with these norms.

If the international community chooses to ignore Russia's violations, it will send a dangerous signal that authoritarian regimes can break the rules with impunity. Having withdrawn from the Council of Europe and jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights, Russian authorities are promoting an alternative model of international order, one in

which a "sovereign right to suppress internal conflicts" and non-interference take precedence. The Kremlin's alliances with China, Iran, North Korea and other authoritarian regimes are being built on this foundation, showing that Moscow is trying to build an alternative to the current rules-based order.

When Israeli bombs struck targets in Iran, the Islamic Republic's leadership was quick to invoke international law. It might seem ironic, given Iran's own blatant human rights abuses. But this only proves the point that even authoritarian regimes remain aware of the potential for international law to bring accountability. In these circumstances, compelling Russia to comply is not merely about confronting Moscow. It is a test of the resilience and credibility of the entire global legal order. If that test fails, it would immediately signal that human rights no longer exist as a universal norm and the world would slide further into a dangerous competition between authoritarian blocs.

Moreover, before 2022, Russia complied with thousands of ECHR rulings - including paying compensation, overturning repressive verdicts and acknowledging systemic violations. There were exceptions, such as the high-profile cases of Yukos and Alexei Navalny. But overall, Russia generally followed international law to the letter. Today, however, the legal rulings the Kremlin is ignoring remain valid, whatever Moscow does. They have not been annulled and continue to exist as legal obligations, as well as moral ones.

This makes it especially important for the international community to begin applying secondary measures of pressure through legal avenues as well as diplomacy and economic sanctions. Although Russia does not abide by international law now, all unimplemented rulings and unfulfilled obligations should be documented, along with the names of victims and the compensation they are owed, for the day when they do.

Making Russia pay does not necessarily mean the rapid democratization of the country.

Smaller-scale achievements are more likely but no less essential: the release of political prisoners and easing of domestic repressions are more likely but no less essential. They could build up to an end to current military aggression and a return to the international legal fold. Even these steps represent a path toward the restoration of the international order that the Kremlin is trying to dismantle.

Russia's model of authoritarian sovereignty challenges the very value-based architecture of the international community. If the world accepts that a state can invade, torture and kill without consequence, it would be the end of the idea of international law itself. That is why exerting pressure on Russia today is not an act of hostility - it is an act of systemic defense: of rights, institutions, security and human dignity. This responsibility lies not only with politicians and diplomats, but also with human rights defenders, analysts, civil society activists and journalists. Their efforts are the building blocks of a future just world.

The Moscow Times

California can fix Trump's EV mistake

Mike Murphy

WHEN he signed his budget bill into law on July 4, President Trump dealt a heavy blow to America's electric vehicle industry, ending most federal support for US electric vehicle manufacturing and hobbling automakers' \$100-billion effort to catch up with China, the world's new automotive manufacturing superpower. Now California alone has the size and market power to fill the void left by Washington's surrender. Our leaders in Sacramento must step up.

The gutting of EV support never got the national debate it deserved. Americans, including many in Congress, fail to see the real EV issue: China. As the world moves toward a future auto market dominated by electric vehicles - a reality no global auto executive doubts - China has seized the opportunity. It's China, not the United States, the European Union or Japan, that now rules global auto-

motive manufacturing. For every car, SUV or pickup built in America, China builds about three, and the Chinese have the manufacturing muscle to build five.

Detroit understands this. Along with their European and Asian peers, US automakers have invested tens of billions in North American factories to build the next generation of EVs and compete in global markets. This month at the Aspen Ideas Festival, Ford Chief Executive Jim Farley put it bluntly: "If we lose this [the race for EVs], we do not have a future Ford."

Unfortunately, the Trump administration is forcing free-world automakers to race against China at a disadvantage. Chinese automakers, awash in government help and subsidies, now manufacture 70% of the world's EVs. Their advanced, low-priced cars are quickly taking market share in Australia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. Mexico is a

sobering example. In 2017, 1% of Mexican cars came from China. Last year that number was 20%.

Despite China's success, have no doubt that US, European, South Korean and Japanese automakers can compete. Much of the EV technology that the Chinese have exploited was first developed in the United States. Although China has more than 100 EV brands, only a handful are profitable; many will fade away. For America and its allies to compete in this race, carmakers must succeed in their anchor American market. (Remember, most foreign car companies - Hyundai, Kia, BMW, Volkswagen and Mercedes - build EVs in the United States, employing thousands of Americans.)

What can California do to fill the massive void in EV support left by Washington? Plenty. Here are three priorities. The state has a tangle of

consumer EV subsidies; this simple approach should replace them. To control costs to taxpayers, lawmakers could make these "conquest" credits - that is, they would be limited to first-time EV buyers and leasers. This program should not have income limits. The more new EV drivers the better because data show that most consumers happily stick with EVs once they have leased or bought one. Income limits would simply limit sales volume.

Fix the multifamily charging problem. Many Californians in large metropolitan areas such as L.A. or San Francisco live in apartments or condos without the convenience and cost savings of overnight charging. Instead, they are often forced to wait in line at fast-charging stations, where electricity prices are usually higher than at home. This lack of apartment and condo chargers is a

"pinch point" in the EV market that California could take the lead in solving.

Sacramento should agree to fund landlords' and condo boards' Level 2 charger installation costs. By my calculations, for the average cost of one six-nozzle fast-charging station, more than 120 multifamily parking spaces could get permanent Level 2 chargers. Tenants would pay for the electricity system maintenance; landlords could charge a modest monthly fee for Level 2-enabled parking spaces. This would not only spur EV sales among working families but also create thousands of good, union infrastructure jobs. A bonus: Many of California's full-time ride-hail drivers use EVs and live in apartments. Access to overnight charging where they live would convert their current daytime charging time into earning time and probably reduce their overall energy costs.

Fast-track fast-charging permits. Despite having the

most EVs, California is a punch line in the charging industry. Building gas-station-style fast-charging stations here is difficult because of utility company delays and permitting headaches. As a result, billions of dollars in private capital ready to invest in charging infrastructure has been chased out of California. Of the first wave of fast-charging stations built by Ionna, a well-funded consortium of eight automakers, just one is in California. Sacramento just reformed the California Environmental Quality Act to accelerate home building; it should do the same for EV charging and make building high-speed public "rechargeeries" faster and easier. Gov. Gavin Newsom, a longtime EV driver, and the state Legislature can fill the void left by Washington, championing EV manufacturing jobs and keeping California and the nation competitive in the race to electrify transportation.

The Los Angeles Times

What do the Afghan leaks tell us about state secrecy in Britain?

THIS week, a British high court judge lifted a superinjunction designed to prevent the reporting of a leak that put the lives of Afghans who cooperated with the UK at risk. The superinjunction was originally expected to be in force from September to December 2023. Instead, it kept details of a national scandal hidden from public scrutiny for years in an extraordinary example of national security providing legal cover for a political crisis.

In attempting to remedy the impact of the leak, both Conservative and Labour governments will end up spending £850m. And thousands of Afghans and their families have been brought to the UK via a secret resettlement programme. These significant decisions made by multiple governments have never been publicly scrutinised. So how was this allowed to happen?

In discharging the superinjunction on Tuesday, Mr Justice Chamberlain acknowledged that this was an "unprecedented case". We are far more used to superinjunctions being granted in relation to celebrities than to protect state secrecy. Indeed, this was the first time that we know of that one was granted on the government's application and represents a step change in the means that it has to prevent the spread of potentially harmful or embarrassing information.

This was also the first superinjunction that we know of that was made contra mundum. This meant that it was an offence for anyone to speak publicly about the fact that there had been a data breach, the various and extensive efforts made to mitigate the harm of the breach, or that there were restrictions in place preventing the reporting of said breach.

The legal remedies open to the government of today, in the form of superinjunctions, are far more wide reaching than any available to previous governments. The deployment of a superinjunction in relation to matters of national security may well mark a new frontier in the executive's attempt to maintain state secrecy.

Theo Burges

However, what has been clear throughout the various applications for extension of the superinjunction is that there was increasing judicial unease. Mr Justice Chamberlain considered in July 2024 that the superinjunction

This follows a path of the judiciary generally deferring to the state on matters of national security. However, this position can only be sustained when the state provides full and proper disclosure. The original motivation for the superinjunction was to protect vulnerable Afghans' lives. What is certain is the leak of their details, at the very least, added to the risk they faced and it was right the government took action to protect them. But serious questions need to be asked about how the risk to them was examined throughout the years the superinjunction was in place - and whether withholding information from public scrutiny improved the situation of those involved. It is of note that the reason for the superinjunction no longer being extended was largely due to a Whitehall review conducted by Paul Rimmer, a former deputy chief of defence intelligence.

"could no longer be maintained" - due, in part, to the inability for public scrutiny to take place and to the fact that those impacted by the list were denied the opportunity to benefit from public pressure on the government to do more for them. The court of appeal, however, said it would be wrong to lift the order, and so the superinjunction remained in place. This follows a path of the judiciary generally deferring to the state on matters of national security. However, this position can only be sustained when the state provides full and proper disclosure.

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It is of note that the reason for the superinjunction no longer being extended was largely due to a Whitehall review conducted by Paul Rimmer, a former deputy chief of defence intelligence. In essence, Rimmer stated that a person's presence on the leaked list was not a "defining factor" in determining risk to an individual, rather it was an element of the risk posed to Afghans who had assisted the UK. Once this report was pro-

vided to the court, keeping the superinjunction in place was simply unsustainable. As a consequence, judicial tolerance for the government's position ran out.

Given the content of the government's own report, it could be argued that the state had a large part in bringing down its own superinjunction. Indeed, following Chamberlain's provisional view on 1 July 2025 that the superinjunction should be lifted, the government legal department confirmed that the defence secretary, John Healey, had decided to discontinue the secret Afghan resettlement scheme and applied to discharge the injunction.

It's concerning then that the decision over whether or not this unprecedented superinjunction was necessary was, seemingly, up to the government. The public interest can only be defended by robust judicial analysis based on the state providing the court with a full account of information. The deference granted to the state on matters of national security is predicated on full and proper disclosure. However, in the context of seemingly flexible government opinion, it is questionable whether such deference is warranted if the primary factor in determining such applications can change so readily.

This seems particularly true when superinjunctions as powerful as this one are exercised far past their sell-by date. If government opinion is a determining factor in applications such as these, one might reasonably question what happens if the government's opinion does not change. Could extensive powers, similar to this superinjunction, continue indefinitely, denying the media the opportunity to properly scrutinise important decision-making relating to highly sensitive political matters? This unprecedented case raises the question of whether the state is being fair and above board in what it tells judges and whether there can be sufficient interrogation of the state's position regarding matters of national security. A question it will only become more urgent that we answer.

Struggle for digital sovereignty

Dr. Kamil Tarhan

the early 1990s. However, the real leap forward came in the period after 2010. With the recognition of cyber threats as a national security issue at the 2010 National Security Council meeting, serious institutional steps were taken under the leadership of the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) and the Information and C o m m u n i c a t i o n Technologies Authority (BTK). The establishment of the Cyber Security Council, along with structures such as the National Cyber Incident Response Centre (USOM) and the Cyber Incident Response Team (SOME), made the protection of critical infrastructure a priority state policy.

The four National Cyber Security Strategy Documents published to date reflect Türkiye's evolution in this area: The 2013-2014 strategy focused on raising awareness, and institutions such as USOM were established. The 2016-2019 strategy focused on protecting critical infrastructure and SMEs, with an emphasis on domestic technology. The 2020-2023 strategy sought to address new-generation threats by centering on a multi-stakeholder structure. The 2024-2028 strategy presented the most comprehensive approach to date, emphasizing human-centered cybersecurity, AI-based threat analysis, and digital sovereignty.

Türkiye is pursuing proactive policies in many areas, including national IP address scans, cyber exercises, under the leadership of BTK, including critical infrastructure protection and integration efforts with NATO. At the same time, the Presidency's Digital Transformation Office and the Communications Directorate are continuing their work on combating disinformation and AI compliance through new institutions. The digital age has transformed the concept of sovereignty beyond borders, turning it into a power equation that encompasses not only physical but also virtual spaces. Türkiye, aware of this transformation, treats cybersecurity not only as a technical issue but also as a matter of national sovereignty and security.

Four national cybersecurity strategy documents published since 2013 and the establishment of the Cybersecurity Presidency in 2025 clearly demonstrate Türkiye's institutional commitment in this area. The newly enacted Cybersecurity Law No. 7545 has strengthened criminal penalties against cyber threats, and enhanced Türkiye's position and credibility in the international digital landscape. However, these moves are not only aimed at security but

also at building digital sovereignty. With national projects such as TURKSAT 6A, digital advances in the defense industry, and AI-based cyber defense mechanisms, Türkiye aims to reduce external dependence and strengthen technological autonomy. However, this strategic progress must be balanced with transparency and the protection of fundamental rights. Ensuring that security-focused regulations are monitored within a framework that respects individual rights will make Türkiye's legitimacy and influence in the digital world permanent.

In conclusion, Türkiye's institutional and legal steps in cybersecurity are not merely a defensive reflex but an effort to consolidate its sovereignty in the digital age. This effort, when the right balances are established, can position Türkiye as a strong, respected, and confident actor in the global cybersecurity arena. In the techno-polar world, the US-China competition is shaping technology, while the EU is trying to establish its norms in data security and ethical AI. Türkiye, on the other hand, aims to develop independent digital capacity and balance international cooperation between these two poles. At this point, strategic independence, reducing digital dependence, and national investments in next-generation technologies, such as AI, are of great importance. In this context, Türkiye's cautious stance toward foreign 5G vendors, particularly Huawei, can be interpreted through a techno-polar lens.

Türkiye has both strengths and weaknesses in its digital transformation. Weak oversight of strategic implementation, lack of coordination, and inconsistency in budget and human resources remain key challenges to be overcome. Additionally, the misuse of new technologies such as large language models (deep fakes, automated disinformation, etc.) requires Türkiye to be prepared not only technically but also ethically and socio-politically.

Cybersecurity policies must be addressed not merely as technical issues but within a multi-layered security framework encompassing foreign policy, democracy, data justice, and national sovereignty. Türkiye's determination and strategic vision in this area can transform it into an actor that not only defends itself but also conducts digital diplomacy and can serve as a regional example. While moving toward this goal, Türkiye also needs to develop more democratic, transparent, and human-centered policies. Türkiye must develop broader, more inclusive digital strategies that go beyond state-centered defense policies.

Bluster, bullying, suspensions - this is no way to run the Labour party

THIS is a sign of weakness, not strength. To suspend four MPs for rebellion suggests a lack of authority and a lack of nerve, not a sense of confidence. Bullying and threats are no way to manage a party, but a signal that Labour has lost control, with its crude methods in cutting winter fuel payments and its attempt to cut disability benefits. As MPs head off for the summer next week, Keir Starmer and the Labour whips hope they will be mulling over their futures, having been warned of the severe penalty for disloyalty. But I doubt that's the message most will absorb.

More than 120 MPs signalled their opposition to the proposed welfare cuts, and many more agreed but didn't sign the amendment. Was the solution to sack the lot? Or just the token "ringleaders"? In fact there were none, just a strong belief among backbenchers of all varieties that not only were the cuts wrong, they were badly done and would be politically damaging, as indeed they were. Those suspended are of the soft left, by no means Corbynites. Rachael Maskell is a bit of a moral grandstander, annoying other MPs by suggesting her conscience is clearer than theirs, but suspensions tend to play to those tendencies (though the four will find that once they are no longer representing Labour, they will lose their voice with backcasters).

A Labour aide boasted gleefully that these "heads on spikes" were intended as a warning shot to the new intake of MPs not to rebel, but

Polly Toynbee

it sounds like petty revenge for their success in forcing the leadership into U-turns. Don't even think of sacking Diane Abbott again: it didn't work out well. She would be away in the Lords now had the party not blundered last time, making her dig in her heels very effectively.

Starmer is building quite a record for stamping down on dissent. He is the first prime minister to suspend the whip from MPs in his first month in power. In fact, during that first month, when he punished the seven who voted for an SNP motion to abolish the two-child benefit cap, he suspended more MPs than Tony Blair did during his decade in No 10, despite frequent rebellions. One senior Blair aide said Jeremy Corbyn wasn't expelled even though "he voted more often against than for the government" (not strictly true, although he did vote against the government more than 400 times). I put that to a senior No 10 source, whose riposte was: "Well, Blair should have done! It would have saved us a lot of years in opposition." Unlikely. If not Corbyn, it would have been someone else of his ilk.

Parties need discipline. How did Blair maintain it sufficiently, without expulsions? A Blair aide said he paid close attention to his backbenchers, holding a daily morning meeting with the chief whips Hilary Armstrong and Jackie Smith, and weekly meetings with a rotating roster of MPs including regular rebels - even Dennis

Skinner - to test the contents of his speeches ahead of time.

Aides such as parliamentary private secretaries were delegated to nurture various groups of MPs - the women, the union supporters, the religious, the leftists, those with particular political issues or constituency concerns, those in marginals who kept their ears closest to the ground. If Blair disagreed with them, he said so and explained why. "Being listened to matters," said the aide. But the whips weren't supine or toothless. "They didn't threaten but they could make MPs' lives miserable," the aide added, with measures such as denying pairing. Things will get worse when MPs return from summer recess, with the autumn budget, the review of services for children with special educational needs and disabilities and a child poverty strategy that needs to rescind the two-child benefit cap, despite 60% of the public in favour of keeping it, including half of Labour voters.

There will be many more opportunities for conflict in the party. The problem is profound. This is not about a handful of usual suspects, but a deep unease about the direction of the government, or whether it even has a direction beyond a random collection of policies. Discipline only works if there is a strong story that defines where a government is heading and why. Too many MPs do not believe Starmer's story, especially after the U-turns they forced seemed to send Labour in a better, more coherent direction. Here's an example: it's

brilliant that Starmer announced on Thursday that Labour will lower the voting age to 16, but where's the more radical constitutional reform?

MPs can get arrogant when they forget they owe everything to the party that selected, financed and organised for them. However talented or beloved they think they are, few manage to buck the trend of national swings. But that also makes them more anxious about the success of the national party. Many know they won't be back after the next election, having won implausible seats by small majorities. The hailstorm of bad economic news in recent days depresses spirits: growth is lower than expected, inflation higher and unemployment up. "Give me lucky generals," Napoleon is reputed to have said, but Rachel Reeves so far has not been one of them. Opinion polls are dismal, with Labour overtaken alarmingly by Reform UK. The summer holiday may be approaching, but the party's MPs will go home glum.

The way to bring them back in better fettle in September is to sharpen Labour's purpose, build on the best policies of the first year and stop making others that alienate supporters without gaining new ones. Listen to MPs. Remember Aesop's fable of the north wind and the sun competing to make a man remove his cloak. The north wind fails when it blows with all its might because the man wraps his cloak tighter around him, but when the sun shines he takes it off in the heat. Persuasion works better than force.

The Guardian

Not even a Putinist minister's suicide could unite Russia's opposition

Boris Bondarev

THE death of the former Transportation Minister and Kursk region Governor Roman Starovoiit split Russia's already fractured opposition. Supporters of the Anti-Corruption Fund (FBK) were the first to react. Their reaction was predictable: "Another servant of the dictator died." Leonid Volkov, head of political projects, wrote that it was "the most honest way" to get taken off the list where FBK recommends individuals for sanctioning.

However, the wide range of people on this list raises questions over its purpose in the first place. Remember how the founders of the facial recognition system NtechLab, Artem Kukhareenko and Alexander Kabakov, were removed from the list following public discussion about how they did not meet the inclusion criteria, only to be added back on later? Despite their having resigned over disagreement with the firm's decision to keep operating in Russia, they remain on the list. The picture is muddied further by Volkov signing letters in 2023 requesting that sanctions on billionaire Mikhail Friedman be lifted. Meanwhile,

Friedman is one of the most prominent Russian oligarchs, whose influence on Kremlin policymaking is no less significant than Starovoiit's. Friedman has not made any anti-war statements, let alone taken any concrete actions. Rather, the opposite: he left increasingly uncomfortable London for Israel before hurrying back to Moscow.

The head of FBK's investigation department, Maria Pevchikh, was more constructive. She offered Putin officials amnesty to defect and spill Putin's secrets in safety. However, she did not specify who should provide these people with protection from the tyrant's reach. A more moderate segment of the opposition, Maxim Katz and Andrei Pivovarov, thought that it was shameful for Volkov to gloat when a person has taken their own life, no matter who they were. Andrei Pivovarov noted that such rhetoric scares away potential defectors who could side with the opposition.

That it is possible and necessary to create alliances with representatives of the regime is not a new idea. It is generally a rational one, tool. But first, we need to under-

stand what such an alliance is and what the principles of its formation are. A benefit of forming alliances is increasing the pool of resources at your disposal. But that presupposes your allies have strength and support in the first place.

Today, the Russian opposition remains out of politics in every meaningful sense: they have no manifesto or organized structure. Leaders are only recognized as such by virtue of their public roles. Rather than building institutions, forming parties, or creating movements, many seem content to run YouTube channels. Thus, the idea that they might "scare off allies" is absurd as it assumes they are the sort of actors anyone would want to ally with in the first place. The key task for the opposition is to become a real political force. Without this, it makes no sense to talk about pacts with former ministers, oligarchs or officials. When the time comes, they will look for allies among those who can support them, or at least give credible guarantees of safety and freedom. This can hardly be expected from YouTubers. An ideological vacuum

is also evident in how the opposition presents itself. FBK works on the principle that everything President Vladimir Putin does is bad. In many ways, that assessment is fair. But criticism should be followed by a constructive agenda. What do we offer instead of what Putin does?

FBK is trying to formulate an agenda through the reconstruction projects discussed at the Yulia Navalnaya Forum. But so far, the forum's experts have failed to produce a positive, mature plan. But those who criticize the FBK - including Maxim Katz, Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Andrei Pivovarov - cast themselves as the antidote to the more famous organization. If FBK gloats, they express sorrow. If FBK is confrontational, they strive to be conciliatory. But like FBK, they lack a strategy, a program and any concrete political steps. The Russian opposition suffers from the same problems as before the war: the lack of a clear political program and a political organization capable of implementing change. Until both appear, all the talk about alliances, strategy and influence will remain empty dreams.

THE world is no longer shaped solely by military or economic poles; technological power centers are establishing the foundations of a new order. This new global system, which Ian Bremmer calls the "techno-polar world," points to an order in which technology companies, which hold the power of digital infrastructure and algorithms, have become actors equivalent to nation-states, and in some cases, even surpassing them in influence. Sovereignty is no longer measured solely by territory or military deterrence but by control over data, artificial intelligence (AI) systems, and digital networks.

Cyberspace, once associated solely with individual computer hacking, is now defined as the "fifth operational domain" in the strategic planning of major powers such as NATO and the US. This development elevates cyberspace beyond a mere technical issue and makes it directly related to national security and foreign policy. At the current stage, cyber threats pose a significant national security risk across a wide range of areas, including power grids, election systems, transportation networks, and banking systems. Cyberspace is transforming into an area where today's states, companies, and individuals develop and transform across a very broad spectrum, much like a living organism that evolves and adapts.

At this point, the question of Türkiye's position in the digital age becomes important. For countries like Türkiye, which are medium-sized but strategically important, determining their place in this new technology-centered world order has become a critical necessity, not only in terms of economic competition but also in terms of digital sovereignty. As AI and cyberspace evolve, cyber threats grow more complex and damaging. Cybersecurity has evolved beyond information protection to encompass the safeguarding of individuals and societal values in digital spaces. Today, it is not only a technical issue but also a political and societal one. This field, which has become a competitive arena not only for major powers but also for technology companies, is becoming even more complex with new elements such as AI, cloud systems, and smart technologies. Therefore, cybersecurity is critical not only for defense but also for the protection of digital sovereignty. In recent years, many nation states have embarked on a new process of sovereignty building, particularly through the protection of data.

Türkiye was one of the first countries to enter the field of cybersecurity, enacting its first legal regulations in

Khamis Al Ali

A deeper understanding of history is essential in order to gain wisdom, broaden our knowledge, and learn from the successes and failures of those who came before us. For policymakers and strategists in the Middle East, the history of post-World War II Europe holds particular relevance. Why? Because of the striking similarities between the Middle East today and Europe in the immediate aftermath of WWII.

Europe emerged from World War II as a devastated continent, scarred by widespread bloodshed, destruction, and deep-rooted animosities - arguably even more severe than those facing the Middle East today. Yet, that moment in history became a defining turning point, remembered positively in the collective memory of humanity. Why? Because it marked the beginning of a new Europe, one founded on economic cooperation and regional integration and development. This framework has made it nearly unthinkable for the continent to return to its former eras of large-scale war and violence.

This transformation was no accident. It was the result of a conscious shift in mindset, as Europeans internalised three key lessons - lessons that the Middle East would do well to consider. First, war, conflicts, and hatred can be replaced by trade, development, and cultural revival - provided there is a collective will to pursue that path.

Second, meaningful progress begins when societies reject zero-sum ideologies - when one group's

gain is no longer perceived as another's loss. Third, the more nations become interdependent - economically, socially, and politically - the lower the risk of reverting to cycles of violence and instability.

For us in the Middle East, these lessons offer a path forward. They challenge us to imagine a region where cooperation replaces conflict, and shared prosperity replaces mutual suspicion. But this transformation requires more than just hope - it demands bold leadership, a long-term vision, and a willingness to break with decades of mistrust. Imagine the possibilities if the region shifted its priorities from military dominance to economic integration. Consider, for example, how energy cooperation could be a game-changer. The Gulf states possess immense oil and gas resources; Israel has made significant advances in water desalination, energy technology, and solar innovation; Turkey offers strategic transit corridors and a growing industrial base; and Iran - despite its isolation - has one of the world's largest natural gas reserves. If these countries set aside rivalry and began developing an interconnected energy infrastructure, the region would not only achieve energy self-sufficiency but also emerge as a global energy hub.

Such collaboration could reduce unemployment, stabilise economies, and empower younger generations with opportunities that don't rely on emigration or extremism. It would create mutual interests - pipelines, joint ventures,

research hubs, cross-border grids - that no side would want to see destroyed. In short, peace would no longer be a lofty dream; it would be a shared investment. This is not naïve idealism. Europe did it. Even after centuries of devastating wars, including two world wars, countries like Germany and France chose to build a future grounded in economic and political interdependence. Institutions such as the European Union, didn't eliminate differences, but they made war both irrational and economically self-defeating.

The Middle East can do the same. The question is not whether regional cooperation is possible - but whether we have the vision and courage to make it a reality. In this vision of a more cooperative Middle East, the United Arab Emirates is well positioned to play a pivotal role. Over the past two decades, the UAE has emerged as a bridge between East and West, tradition and modernity. Through its active diplomacy, economic diversification, and strategic investments in technology, renewable energy, and education, the UAE has become a natural catalyst for regional transformation. While significant challenges remain, the country has demonstrated that pragmatic diplomacy and economic openness can unlock new avenues of regional cooperation. If more countries adopt a similar mindset - prioritising long-term stability over short-term rivalry - the Middle East can finally shift its narrative from one of conflict to one of shared progress.

Gulf News



China, Pakistan establish deep connections to simplify all financial-related process

BEIJING (INP): Policymakers in China and Pakistan have established very deep connections to simplify all financial-related processes, assisting us to confidently provide comprehensive services in the current complex and changing international environment, solving financial problems, consulting problems, and of course the most important liquidity problem for enterprises.

This was stated by the Chief Representative, National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) Beijing Office, Shiahk Muhammad Shariq at Supply Chain Services Panel Discussion held during the 3rd China International Supply Chain Expo.

“In the current environment, the global supply chain has been continuously upgrading digitally, that is, achieving innovative and sustainable development, which is also a major

responsibility that we need to shoulder together,” he added.

According to a report carried by China Economic Net (CEN) the Chief Representative pointed out that the key link is to provide very complete localized financial services and reduce conflicts between traders, which is crucial for both large leading enterprises and small start-ups.

“The global supply chain need and must take a diversified path, not only for industrial powers like China that support the global supply chain, but also for all countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative, and of course Pakistan, which is jointly developing the CPEC.”

When it comes to specific measures for supply chain optimization and innovation, Shariq emphasized the importance of bet-

ter financing mechanisms and a unified framework.

“The optimized financing mechanism will allow us to have smoother capital flow and reduce our reliance on a single path, helping us to seek better financing strategies.”

The Chief Representative added that a unified framework means unifying standards within this scope, assisting different cultures, concepts, customs, and the like, to communicate more smoothly, which is the premise for all parties to build a global network.

Through these measures, various countries could build a more efficient, more resilient and fairer global supply chain network.

Talking specifically about the financial links between China and Pakistan, Shariq elaborated on NBP’s efforts to better integrate into the financial supply chain system between the two countries and the world.

“As the national bank of Pakistan, we have branches in 80 countries worldwide. In 1981, we entered the Chinese market and opened a representative office in Beijing.



QUETTA: A man selecting waistcoat from a roadside stall.

SCCI hosts seminar

SIALKOT (APP): An awareness seminar on the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) and the EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) was organized by the Departmental Committee on Industrial Safety and Risk Management of the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) in collaboration with SGS-Pakistan, here on Saturday.

According to a spokesperson, VP SCCI Omer Khalid and group leader Sialkot business community Riaz-ud-Din Sheikh (SI) attended the seminar which focused on highlighting the financial and strategic implications of CBAM and SBTi for Sialkot’s industries.

The session underscored the importance for exporters to adopt sustainable practices in order to remain competitive in the rapidly evolving global trade environment.

FFC team visits IUB

BAHAWALPUR (APP): A delegation from Fauji Fertilizer Company Limited visited Department of Soil Science at Islamia University of Bahawalpur to explore institutional collaboration and research partnerships.

The visiting team, including Muhammad Tahir Naem, head of Farm Advisory Centre Multan, and Wassim Abbas, head of Agriculture Territory Bahawalpur, was briefed on the department’s ongoing research and facilities by Dr. Azhar Hussain and Dr. Fakhar uz Zaman.

Prof. Dr. Maqsood Ahmad, Chairman of the Department, highlighted academic achievements and discussed internship opportunities for students.

Speaking on the occasion, Dean Faculty of Agriculture Prof. Dr. Tanveer Hussain Turabi appreciated the Vice Chancellor’s vision of strengthening academia-industry linkage. Both parties expressed strong interest in future collaboration for sustainable agricultural practices and capacity building.

vivo Y19s Pro now available in Pakistan

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Stepping up its Y Series lineup, vivo rolls out the all-new Y19s Pro, an upgrade built on user-loved essentials. As a refined successor to Y19s, the Y19s Pro features enhanced battery performance for longer-lasting power, without compromising on the core features users rely on.

It brings together vivo’s signature stylish design, immersive audio-visual experience, reliable durability, and dependable imaging, making it to

keep up with your everyday hustle and downtime alike. Priced at Rs. 43,999, the vivo Y19s Pro combines stylish design with balanced performance, making it a smart choice for users who value practicality and affordability.

Muhammad Zohair Chohan, Director Brand Strategy at vivo, said, “The Y19s Pro is all about giving users more of what they love. It’s an ideal choice for those who value reliable performance, enhanced capacity, and a modern design all-in-one device.”



Stocks consolidate after bumper week buoyed by resilient economy

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): US and European stock markets stalled or trimmed gains on Friday after a bullish week buoyed by US data and upbeat company earnings. New York -- whose S&P 500 and Nasdaq Composite struck record highs on Thursday -- made little further headway, while the Dow slid.

In Europe, London’s blue-chip FTSE was up though just under its all-time record reached on Tuesday. Paris was flat and Frankfurt slipped a little on profit-taking.

Asian markets closed higher except for Tokyo, which was dragged down ahead of weekend upper-house elections that could spell trouble for Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba.

The week’s strong performance in equities showed that worries were largely being set aside for now when it comes to US President Donald Trump’s

threats of higher tariffs from August 1 if governments do not agree on trade deals.

“With the president toning down his rhetoric, markets are quick to forget tariff risks and concentrate on the positives including a resilient US economy,” said Kathleen Brooks, research director at trading firm XTB.

The overall optimism was fueled by data suggesting the US economy was still well, with no persuasive indication that the tariffs were causing a surge in inflation.

A June consumer price index report released this week “does not reveal tariff-induced price increases, but a closer look shows clear signs” they could be building, said Holger Schmieding, chief economist at Berenberg bank.

“We expect (US) annual core inflation to approach 3.5 percent by year-end and the Fed to hold the policy

rate at the 4.25-4.50 percent target range,” he said, referring to the US central bank.

One Federal Reserve governor, Christopher Waller, on Thursday argued for a July rate cut, saying he expected tariff increases to cause a one-time bump to prices. On Friday, Waller flagged risks in the labor market.

But overall, Fed policymakers have remained cautious as they gauge the right timing for further interest rate reductions.

Trump this week denied he was planning to sack Fed boss Jerome Powell, whom he had been urging to reduce US borrowing costs to boost the world’s top economy.

A meeting in South Africa of G20 finance ministers on Friday pointedly stressed that “central bank independence is crucial” around the world.

In corporate news, American Express followed big US banks in

reporting better results than expected in the second quarter.

Results from streaming giant Netflix also outperformed, although its share price slipped Friday as investors weighed whether it had been overvalued.

In London, British luxury brand Burberry said sales had not fallen as much as analysts expected, “which is a sign that the company’s new strategic direction could be working,” said XTB’s Brooks. Its shares rose nearly six percent.

On the downside, shares in GlaxoSmithKline slid more than four percent after the British pharmaceutical giant reported a US regulatory setback for its blood cancer drug Blenrep.

Oil prices initially rose after fresh EU sanctions aimed at crimping Russia’s crude exports, to pressure Moscow over its war on Ukraine. But then they fell back.

Saudi bank loans hit \$845 billion

RIYADH (Arab News): Saudi banks’ total outstanding loans reached SR3.17 trillion (\$844.7 billion) at the end of May, an annual increase of 16.28 percent, according to the latest official data.

Figures released by the Saudi Central Bank, also known as SAMA, show that this marks one of the fastest annual credit expansions in recent years, underscoring strong economic momentum in the Kingdom.

The SAMA data revealed that business loans

now comprise 55.35 percent of all bank credit, up from 52.87 percent a year ago.

Corporate lending surged 21.73 percent year on year to SR1.75 trillion, far outpacing personal lending, which rose around 10 percent to SR1.41 trillion.

This shift highlights how companies have become the dominant force in Saudi Arabia’s lending landscape, as banks pivot from consumer finance to funding large projects and enterprises.

The Kingdom’s credit boom stands out within the region. Across the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, most banking sectors are expanding on the back of post-pandemic economic growth and government spending, but Saudi banks are leading the pack in loan growth.

A Kamco Invest report published in May found the Kingdom posted the region’s highest year-on-year loan growth in the first quarter of 2025, outpacing other Gulf markets.

This growth was broad-

based across sectors — including construction, real estate, education, and transport — whereas some neighboring countries saw more subdued or narrowly focused increases.

The UAE, the region’s second-largest banking market, is also seeing solid credit expansion supported by its own infrastructure and economic reforms.

Gulf banks in general benefit from strong capitalization and government backing, which has kept credit flowing. The International Monetary

KP’s workforce demand & supply gap: A tale of missed opportunities

Raja Saad Khan

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), like the rest of Pakistan, stands at a demographic crossroads. With a predominantly young population, part of the 64% of Pakistanis under 30, the province faces both a formidable challenge and a powerful opportunity. Tapping into this “youth bulge” could ignite economic growth, but neglecting it may deepen unemployment, inequality, and social unrest.

According to recent labor market data released by the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC),

with support from GIZ, funded by the European Union and the Federal Republic of Germany, Pakistan faces a serious supply-demand mismatch in skilled labor. Nationally, the total demand for skilled labor stands at 868,000, while supply from 4,669 public and private institutes is only 303,000. This data has just touched the agriculture where mechanical machinery and equipment required but excludes sectors like agriculture and livestock, which remain largely untrained and, as a result, underproductive, despite our claims of being an agricultural and livestock-based country.

Every year, roughly 2.5 million young people enter the job market across country. Yet only about 0.3 million receive any form of vocational training. At the same time, 3.86 million babies were born in 2024 alone, a figure larger than the population of over 80 countries. This relentless population growth exerts enormous pressure on infrastructure, housing, education, healthcare, and even sanitation facilities.

Youth unemployment currently sits at 4.5 million, with 11.1% of the 15-24 age group out of work. Moreover, 75% of Pakistan’s working-age population is engaged in

the informal sector, without job security, fair wages, or professional development.

While population growth needs urgent policy intervention, efforts must now focus on equipping the existing and upcoming workforce with relevant skills. For KP, this is a chance to transform demographic pressure into economic potential.

Focusing on KP, NAVTTTC’s labor market analysis highlights a total projected demand for 132,103 skilled workers—a promising indicator of economic momentum. Male demand dominates at 118,912, but female participation, at 13,191, is gradu-

ally rising. This reflects shifting cultural attitudes and greater gender inclusion in KP’s traditionally male-dominated labor force.

Top sectors driving KP’s human resource demand include:

- Construction - 37,000
- Hospitality - 32,000
- Allied Health - 17,000
- Renewable Energy - 12,000
- Agriculture - 11,300
- Manufacturing - 9,000
- Textiles - 5,000
- Services - 4,600
- Printing - 3,500

In terms of gender-specific trends, nursing is a standout profession, with 3,100 positions available

for female nurses, exceeding the 1,633 for males. Similarly, hospitality is showing greater inclusion, with demand for 1,890 female waiters. While cooking and carpentry remain male-heavy, female representation is beginning to surface, especially in technical roles like machine operation, where 800 women are needed compared to 1,496 men.

Against the demand for 132,000 skilled workers, TEVTA supplies only around 35,000 trained individuals annually, far below the market’s needs. These are straightforward employment opportunities that could be significantly

enhanced with just a little government attention.

In construction, masonry remains foundational. The hospitality sector’s rise highlights growing tourism and service activity in the region. Meanwhile, healthcare, particularly nursing offers critical roles, especially for women. The increasing demand in renewable energy for electrical trades also signals KP’s alignment with sustainable development goals.

These shifting trends illustrate that KP is on the brink of a labor market transformation, embracing gender inclusion, sustainability, and diversification.

While the challenges are steep, the opportunity is undeniable. Investing in quality vocational education, sector-specific training, and youth employment policies is no longer optional, rather it is essential. The success of KP’s labor market will depend on closing the gap between skills and industry demand, while ensuring that young people, especially women, have equal access to these opportunities.

Pakistan may not be able to reduce its population overnight, but it can certainly choose to train, empower, and employ the millions already here. For KP, the time to act is now.



In brief

Hunter, Dobson and Lake claim wins in London

LONDON (Agencies): Britons Georgia Hunter Bell, Charlie Dobson and Morgan Lake claimed victories in front of a sell-out home crowd of 60,000 at the London Diamond League. Olympic 1500m bronze medalist Hunter Bell stormed clear on the home straight to take victory in the women's 800m in a season's best one minute 56.74 seconds. Dobson could barely believe his victory in the men's 400m as he burst past the leaders - including compatriot Matthew Hudson-Smith - in the closing stages to clock a personal best 44.14 seconds. Lake won the women's high jump as the only athlete to clear 1.96m in a field that included world record holder Yaroslava Mahuchikh and Olympic medallist Eleanor Patterson. But world 1500m champion Josh Kerr, who had targeted his own British record, was made to settle for second as he was upstaged by Kenyan 19-year-old Phaneul Kipkosgei Koech. Koech passed Kerr on the inside with 200m to go and held on for victory in three minutes 28.82 seconds, as Kerr clocked his best time of the season with 3:29.37. Former world champion Jake Wightman was fourth in 3:31.58, Elliot Giles finished in sixth (3:32.51) and Neil Gourley 10th (3:33.69) - but George Mills fell after being tripped on the final lap. There was also a second-place finish for Dina Asher-Smith, who pipped fellow Briton Amy Hunter behind clear winner Julien Alfred in the women's 200m. The stellar programme at the home of so many iconic moments at the 2012 Olympics came on the same day the UK government confirmed it will support the city's bid to host the 2029 World Athletics Championships.

Marquez wins Czech MotoGP

BRNO (AFP): Marc Marquez overtook fellow Spaniard Pedro Acosta on the penultimate lap to win the Czech MotoGP sprint race on Saturday and stretch his championship lead. Spanish factory Ducati rider Marquez won the 11th sprint out of 12 this season to raise his tally in the championship standings to 356 points. The 32-year-old leads his younger brother Alex by 95 points and third-placed Italian teammate Francesco Bagnaia by 156. Factory KTM rider Acosta, 21, came home second ahead of Italian Enea Bastianini on a KTM-Tech3. Starting from second spot on the grid, Marquez quickly eased past pole-sitter Bagnaia, still in the opening lap. Acosta shot ahead from the third row at the start, passing Bagnaia half way through the race to get just behind Marquez. He glided into the lead moments later as Marquez slowed down in uncertainty over tyre pressure. "I saw that the pressure was not enough. I tried to push some laps on the brakes, but I saw that was too much risk. I decided to wait," said Marquez. It took the six-time MotoGP champion a while to warm the tyres up and take the lead back with a swift overtake early into the last but one lap. "When I saw that the pressure was inside the rules, then I pushed the last laps," Marquez said. Battling a forearm injury earlier in the season, Acosta relished his podium finish. "It was the darkest beginning of the season of my life, and being in the podium again is super nice," Acosta said.

Pakistan edge Iran to win U-16 Asian Volleyball Championship title



NAKHON PATHOM (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan pulled off a sensational comeback to defeat defending champions Iran 3-2 in the final of the Asian Men's U16 Volleyball Championship on Saturday, sealing their maiden title in a high-stakes thriller at the Nakhon Pathom Gymnasium.

The summit clash got off to a contrasting start as the holders secured an early edge by winning the first two sets, moving within touching distance of retaining the title.

The Green Shirts, however, made an astounding comeback as they won two consecutive sets to force the match into the decider. Pakistan continued the

momentum in the fifth and final set and eventually rounded up a thrilling 22-25, 21-25, 30-28, 25-21 and 15-10 victory, which led them to their maiden AVC Asian Men's U16 Volleyball title.

Muhammad Junaid and Faizan Ullah once again were the standout performers for Pakistan.

Pakistan's journey to

the final has been remarkable as they opened their campaign with a 3-0 win over South Korea (25-16, 25-19, 25-8), followed by a dominant performance against Saudi Arabia (25-14, 25-13, 25-11).

In their third group match, they maintained their perfect record by defeating Chinese Taipei in straight sets (26-24, 25-14, 25-16).

The Pakistani squad extended their unbeaten streak in the first crossover round with a 3-0 win over Indonesia.

The national U16 team ultimately booked their spot in the final by registering a perfect 3-0 victory over arch-rivals India in the blockbuster semi-final on Thursday.

The Green Shirts put on a commanding display, winning in straight sets with scores of 25-16, 25-19, and 25-12. Pakistan outperformed India in all departments—attack, block, and service—to register a clinical win.

Mohammad Asif wins World Masters Snooker C'ship



ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan on Friday stamped their authority on the global snooker stage as Mohammad Asif and Muhammad Hasnain clinched both the Masters and Under-17 titles after a thrilling finale at the IBSF World Snooker C'ship 2025 in Bahrain.

Asif faced a stern test in the World Masters final, going toe-to-toe with India's Brijesh Damani in a nail-biting encounter. After six fiercely contested frames, the Pakistani star

cueist held his nerve in the decider to edge Damani 4-3, clinching yet another major title.

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz congratulated Asif on his brilliant win in the Masters category.

"Mohammad Asif has brought pride to Pakistan on the global stage by defeating his Indian opponent through sheer hard work, skill, and determination," she was quoted as saying by her Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) party.

Asif advanced to the final with an impressive 4-2 win over India's Manan Chandra in the semifinal on Thursday at the Crowne Plaza, Bahrain.

Meanwhile, Hasnain produced a clinical display of cue mastery, sweeping past Riley Powell of Wales 4-0 to seize the World Under-17 Snooker crown.

"The young prodigy remained unshaken throughout, showcasing composure beyond his years to secure the gold," the IBSF said on its website.

Local climber dies in K2 avalanche, body airlifted to Skardu



ISLAMABAD (APP): An avalanche struck Camp 1 on K2, the world's second-highest peak on Friday (July 18) at approximately 2:30 PM, resulting in the tragic death of a local climber and minor injuries to a

foreign mountaineer, the Alpine Club of Pakistan (ACP) said on Saturday.

The avalanche occurred around 500 meters above the base camp, catching four climbers in its path. Two managed to return safely to the Advance Base Camp, while one foreign climber suffered minor injuries.

Local climber Iftikhar Hussain, a resident of Sadpara, Skardu, lost his life in the incident. His body was recovered and brought down to the base camp.

Following the incident, the expedition outfitter submitted a formal request to Major General (r) Irfan Arshad President of the

Alpine Club of Pakistan and Askari Aviation for a mercy helicopter operation to repatriate the deceased. The request was approved on humanitarian grounds and the climber's body was airlifted to Skardu.

Irfan Arshad extended his condolences to the bereaved family, friends and the mountaineering

community, assuring them of full support in this time of sorrow.

Senior Vice President of the Alpine Club of Pakistan, Karrar Haidri also expressed grief over the loss and paid tribute to Iftikhar Hussain's commitment and contributions to the sport of mountaineering.

Pakistan-Bangladesh to contest three-match T20I series from Sunday

DHAKA (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan and Bangladesh will lock horns in a three-match T20I series beginning on Sunday, 20 May with the remaining two games to be staged on 22 and 24 May at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Dhaka. All matches are set to begin at 5pm PKT with the toss to take place at 4.30pm.

Pakistan are visiting Bangladesh for the first time since December 2021 as they arrived in the country on Wednesday, 16 July after taking part in an extensive training camp in Karachi. Salman Ali Agha, who has so far led Pakistan in 12 T20Is, will marshal the side in fourth T20I series.

Pace duo of Ahmed Daniyal and Mohammad Salman Mirza are the two uncapped players in Pakistan's squad and will be in line to make their international debuts during the series. Earlier, Pakistan had white-washed Bangladesh in a home three-match T20I series bagging 37-run, 57-run and seven-wicket wins at the Gaddafi Stadium in May and June. Litton Das-led Bangladesh will take the field on the back of an away 2-1 T20I series triumph over Sri Lanka last week.

The overall T20I record between Pakistan and Bangladesh depicts the former's domination as they have won 19 out of 22 T20Is since the first clash between both sides in September 2007 in Nairobi.

Pakistan T20I captain, Salman Ali Agha:

"We have changed the way we want to play but knowing the conditions is going to be the key. If the conditions allow us to play aggressively then we'll surely play that way and in other case we'll go accordingly. In our training we have tried to make sure that we experience match-like situations in order to get game ready.

"Bangladesh are a tough opposition especially in their home conditions. We know what the challenges are going to be thrown at us and we are very excited to play here."

Pakistan T20I squad:

Salman Ali Agha (captain), Abrar Ahmed, Ahmed Daniyal, Faheem Ashraf, Fakhar Zaman, Hassan Nawaz, Hussain Talat, Khushdil Shah, Mohammad Abbas Afridi, Mohammad Harris (wk), Mohammad Nawaz, Sahibzada Farhan (wk), Saim Ayub, Salman Mirza and Sufyan Moqim

Bangladesh T20I squad:

Litton Das (captain), Jaker Ali Anik, Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Mohammad Naim Sheikh, Mohammad Saifuddin, Mustafizur Rahman, Nasum Ahmed, Parvez Hossain Emon, Rishad Hossain, Shak Mahedi Hasan, Shamim Hossain Patwari, Shoriful Islam, Tanzid Hasan Tamim, Tanzim Hasan Sakib, Taskin Ahmed and Towhid Hridoy.



MIRPUR: Litton Das and Salman Agha pose with the series trophy.

Zimbabwe reach first Rugby World Cup since 1991



KAMPALA (Agencies): Zimbabwe have qualified for the Rugby World Cup for the first time since 1991 after beating Namibia 30-28 in the Rugby Africa Cup final in Kampala.

It means they will be among 24 teams at the 2027 World Cup in Australia.

They will be making their third appearance at the tournament, having also been invited to represent Africa at the inaugural World Cup in 1987.

The Sables went into Saturday's final as Rugby Africa Cup holders, having defeated Namibia in last year's semi-finals.

It was 16-16 at half-time, but Godfrey

Muzanargwo and Brandon Mudzekenyedzi appeared to have put Zimbabwe firmly in control with tries early in the second period.

Jay-Cee Nel and Adriaan Booysen then crossed the line for a Namibia team coached by former Saracens back row Jacques Burger, making it a two-point game with 10 minutes remaining.

However, Burger's side could not find the crucial score needed to overturn the deficit, seeing substitute Tiaan Swanepoel fire a penalty from inside his own half wide of the posts in the 79th minute.

The result brings to an end an era of dominance

for the Welwitschias, who had reached the past seven Rugby World Cups, with Ivory Coast the only other African nation to come through the continent's qualifiers in 1995.

While Zimbabwe have now confirmed their place alongside holders South Africa, Namibia do still have a chance of reaching the newly expanded World Cup.

They face the United Arab Emirates, runners-up at the Asia Rugby Men's Championship, next Saturday in a play-off for the right to take part in the four-team Final Qualification Tournament, which will be held in Dubai in November.

Rashford closing in on Barcelona move: reports

LONDON (AFP): Manchester United outcast Marcus Rashford is closing in on a move to Barcelona, reports said on Saturday.

The 27-year-old has not played for his boyhood club since December 12, and joined Aston Villa on loan in early February.

The Spanish champions have reportedly been his preferred destination since he was dropped by United manager Ruben Amorim.

Britain's Press Association said talks were progressing on a deal to take Rashford to Barcelona, with a season-long loan including an option to buy being worked on.

Rashford is among five players to have informed United they wish to explore a future away from

Old Trafford, where he came through the academy and scored 138 goals in 426 first-team appearances.

The England international admitted he was "ready for a new challenge" in December and last month revealed he would like to play alongside Barcelona's teenage prodigy Lamine Yamal.

Rashford has trained away from Amorim's first-team squad since pre-season began.

Barcelona sporting director Deco said in May that he liked Rashford and head coach Hansi Flick described the forward as a "fantastic player".

Rashford does not have a squad number at United having lost the 10 shirt to Brazil forward Matheus Cunha, who arrived at Old

Trafford during the current transfer window along with left-back Diego Leon.

Brentford forward Bryan Mbeumo is expected to join them after United finally struck a deal worth an initial £65 million (\$87 million).

United will likely have to fund any further deals through departures.

Even if Rashford were to leave initially on loan, the savings on the wage bill would be significant.

Barcelona had looked set to sign Spain winger Nico Williams but the 23-year-old recently signed a new 10-year contract at Athletic Bilbao.

The Catalan giants won a league and cup double last season -- Flick's first campaign at the club.

Arensman climbs to misty Tour de France win as Pogacar extends lead



LUCHON-SUPERBAGNÈRES (AFP): Dutch rider Thymen Arensman climbed to victory on the gruelling stage 14 of the Tour de France in the Pyrenees on Saturday as defending champion Tadej Pogacar extended his overall race lead.

Double Olympic champion Remco Evenepoel, who had been third overall, pulled out of the race on the day's first climb, the daunting 2180m altitude Tourmalet.

As the disappointed Belgian Soudal Quick-Step rider left the race Arensman attacked on the third of four mountains on a colossal climb day while Slovenian Pogacar outspinted Jonas Vingegaard for second just over a minute behind the winner.

Crossing the line in the mist at 1840m altitude, Arensman flung himself to the ground exhausted after taking a first win on this Tour for British team Ineos.

"After all that effort it was beautiful to win.

"I was focussed on trying to get in the breakaway and luckily I had good legs today," Arensman said.

The 25-year-old produced a virtuoso climb amidst suffocating packs of near hysterical fans who had waited all day for the peloton to pass.

Behind him Pogacar fought off a string of attacks from his arch rival Vingegaard on a day the Slovenian never looked like attacking for the win.

Winner of the past two stages Pogacar pounced for the line from 50 metres with his trademark kick gaining another six seconds on the Dane.

Pogacar, overall race winner in 2020, 2021 and 2024, now leads Vingegaard by 4min 13sec with Florian Lipowitz moving into third place at 7min 53sec.

Pogacar praised Arensman as "the strongest of the breakaway and strongest of the race".

"That was one hell of a ride from him.

You could only see 20m ahead," said the race leader.

"I was quite scared racing down the Tourmalet, I was behind Arensman and he just disappeared into the fog," said Pogacar.

Biathlon to white jersey

Lipovitz rode on Pogacar's wheel until Dane Vingegaard, who won Tour titles in 2022 and 2023, had attacked late on.

The 25-year-old Red Bull rider Lipowitz took the best young rider's white jersey and is a rising force in cycling, which he came to late after switching from the winter sport biathlon, a mixture of shooting and cross-country skiing.

"When I came here I had no pretensions of taking the white jersey, so I'm really happy," said the quietly spoken 6ft 4in (1.93m) German.

"The crowds were so encouraging, it makes you want to ride faster."

Evenepoel's premature exit meanwhile came following Friday's stamina-sapping uphill time trial.

"Today in the morning I could feel I was empty and on the climb the legs just weren't there," said Evenepoel, a fan favourite. "It's a pity, but you need to be 110 percent to win this race."

Evenepoel had won the stage five time trial and but for a blunder on day 1 would likely have at least worn the yellow jersey at some stage of the first week.

"It really sucks for the Tour to lose someone like him," Pogacar said.

Ireland's Ben Healy, who did wear yellow for two days, climbed back up to ninth as the EF rider who arrived in the Pyrenees in the lead but suffered badly on the first climb, rode all day on stage 14 with the Pogacar clique.

Frenchman Lenny Martinez led over the first three mountains and has the polka dot King of the Mountains jersey.

After three days in the Pyrenees the riders next have a hilly stage 15 over 169.3km from Muret to the medieval fortified town of Carcassonne.



In brief

Fake official nabbed

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested a man who was impersonating a senior officer of a law enforcement agencies. According to police, the suspect was held during a special operation in the jurisdiction of RA Bazaar police station. During the search, police recovered fake identity cards of different organizations, wireless communication sets, smart cards of various vehicles, and ATM cards from his possession. Uniforms and official seals of several government departments were also found from the accused. SP Potohar Division, Talha Wali, commanded police team and said that the suspect pretended to be a high-ranking officer to mislead people. He added that a case has been registered and the accused will be presented in court with solid evidence. "Police are further investigating whether the accused was involved in any other criminal activities," he concluded.

Robber shot dead in encounter

RAWALPINDI (APP): A robber was shot dead in an exchange of fire with police in the Saddar Barooni area while two of his accomplices managed to escape. According to police, the incident occurred when a citizen informed the Saddar Barooni Police Station about a robbery attempt. Police acted swiftly and tried to stop three robbers riding a motorcycle. However, the robbers opened fire on the police party. In retaliatory fire, one of the robbers was killed. He was later identified as Samin, who had been involved in the killing of a 16-year-old Hafiz-e-Quran student in Saddar Barooni a few days ago. The two other robbers fled the scene while continuing to fire at police. Senior police officers reached the spot soon after the incident. The body of the deceased robber has been shifted to a hospital, and a search operation is underway to arrest the escaped suspects. City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Mehmood Hamdani appreciated the efforts of the Saddar police team and said, "Those who attack the lives and property of citizens will not escape the grip of the law."

Over 4.5kg drugs seized

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police on Saturday have intensified their crackdown against drug dealers following the arrest of three drug dealers and recovered over 4.5 kilograms of drugs from their possession. According to police, Kallar Syedan Police carried out successful operation and arrested two drug dealers. During the operation, police have also recovered 3.1 kg drugs from their custody. In a separate operation, Gujjar Khan Police arrested drug supplier and confiscated 1.6 kg drugs from him. The arrested drug dealers have been booked under anti narcotics act. The dealers will be presented in court with solid evidence to ensure strict legal action. A spokesperson for Rawalpindi Police stated that the force, on the direction of City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Mehmood Hamdani, was taking all possible steps to eliminate the menace of drugs from the society. "Drug peddlers are threats to our youth and future generations. We will not allow them to operate freely," he added.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi visiting under construction National Police Hospital at the Police Headquarters. —APP Photo

July 19 a symbol of Kashmir's support for Pakistan: NA Speaker

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Saturday termed July 19, 1947 a historic reflection of Kashmiris' enduring aspiration for Pakistan commemorating the pivotal resolution passed by the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference as a profound symbol of unwavering affiliation.

Kashmir Accession Day, observed annually on July 19, commemorates the 1947 Srinagar session of the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference, which passed a resolution to accede to

Pakistan for the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

As Kashmiris across the globe commemorate "Y o u m - e - I l h a q - e - Pakistan," National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq in his message reaffirmed the historic accession resolution as a profound manifestation of the collective will of the Kashmiri people.

He described the occasion as a solemn renewal of Pakistan's enduring pledge to Kashmiris, symbolizing their historical aspiration and unwavering bond with the nation.

Speaker paid heartfelt tribute to the Kashmiri

people's unwavering struggle for freedom, honoring their enduring sacrifices made in pursuit of self-determination.

Speaker declared that Indian oppression has failed to extinguish the spirit of freedom among the Kashmiri people. He emphasized that "the third generation of Kashmiris remains determined in their right to self-determination," reaffirming Pakistan's consistent stance that "Kashmir is Pakistan's jugular vein."

The speaker paid tribute to the enduring sacrifices of Kashmiris and underscored the unwavering

national support for their legitimate aspirations.

Reaffirming Pakistan's unwavering commitment to the Kashmiri people, Speaker stated that the country will "continue to extend its political and moral support" for their cause.

He urged the international community to "play an effective role for a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute," and underscored the nation's steadfast solidarity, declaring, "The Pakistani nation stands shoulder to shoulder with the Kashmiri people in their struggle for freedom."

Pakistan, Azerbaijan to form JWG for economic cooperation



ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Azerbaijan on Saturday have agreed to establish joint working groups (JWGs) aimed at strengthening bilateral connectivity and elevating their relationship into a strategic economic partnership focused on rail and trade infrastructure.

The announcement followed a high-level meeting held Saturday at the Ministry of Railways, with Minister of State for Railways and Finance, Bilal Azhar Kayani in the Chair. The session brought together key stakeholders to explore avenues for strengthening cross-border linkages and advancing mutual economic interests.

The State Minister reiterated Pakistan's firm

commitment to enhancing rail-based trade connectivity with Azerbaijan. He noted that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is actively pursuing a comprehensive strategy for the development and modernization of Pakistan Railways.

Secretary Railway Board, Muhammad Yousuf, gave a detailed briefing on Pakistan's railway network, highlighting its existing capacity and outlining prospects for future expansion to accommodate regional freight and logistics operations.

During the meeting, both sides also discussed the rail agreement inked between Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and Afghanistan, underscoring its significance in advancing regional connectivity.

Key officials from various Pakistani ministries and departments participated in a high-level meeting aimed at advancing bilateral connectivity between Pakistan and Azerbaijan.

Among those present were Secretary Railways Syed Mazhar Ali Shah and Secretary Railway Board Muhammad Yousuf, alongside senior representatives of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), National Logistics Corporation (NLC), Maritime Affairs, and the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Azerbaijani delegation, led by Deputy Chairman Arif Aghayev, attended the discussions via video link.

ANF recovers over 158 kg drugs in five operations

ISLAMABAD (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting five operations managed to recover of 158 kg drugs worth more than Rs 18.7 million and arrested four drug traffickers.

According to an ANF Headquarters spokesperson, in an operation near a college on University Road, Peshawar, 6 kgs opium was recovered from the possession of a motorcyclist.

The arrested suspect confessed selling drugs to the students of educational institutions.

In another operation, ANF recovered 1000 grams ice drug booked at a courier office in Karachi for Australia.

In third operation 250 grams ice drug was also recovered from a courier office in Peshawar.

3,450 kgs hashish & 950 grams ice drug were seized from the possession of two suspects rounded up during a operation conducted near Golra Mor, Islamabad.

In 5th operation near Ring Road, Peshawar, 96 kgs hashish & 50,400 kgs opium were recovered from a vehicle and an accused was apprehended.

Separate cases have been registered against the accused under the CNS Act, the spokesperson informed.

Kashmir 'Accession Day' a beacon of hope and resolve: Naqvi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has issued a heartfelt message on Kashmir Accession Day (Y o u m - e - I l h a q - e - Kashmir), paying tribute to the unwavering spirit of the Kashmiri people and reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to their right to self-determination.

"Kashmir Accession Day is the dawn in history when the people of Kashmir rejected Dogra rule and chose Pakistan as their political and spiritual destination," said Naqvi. He recalled that on July 19, 1947, Kashmiris made a decision that could not be erased by the dust of time, the fog of tyranny, or the sound of gunfire.

Quoting Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Naqvi said: "Kashmir is the jugular vein of

Pakistan," a declaration that remains central to the country's national consciousness even today.

He emphasized that the spirit of 1947 still echoes in Kashmir's mountains and valleys, raised by the unarmed yet valiant Kashmiris who chose to align their destiny with Pakistan.

Despite Indian military oppression, draconian laws, and human rights violations, Kashmiris have stood firm in their devotion to Pakistan. "Even through prisons, silenced voices, and dug-up graves, India has failed to remove Pakistan from the hearts of Kashmiris," he said.

On this solemn occasion, Naqvi saluted the martyrs of Kashmir, who valued their ideological bond with Pakistan more than their own lives. He

also lamented the continued silence and double standards of the international community, saying that UN resolutions still await the awakening of global conscience to grant Kashmiris their rightful plebiscite.

"Kashmir Accession Day is a mirror to the world, reflecting its silence and hypocrisy," he stated. "It is also a day of renewed commitment—Kashmiris' sacrifices are a trust upon us, and the only repayment is freedom."

Naqvi expressed hope, saying: "The day is not far when India will be forced to bow before the just demands of Kashmiris." He reaffirmed that Pakistan will continue its diplomatic, moral, and political support for the Kashmiri people in their struggle for freedom.

NDMA cautions public as flood danger looms

ISLAMABAD (INP): A powerful southwest monsoon system coupled with a westerly wave has prompted the National Emergencies Operation Center (NEOC) to issue wide-ranging impact-based weather alerts across Pakistan, warning of potential flash floods, urban inundation, and glacial water surges from July 19 to 25, (Saturday to Friday).

The alerts cover vulnerable districts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Sindh, and Islamabad, where heavy rains are expected to disrupt daily life and pose serious risks to low-lying and mountainous communities.

NDMA has directed disaster management authorities to remain on high alert, expedite drainage clearance, and prepare emergency teams for rapid response.

Citizens are strongly advised to avoid high-risk travel, remain indoors during intense downpours, and follow official guidance via the NDMA Disaster Alert App.

The alerts cover potential flash floods and urban flooding across different regions of the country, including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, low to moderate rainfalls are expected to continue up to July 25, with an increased risk of flash flooding in the upper catchments of major rivers. River Kabul at Nowshera and its tributaries such as River Swat, Panjkora, Bara, and Kalpani Nullah may experience rising water levels due to glacial melting and rain-induced inflows.

There is a heightened flood risk in low-lying areas and disruption in transportation, especially in hilly and mountainous regions.

In Islamabad and Punjab, strong monsoon currents are expected to penetrate central and upper regions from July 21 to 24, bringing moderate to heavy rainfall across Rawalpindi, Lahore, Sialkot, Sargodha, Faisalabad, Multan,

Khanewal, Sahiwal, Lodhran, Muzaffargarh, Kot Addu, Taunsa, Rajanpur, Bahawalpur, and Rahim Yar Khan.

Urban flooding is anticipated in major metropolitan cities due to heavy downpours, especially in low-lying zones. Sindh is forecast to receive low to moderate rainfall and thunderstorms between July 19 and 24, affecting districts such as Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur, Jacobabad, Thatta, Badin, Larkana, Jamshoro, Nawabshah, and Mirpurkhas. Urban flooding may occur in low-lying areas, streets and underpasses.

NDMA has urged authorities in vulnerable areas to swiftly clear drainage systems and ensure emergency teams are fully equipped to handle any eventuality. The public is urged to remain indoors during periods of intense rainfall, keep drainage outlets clear, and safeguard essential household items.

DG Civil Defense orders overhaul of volunteer services

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director General (DG) Civil Defense and Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA), Muhammad Ali Randhawa, has ordered a comprehensive upgrade of civil defense infrastructure and volunteer services across Islamabad and other regions, aiming to strengthen emergency response and ensure the safety of citizens.

The directive was issued during a high-level meeting chaired by Randhawa at CDA Headquarters on Saturday.

Senior officials, including CDA Member Administration and Estate Talat Mehmood, Member Finance Tahir Naeem, ICT Director, Additional Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, and Civil Defense officers were present.

The meeting reviewed the current performance of civil defense institutions, especially the National Institute of Fire Technology in Islamabad, as well as other training centers operating across the provinces.

A series of reforms were approved to modernize services—ranging from fire-fighting and bomb disposal to volunteer training and public awareness.

"Our core mission is to protect lives and property," said Randhawa. "To achieve that, 36 master trainers will be equipped with modern techniques to train a new generation of volunteers capable of handling emergencies effectively."

Among the key measures discussed were the

upgrading of civil defense training centers, the launch of public education campaigns, and the introduction of regular fire prevention and first aid workshops in schools and public venues.

The initiative also aims to broaden volunteer participation across society and integrate international best practices into Pakistan's civil defense system.

Randhawa emphasized that increasing community involvement and professionalizing the volunteer network are essential for a resilient emergency response system.

"Volunteers have served valiantly in both peace and war," he said. "With proper training and resources, they can become the frontline force during crises."



ISLAMABAD: A heavily loaded, brightly decorated truck makes its way through a service road in Iqbal Town area. —APP Photo

RDA seals 17 illegal commercial properties in Rawalpindi

RAWALPINDI (APP): In a decisive operation against illegal/unauthorized constructions, the Enforcement Squad of Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) sealed 17 illegally established commercial properties in the Midcity Apartments on Service Road, Mauza Gangal, here Saturday.

Acting under the directives of Director General RDA, Kinza Murtaza, the operation was led by the RDA Enforcement Squad with the support of the Old Airport Police Station.

The team included the Assistant Director of Building Control, building inspectors, and other RDA officials.

The sealed properties

include 10 offices, two apartments, one restaurant, and four hotels, notably among them Overseas Requirement Agency, Ghouri Town Offices, W B Centers, and J.D. Aviation, among others.

According to an RDA spokesperson, the owners of these properties were found in violation of approved plans and maps.

They breached the Punjab Development of Cities Act 1976 and the RDA Building and Zoning Regulations 2020 by constructing illegal commercial buildings without approval or No Objection Certificates (NOCs).

The DG of RDA has

directed the Land Use and Building Control (LU&BC) Wing to enforce strict measures against encroachments, unauthorized constructions and commercial activities impartially. Furthermore, the Building Control Wing has been tasked with surveying fees and charges related to the approval of illegal residential and commercial buildings, commercialization, and complementary building plans to regularize all such structures within RDA's jurisdiction.

The RDA urges the general public to take moral responsibility in removing any form of encroachment to prevent further losses.

Man dies in road accident

SHIBERGHAN (Pajhwok): A man died in a traffic accident in the capital of northern Jawzjan province on Saturday. Police spokesman Abdul Sattar Halimi told Pajhwok Afghan News the incident took place after a Mazda-type vehicle collided with a Passo on the Jawzjan-Sar-i-Pul highway in Shiberghan city this morning. Abdul Sattar Halimi said a man lost his life in the collision. He linked the incident with reckless driving.

CSL's 10 season kicks off

KABUL (Ariana News): The much-anticipated 10th edition of the Shpageeza Cricket League (SCL) was inaugurated on Saturday at the Kabul International Cricket Stadium, marking a major highlight in Afghanistan's domestic cricket calendar. In this T20 tournament, five regional sides — Amo Sharks, Boost Defenders, Band-e-Amir Dragons, Mis-e-Ainak Knights, and Speen Ghar Tigers — will face off in a double round-robin format.

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

Nutritional emergency threatens children

KABUL (TOLOnews): Seyda, a resident of Nangarhar, says her infant has been suffering from malnutrition for the past six months and is currently hospitalized at Indira Gandhi Hospital in Kabul. She complains about her dire economic situation, saying she cannot afford the treatment expenses for her child. Seyda explained that: "I'm from Jalalabad. My child has been malnourished for four months. My husband collects scrap. We can't manage anymore. Our financial situation is terrible, we can't even afford milk." Similarly, Sabera, a resident of Helmand, shares: "It's been two or three months since my child fell ill. I had him hospitalized in Helmand for a month. I treated him at home for another month. Now I've brought him here."

Meanwhile, a report from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) states that one in two Afghan children suffers from malnutrition. The global agency adds that Afghanistan ranks fourth worldwide in terms of severe food insecurity, with 90% of children under five lacking access to sufficient and nutritious food. UNICEF's representative in Afghanistan, Tajudeen Oyewale, notes: "Nearly half of all Afghan children under five suffer from stunting or chronic malnutrition, and 10.3% are wasted (low weight for height). According to our latest report on food insecurity, 90% of Afghan children under five are food insecure. Globally, it is estimated that 440 million children under five suffer from food insecurity, and Afghanistan is among the

worst-hit countries, ranking fourth in the world for food insecurity." He added: "UNICEF is pleased to launch the 'First Foods' strategy in Afghanistan as an innovative initiative to improve children's health and well-being by promoting locally produced and processed nutritious foods. This initiative will help ensure proper dietary combinations for children at the household level. We believe this is the best approach to reduce malnutrition through a preventative strategy." Concerns over high rates of malnutrition among Afghan mothers and children come amid repeated warnings from various UN agencies about rising malnutrition levels and calls on the international community to take joint action to address the crisis.

Detained women transferred to security posts

KABUL (Amu TV): Women arrested last Wednesday, July 16, by Taliban morality police in Kabul's Shahr-e-Naw neighborhood have been transferred to Taliban-run security outposts and their Ministry of Interior, according to individuals familiar with the matter. The women were initially detained for allegedly failing to wear what the Taliban defines as "proper hijab," despite some reportedly observing conservative Islamic dress at the time of arrest. Video footage obtained by Amu last week showed Taliban enforcers detaining women from clinics, restaurants and shopping centers without warning or explanation. Now, sources say, many of those detained have been relocated from local police precincts to central security facilities, including sites operated by the Ministry of Interior. Some women have been released after their families signed written pledges. Others, however, remain in custody. Family members of several detainees say Taliban officials demanded payments in exchange for the release of their daughters or sisters. Some of the women who resisted arrest were allegedly beaten during questioning. "This was not just a warning," said a relative of one detainee, speaking on condition of anonymity. "It was a show of power. Some of them were taken in front of their children." Sources told Amu that the operation was carried out jointly by officers from the 10th Police District and agents of the Taliban's Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice. While Taliban officials continue to deny that arrests have taken place, their statements have conflicted with both eyewitness accounts and video documentation. In a phone call last week, a spokesperson for the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue claimed no one had been detained, and described recent actions as part of a nationwide "awareness campaign" on hijab compliance. Taliban have repeatedly expanded restrictions on women's public presence since returning to power in August 2021. They have issued edicts limiting women's access to education, work and travel, and increased patrols aimed at enforcing its interpretation of Islamic modesty. Rights groups say the latest arrests — and now, the transfer of detainees to higher security institutions — mark a troubling escalation.

Addressing refugee-related issues shared responsibility

KABUL (Pajhwok): United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Filippo Grandi has arrived in Kabul to assess the challenges faced by Afghan refugees, says the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR). Deputy Minister of Refugee and Repatriation Sheikh Kaleem-ur-Rahman Fani welcomed Grandi at the Kabul International Airport on Friday morning. MoRR said in a statement. Fani said addressing refugee-related challenges was a shared responsibility. He noted that in addition to emergency assistance, returnees were in need of shelter, education and healthcare services. He expressed hope that the visit of UN High Commissioner for Refugees would play a positive role in supporting the reintegration of returnees and mobilising aid for them. Meanwhile, 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. The ministry's statement also quoted Grandi as describing the mass and forced repatriation of Afghan refugees from neighbouring countries as a major challenge. While acknowledging the global financial crisis, he said UNHCR would continue its efforts and support for Afghan returnees as before. Filippo Grandi is also scheduled to visit western Herat province after holding meetings in Kabul to assess the conditions of returning families there.



Jalali, UK envoys discuss healthcare cooperation



KABUL (Pajhwok): Acting Minister of Public Health Maulvi Noor Jalal Jalali and the UK chargé d'affaires for Afghanistan have discussed cooperation in various healthcare areas, including capacity building of Afghan medical professionals, treatment of drug addicts and cancer patients and maternal and child healthcare. Jalali met with Robert Chatterton Dickson, the

UK's chargé d'affaires to Afghanistan and Richard Lindsay, the newly appointed UK representative to the country, the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) said. In a statement, the ministry said the meeting focused on improving Afghanistan's health system, MoPH priorities, building the capacity of Afghan healthcare professionals, treatment for drug addicts and cancer patients,

and support for maternal and child health services. Jalali appreciated UK for its previous support in the health sector and called on the new British envoy to continue assistance in the aforementioned areas. The statement added that both UK representatives reaffirmed their country's commitment to continued cooperation with Afghanistan in the health sector.

Cooking oil price down, flour up in Kabul

KABUL (Pajhwok): The prices of cooking oil decreased, while the rate of flour surged in Kabul market during the outgoing week, market sources said on Saturday. Food items Zmarai Safi, head of the Food Traders' Association, said the price of a 16-litre bottle of Malaysian cooking oil went down from 1,650 afghanis to 1,600 afghanis due to a fall in global market prices. However, the price of a 49-kilogram sack of Kazakhstani flour rose from 1,400 to 1,420 afghanis, he added. He noted that prices of other essential food items remained unchanged. A 49-kilogram sack of Indian sugar stood at 2,500 afghanis, while a 24-kilogram

bag of Pakistani rice remained at 2,600 afghanis — the same as last week. He said one kilogram of African black tea sold for 400 afghanis and the same quantity of Indonesian green tea for 350 afghanis. Hamid Sufizada, a retailer at Dahna-i-Bagh market, put the retail price of a 49-kg bag of flour at 1,450afs, a 24-kg bag of rice at 2,650afs and a 49-kg sack of sugar at 2,550afs. A 16-litre bottle of cooking oil cost 1,700 afghanis, while one kilogram of black tea was priced at 400 afghanis and green tea at 450 afghanis, he added. Fuel prices A worker at the Ahmadyar fuel station said the price of one litre of petrol remained at 60 afghanis and diesel at 62

afghanis. Meanwhile, Mohammad Jan, a shopkeeper in the Dahan-i-Bagh area, said one kilogram of liquefied gas was selling for 47 afghanis — unchanged from last week. Gold Mohammad Fawad, a jeweller in Timor Shahi area, said the price of one gram of Russian gold remained stable 4,700afs and the same amount of Arabian gold stayed unchanged at 6,000afs. Currency rates Haji Hussain, owner of the Sadaqat Money Exchange, said one US dollar was traded at 69.10afs and 1,000 Pakistani rupees at 230 afs. Last week, one US dollar was exchanged for 69.10 afs and 1,000 Pakistani rupees for 235afs.

Kabul faces one of its most severe water crises

KABUL (TOLOnews): Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, is currently grappling with one of the most critical water crises in its history. According to data, water levels in many central and western parts of Kabul have dropped significantly, severely affecting the lives of millions of residents. Mohammad Agha, a Kabul resident, said: "Everything depends on water. Without it, life becomes extremely difficult. If these petrol stations stop giving water, people will die of hunger and thirst." Another resident, Najibullah, added: "Children and women wander day and night with buckets, but there's no water. A woman came and said she hadn't performed ablution today because there's not even enough water for that." According to a report by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the dramatic decline in Kabul's water levels has put nearly six million people at risk of water scarcity. The agency described the crisis as "unprecedented," emphasizing the need for large-scale investment, stronger cooperation, and increased public awareness on water use and management to confront the issue. Meanwhile, residents are urging the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan to address their concerns by expanding water supply networks and digging deeper wells. Mohammad Naseem, another Kabul resident,

said: "If these petrol stations don't give us water, no one else will. Our children go to the neighbors, but they get beaten and told they won't be given water. We ask the Islamic Emirate to drill wells for us so we can have our own water and access it day and night." Despite the growing concern among Kabul's population, officials from the Islamic Emirate have repeatedly promised to resolve the issue, but no concrete action has yet been taken.

Herat governor heads to Iran for official visit



HERAT (Ariana News): Noor Ahmad Islamjar, the Governor of Herat province, travelled to Iran on Saturday, leading an official delegation. According to Iran's state news agency (IRIB), the visit began with a tour of the Free Trade-Industrial Zone in Iran's Razavi Khorasan province. Following this, Governor Islamjar visited the Afghan refugee camp in the town of Sefid Sang, located in Fariman district, to assess the living conditions of Afghan nationals residing there. He is also expected to visit the Afghan Consulate in Mashhad as part of his three-day trip.

During his stay, Governor Islamjar is scheduled to sign several cooperation agreements and visit various industrial production units in the region.

The visit comes amid unprecedented surge in refugee returns from Iran.

Over 1.9m Afghans deported: UN HR Chief

KABUL (Khaama Press): Over 1.9 million Afghan migrants were deported from Iran and Pakistan in seven months, prompting UN calls to halt forced, unsafe returns immediately. Volker Türk, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, has reported that more than 1.9 million Afghan migrants have been deported from Iran and Pakistan in the past seven months. Speaking on Friday, July 18, Türk stated that over 1.5 million people were returned from Iran, while more than 300,000 were expelled from Pakistan. He warned that many of those being deported face serious risks of abuse, torture, or arbitrary detention in Afghanistan and should not be forcibly returned. The High Commissioner called for an immediate halt

to deportations, emphasizing that returns must be voluntary, safe, dignified, and in line with international law. According to Türk, Afghanistan is facing a severe humanitarian and human rights crisis. Returnees—whether forced or voluntary—face discrimination, violence, economic hardship, and lack of employment opportunities. He stressed that specific groups such as women,

girls, journalists, and former government employees are particularly vulnerable and under serious threat in Afghanistan. These warnings come as the pace of forced deportations of Afghan refugees from neighboring countries continues to increase, raising alarm among rights organizations. In a recent case, Germany deported 81 Afghan refugees, citing criminal records. This inci-

dent adds to growing international concern about the safety and legality of such deportations. The UN has urged all countries to prioritize protection, uphold asylum rights, and avoid returning individuals to dangerous conditions. The current deportation trend, if continued, may deepen Afghanistan's ongoing crisis and put thousands more lives at risk.

Early pregnancy after cesarean unsafe, doctors warn



KABUL (Pajhwok): A number of obstetricians and gynecologists warn that early pregnancy after a cesarean section can endanger the health of both mother and baby. They recommend that mothers wait approximately three years between childbirths following a cesarean delivery to avoid serious complications. Cesarean section, its

indications Dr. Hafiza Sajjad, a senior obstetrician and gynecologist trainer at Malalai Hospital, told Pajhwok Afghan News that a cesarean section, or surgical

delivery, is performed when natural or safe vaginal delivery is not possible. She explained that cesarean delivery is recommended in cases such as high blood pressure, diabetes, a large fetus, abnormal fetal positioning (breech or transverse), or severe maternal bleeding. Why is the gap after cesarean necessary? Dr. Sajjad emphasized the importance of maintaining approximately a three-year interval between deliveries for mothers who had a cesarean section. This period allows surgical incisions to fully heal, helps the mother recover from anemia and general weakness, strengthens her immune system, and reduces risks during subsequent pregnancies. She stressed that spacing

births is crucial for all mothers, noting that early pregnancy can lead to anemia, calcium deficiency, and the birth of a weak or underweight baby. "The greatest risk with early pregnancy is uterine rupture," she warned. "If a mother goes into labor before adequate healing and cannot reach a health facility quickly, the previous surgical site might rupture. If surgical care is not available within ten minutes, this can be life-threatening for both mother and child, potentially resulting in death." Dr. Sajjad added that mothers who become pregnant too soon should have monthly doctor visits until the seventh month, followed by weekly check-ups during the eighth and ninth months. She also noted that without proper prenatal care, premature birth and low birth weight are likely outcomes. Expert opinions Dr. Noria Raufi Ebrahimi, another obstetrician and gynecologist based in Kabul, said a two-year gap between deliveries is essential for all mothers, but for those with previous cesareans, waiting more than two years is critical. She highlighted the dangers of neglecting this interval, including premature labor, uterine rupture, postpartum hemorrhage, chronic fatigue, weakened immunity, miscarriage, and low birth weight in newborns. Dr. Ebrahimi advised mothers to focus on proper nutrition and remain under medical supervision throughout pregnancy.

Experiences of mothers who did not observe the gap Mursal Gawhari, a resident of Hessa-i-Awal Khair Khana in Kabul, gave birth to her first child by cesarean one year ago. She said, "We are currently celebrating my daughter's first birthday, and it's been two months since I became pregnant again." Mursal complained of abdominal pain and weakness, explaining, "I got pregnant so soon because I wanted my children to grow up together, but I didn't know about the risks of early pregnancy." She is currently under treatment and medical supervision for severe anemia. Similarly, Marwa Efati, 22, from the 500-Family area of Kabul, gave birth via cesarean eight months

ago and is now three months pregnant. She is not in good health and is being closely monitored by her doctor, who advised her to avoid heavy lifting and focus on strengthening her body. Marwa shared, "I didn't know about the risks. A relative told me that if you get pregnant soon, you'll have a baby boy." Positive experience with birth spacing Anahita, who gave birth via cesarean about two years ago, said she is following doctors' advice and will not attempt another pregnancy until her child turns three. She urges other mothers to observe at least a two-year gap between births and reports feeling healthier and stronger each day as a result.



DAMASCUS: Tribal and Bedouin fighters crossing Al-Dur village in Syria's southern Sweida governorate as they mobilize amid clashes with Druze gunmen.

32 killed by Israeli fire while seeking aid in Gaza

GAZA (Reuters): At least 32 people were killed by Israeli fire while they were on their way to an aid distribution site in Gaza at dawn on Saturday, according to the Gaza Health Ministry and Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis.

The Israeli military said it had fired warning shots at suspects who approached its troops after they did not heed calls to stop, about a kilometer away from an aid distribution site that was not active at the time. Gaza resident Mohammed Al-Khalidi said he was in the group approaching the site and heard no warnings before the firing began. "We thought they came out to organize us so we can get aid, suddenly (I) saw the jeeps coming from one side, and the tanks from the other and started shooting at us," he said.

The Gaza Humanitarian Fund, a US-backed group which runs the aid site, said there were no incidents or fatalities there on Saturday and that it has repeatedly warned people not to travel to its distribution points at dark. "The reported IDF (Israel defense Forces) activity resulting in fatalities occurred hours before our sites opened and our

understanding is most of the casualties occurred several kilometers away from the nearest GHF site," it said.

The Israeli military said it was reviewing the incident. GHF uses private US security and logistics companies to get supplies into Gaza, largely bypassing a UN-led system that Israel alleges has let Hamas-led militants loot aid shipments intended for civilians. Hamas denies the accusation.

The UN has called the GHF's model unsafe and a breach of humanitarian impartiality standards, which GHF denies. On Tuesday, the UN rights office in Geneva said it had recorded at least 875 killings within the past six weeks in the vicinity of aid sites and food convoys in Gaza — the majority of them close to GHF distribution points.

Most of those deaths were caused by gunfire that locals have blamed on the Israeli military. The military has acknowledged that civilians were harmed, saying that Israeli forces had been issued new instructions with "lessons learned." At least 13 more people were killed in other Israeli attacks across Gaza

on Saturday, health officials said. The Israeli military said that it had struck militants' weapon depots and sniping posts in a few locations in the enclave.

The war began when Hamas-led militants stormed into Israel on October 7, 2023, killing 1,200 people, mostly civilians and taking 251 hostages back to Gaza. The Israeli military campaign against Hamas in Gaza has since killed around 58,000 Palestinians, most of them civilians according to health officials, displaced almost the entire population and plunged the enclave into a humanitarian crisis, leaving much of the territory in ruins. Israel and Hamas are engaged in indirect talks in Qatar aimed at reaching a 60-day ceasefire though there has been no sign of any imminent breakthrough.

Meanwhile, another 10 hostages will be released from Gaza shortly, US President Donald Trump said on Friday, without providing additional details. Trump made the comment during a dinner with lawmakers at the White House, lauding the efforts of his special envoy Steve Witkoff.

Court issues arrest warrant for KP CM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A district and sessions court in Islamabad on Saturday issued arrest warrants for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur in a liquor and illegal weapons recovery case.

The federal capital's court ordered the authorities concerned to arrest and produce Gandapur after rejecting the KP chief executive's request for exemption from personal appearance. At the outset of the hearing, the judge granted the final opportunity to the firebrand politician to record his statement under Section 342.

It also warned that the court may issue a verdict in his absence, and failure to do so could forfeit his right to record the statement. The court directed that Gandapur be produced before July 21 and emphasised that authorities should not face failure in executing the arrest order. The order read that the case had been pending for eight years, and the prosecution recorded testimonies of witnesses since May last year. Expressing displeasure over Gandapur's absence in the hearing, the court said that the KP CM was deliberately avoiding recording his statement.

UAE and Pakistan vow to boost ties

F.P. Report

ABU DHABI: The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research (ECSSR) is set to host a high-level dialogue session on Thursday, July 24, 2025, focusing on strengthening the bilateral relations between the United Arab Emirates and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

The keynote address will be delivered by H.E. Faisal Niaz Tirmizi, Ambassador of Pakistan to the UAE, who is expected to highlight the deep-rooted historical friendship, economic partnerships, and strategic cooperation between the two nations.

The event will take place at the ECSSR Complex in Abu Dhabi, and is expected to bring together diplomats, policy researchers, media professionals, and community leaders from both countries. Discussions will revolve around trade, investment, regional security, cultural exchange, and mutual diplomatic interests.

With over 1.6 million Pakistani expatriates contributing significantly to the UAE's growth, the dialogue aims to further enhance cooperation in vital sectors such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure. The ECSSR's initiative in organizing this session underscores its pivotal role as a premier think tank in the Middle East, fostering constructive dialogue and strategic policy engagement between nations.

Sri Lankan Ambassador calls on Pakistani Ambassador: Her Excellency Dr. Arusha Cooray, the newly appointed Ambassador of Sri Lanka to the United Arab Emirates, paid a courtesy call on Ambassador Faisal Niaz Tirmizi at the Embassy of Pakistan in Abu Dhabi.

The meeting was held in a spirit of goodwill, during which matters of mutual cooperation were discussed.

BYC protesters in Islamabad fear police crackdown on sit-in

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) on Saturday continued its ongoing sit-in on the road leading to the National Press Club in Islamabad, as the route had been blocked by police with barbed wire, preventing its activists from returning to their original protest site.

The demonstrators were not allowed to set up their protest camp outside the press club, so they would leave in the evenings and return to demonstrate in the afternoon. When they arrived today, they found the route to the press club blocked.

"We started our camp in the morning and finished in the evening as the authorities did not allow us to erect tents," a woman protester told media. "When we came back today, they didn't allow us to proceed and we were told that we didn't have an NOC (no-objection certificate)." She continued that "everyone had the right to protest except for the Baloch".

"We have been sitting on the main road peacefully for the fourth day, but the police have called in buses to take us away and increased their numbers," she added. When asked about the possibility of a crackdown, the protester said, "They're prepared to drag us into buses and take us back to Balochistan." According to the BYC, elderly people, women and children are among the protesters today and facing extreme heat.

"Whether under pouring rain or in scorching heat, they have continued

their peaceful demonstration on the bare footpaths, without tents or shade," the group wrote on X. Lawyer Nadia Baloch, Mahrang's sister, expressed fears of a crackdown by police in a post on X. "Riot police have surrounded the National Press Club in Islamabad and its surrounding areas with barbed wire," she wrote.

"We are peaceful protesters, including older women and young children, who have travelled thousands of kilometres from Balochistan to this city of power and authority, only to now face the threat of arrest, violence, and intimidation."

Former PPP senator Farhatullah Babar told media that there are "hardly 20 women" at the demonstration and that protesting is their fundamental right. He highlighted two main issues in Balochistan, which are causing discontent among the people and contributing to protests like this one. "There are two fundamental issues in Balochistan: number one, people want their representative assembly and government," Babar explained.

"People in Balochistan feel that neither the assembly nor the government are their genuine representative. When you don't have trust in your government ... there is resentment." Babar highlighted that the second issue is enforced disappearances, stating, "My suggestion to the state would be to come out of the mode of denial, admit that there is an issue of enforced disappearances and sit together."

Babar emphasised that all stakeholders should sit together and find a solution. "A solution can be found — there have been recommendations made by parliament and there are observations made by the courts. Let us all sit together and find a way." Former Jamaat-i-Islami senator Mushtaq Ahmed, who is present at the protest, told media that 25-30 people are protesting.

"They are demonstrating for their right to live and right to fair trial under Article 10A of the Constitution," Ahmed said. "The roads have been closed and there is a heavy police deployment. There's an atmosphere of fear here." The former senator said that he condemned this because the demonstrators have not blocked roads themselves. "This will not resolve the issue and the people behind this are playing with fire."

Former senator Afrasiab Khattak condemned the police's blocking the route to the press club in a post on X. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) issued a statement on X expressing concern about the treatment of Baloch activists who have travelled from Balochistan to the federal capital.

"HRCP stands by their right to peaceful assembly and protest and demands that the authorities differentiate between advocacy for legitimate rights and militancy," the statement read. "Women and children from Balochistan deserve as much dignity and respect as people from other parts of the country."

202 dead as relentless monsoon rains wreak havoc across country

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: At least 202 people — including 96 children — have lost their lives across Pakistan since the onset of the monsoon season in late June, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) said on Saturday.

The official data paints a grim picture, with Punjab accounting for 123 of the total deaths. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa recorded 40 deaths, Sindh 21, Balochistan 16, and Islamabad and Azad Jammu and Kashmir reported one each. The causes of death varied widely, with at least 118 killed due to house collapses, 30 from flash floods, and others due to drowning, lightning strikes, electrocution, and landslides. The rains have injured more than 560 people, including 182 children.

In Rawalpindi, flash floods swept through homes, streets, and markets, submerging entire neighbourhoods such as Dhamial, Hathi Chowk, and Morgah, media reported. In Trench Bhata and Fauji Colony, water levels rose dangerously — in some areas reaching rooftops — forcing residents to flee, leaving behind their belongings.

Among the victims was eight-year-old Hasan Ali, whose grieving father described the family's shock over the sudden loss. Faisalabad has also witnessed extensive damage, with 11 deaths and 60 injuries reported in 33 incidents over just two days. Most of the fatalities occurred due to the collapse of weakened structures. Many of the affected families stated they lacked the resources to repair their homes before the monsoon.

Heavy rainfall and landslides have destroyed infrastructure across Punjab. At least 32 roads in Chakwal were washed away after over 450mm

of rainfall. In nearby villages like Khewal, house collapses killed multiple people, including a father and son. Communication links remain severed, and the power supply is yet to be restored in several regions.

Rescue and repair work is underway. On the chief minister's instructions, heavy machinery has been deployed to reopen blocked roads in Jhelum, Pind Dadan Khan, Kallar Kahar, and surrounding areas. In Rawalpindi's Karoli Dhoke Bridge area, a rain-triggered road breach has been patched to resume traffic flow.

As monsoon rains sweep across the country's length and breadth, water level in the Indus River is also constantly rising at the Kotri barrage as 2 other barrages in Sindh have already attained low flood level.

The Sindh Irrigation Department recorded 154,476 cusecs flows in the barrage's upstream in Jamshoro district on Saturday morning. The barrage was discharging 112,351 cusecs in the downstream towards the Arabian sea.

The 4 canals flowing from Kotri barrage also witnessed rising flows with K B Feeder canal, aka Karachi canal, drawing 7,450 cusecs against its seasonal allocation of 6,140 cusecs. The barrage released 19,525 in New Fuleli canal, 12,475 in Old Fuleli and 2,680 in Akram canal. However, the allocations for the 3 canals were 10,520, 9,940 and 3,200 cusecs, respectively.

The Pakistan Meteorological Department has predicted continued monsoon rains across most districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from July 20 to 25. According to reports, Heavy rainfall is expected in the upper districts, including Dir, Swat, Chitral, Kohistan, Malakand, Shangla, and Battagram.

Rain is also likely in Buner, Kohat,

Karak, Bannu, Tank, Lakki Marwat, and Dera Ismail Khan. In addition, the tribal districts of Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Waziristan, Orakzai, as well as Mansehra, Abbottabad, and Haripur are expected to receive rain. Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera, Mardan, Swabi, Hangu, and Kurram may experience thunderstorms and rainfall during this period.

The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) has warned of potential landslides in mountainous areas and flooding in local streams and rivers. PDMA has issued an alert to all district administrations to take precautionary measures in advance. Earlier, widespread rains wreaked havoc in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) provinces leaving at least 30 persons dead in Punjab and seven in KP in various rain-related incidents.

Heavy rainfall in Lahore since last night submerged several areas of the provincial capital city as main traffic arteries drowned under the rainwater. Around 10 people killed across the city in fatal incidents of electrocution and falling rooftops during the downpour that started at 9:10 PM on Tuesday night. Two children, 15-year-old Awais and 13-year-old Esha died in an electrocution incident in Harbanspura of Lahore.

Separately, five persons of a family died and two injured when a rooftop collapsed at Muridwal in Thokar Niaz Beg, while three others died and scores were injured as a roof caved in in Raiwind. Moreover, seven persons lost their lives in various incidents of roof collapse in Faisalabad. Three people died each in Bahawalnagar and Okara in rain-related incidents, two at Pakpatan and one each in Sahiwal and Arifwala, according to reports.

Police arrest more than 50 Palestine Action protestors

LONDON: More than 50 protesters have been arrested in central London supporting the banned group Palestine Action. Protests were held across the UK on Saturday, including in Manchester, Edinburgh and Bristol after the group was outlawed as a terrorist organisation.

The main demonstration was in Parliament Square in Westminster, where numerous people held up signs reading "I oppose genocide, I support Palestine Action." Supporting a proscribed group in the UK is illegal. The protesters in London were detained under Section 13 of the UK's Terrorism Act, which carries a possible jail term of six years.

On X the Metropolitan Police stated: "55 people were arrested in Parliament Square for displaying placards in support of Palestine Action which is a proscribed group." Eight people were also arrested in Truro, Cornwall for a similar protest. Several others were

detained in Manchester.

Defend Our Juries, the group behind the protests, said before the demonstrations that 120 people in the UK had been arrested for supporting Palestine Action so far. The group was banned after activists broke into a Royal Air Force base at Brize Norton on June 20, causing an estimated £7 million (\$9.38 million) of damage to military aircraft. Membership of direct support for Palestine Action now carries a prison term of up to 14 years. Displaying the group's name on clothing could lead to a six-month jail sentence.

A hearing into a permission to bring a judicial review into the ban will be held at the High Court in London on Monday. Five people appeared in court on Saturday over a Palestine Action protest at an Israeli-linked defence firm's site. Members of the organisation, allegedly armed with sledgehammers and whips, are accused of breaking into the Elbit

Systems site near Patchway, Bristol, in the early hours of August 6, 2024, "counter-terrorism" police said.

More than 2 million pounds of damage (\$2.68 million) was caused, and police officers and a security guard were assaulted, the Westminster Magistrates' Court heard. Prosecutors claim the alleged offences had a "terrorist connection". The five involved were charged with aggravated burglary, criminal damage and violent disorder. Palestine Action describes itself as "a pro-Palestinian organisation which disrupts the arms industry in the United Kingdom with direct action". Since its founding in July 2020, it has carried out hundreds of protests across the UK aimed at disrupting the operations of companies they accuse of profiting from Israeli military operations, with a particular focus on the Israeli arms manufacturer, Elbit Systems. — Arab News

Buildings burn as wave of Russian attacks hits Ukraine

KYIV: At least three people have died following another widespread air bombardment by Russia. Two people were killed in the eastern Dnipropetrovsk region, the regional governor, Sergiy Lysak, said, while a woman died of her injuries after being rescued from a burning apartment in Odesa, according to emergency services.

President Volodymyr Zelensky said 10 regions of Ukraine, including a number of cities, were hit in the overnight assault. Ukraine's military said more than 340 explosive and dummy drones and 35 cruise and ballistic missiles were used. Although it said 90% of these were shot down, suppressed electronically or lost, more than 30 got through.

One of the strikes hit a residential block in the southern city of Odesa, causing a fire on its upper floors.

Rescuers said five people were rescued from burning apartments - including the woman who later died. At least another six people were wounded. The eastern city of Pavlohrad was subjected to what Serhiy Lysak called a "hellish night and morning".

He said there had been "explosion after explosion" caused by drone and missile strikes, adding it had been the biggest-scale attack on the city to date. Targets reportedly included industrial sites, a fire department, a clinic, a school, and a cultural institution.

Zelensky wrote of "important infrastructure" being damaged there. A missile plant is based in Pavlohrad, and the city has been struck in the past by Russia. Russia's defence ministry said it struck military-industrial enterprises that produce components for missiles and drones

overnight, but did not specify where.

The north-eastern city of Sumy was also attacked. Zelensky said critical infrastructure had been damaged, cutting power to several thousand families. There have also been strikes - including with guided bombs - on another town in the region, Shostka, which lies less than 50km (30 miles) from the Russian border. Officials said a "targeted hit" there had caused a fire. They did not say what had been struck. Unverified video footage posted online purportedly of the incident shows a fierce fire and billowing clouds of grey smoke. Zelensky once again stressed the importance of bolstering air defences, both in terms of supplies from allies, but also producing them in Ukraine, including more interceptor drones. — BBC