

Marriott calls on Aseefa
F.P. Report
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's First Lady, Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, and British High Commissioner Jane Marriott convened at Bilawal House in Karachi today to explore key areas of bilateral cooperation. Their dialogue encompassed shared interests between Pakistan and the United Kingdom, particularly in education, healthcare, women's empowerment, and health advancement.

The Frontier Post

Body emphasizes unity against terrorism

Terrorists won't be allowed to hide among civilians, says KP CM

F.P. Report
PESHAWAR: A meeting of the Provincial Apex Committee was held here at the Chief Minister's Secretariat on Wednesday, with Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur in the chair. The session reviewed in detail the overall security situation in the province, with particular focus on the newly merged tribal districts. The meeting was attended by Adviser to the Chief Minister on Information Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif, Corps Commander Peshawar Lieutenant General Omer Ahmad Bukhari, Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah, Inspector General of Police Zulfiqar Hameed, and other senior civil and military officials. In addition, Members of National and Provincial Assemblies from Bajaur, Khyber, and North Waziristan were invited as special participants. During the session, relevant authorities briefed the participants on the various aspects of the prevailing security challenges. The committee paid tribute to the civilians, police, and security personnel martyred in recent terrorist incidents and reaffirmed the collective resolve to continue the fight against terrorism. It was agreed that public trust must be secured to effectively counter terrorism, and participants underscored the need for enhanced coordination

among civil administration, police, security forces, and intelligence agencies to carry out decisive operations. Participants unanimously acknowledged that terrorism has become a malign threat that can only be eliminated through concerted efforts by the government, the public, and state institutions. They noted that terrorists are a common enemy and all stakeholders desire their elimination. Following the meeting, Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur issued a video statement to address the public and share key takeaways. He emphasized that the vision of his party and its leadership has always been to uplift underdeveloped areas, particularly the merged districts, and integrate them into the mainstream through development. However, he regretted that the lack of peace in these areas remains a major obstacle to progress, with terrorism being the root cause of the prevailing instability. The Chief Minister asserted that peace is essential not only for development but also for securing the future of the province and the country. He warned that Pakistan's adversaries are actively working to destabilize the nation and that terrorism is often linked to these hostile foreign interests. He stressed the need for unity, saying that a deliberate campaign is underway to sow distrust

between the government, the public, and the security forces - a conspiracy that must be exposed and countered through collective efforts. Ali Amin Gandapur cautioned that without the active support of the public, this war against terrorism cannot be won. He called on citizens to participate wholeheartedly in identifying and resisting those who support terrorists, whether out of fear, greed, or any other motive. He reiterated that aiding terrorism is neither sanctioned by religion, law, nor tradition, and that facilitators of terrorism must be eliminated alongside the perpetrators. He explained that terrorists deliberately take refuge in populated areas, launching attacks from within civilian zones to provoke retaliatory responses that could lead to civilian casualties. This tactic, he said, is intended to drive a wedge between the people and the state, and therefore it is imperative to expel terrorists from residential communities. The Chief Minister urged public to make a firm decision not to tolerate the presence of terrorists in their midst. He called security personnel - including police and military forces - guests of the community, who must be respected and protected in line with local traditions. Any attack on them, he said, should be met with a unified and forceful response, as it is a moral, religious, and cultural duty of the people.



Chief Minister expressed deep gratitude for the sacrifices made by the armed forces, police, and the general public in the fight against terrorism. He announced that from August 2, a series of Jirgas will be initiated, starting at the divisional level and involving local elders, political leaders, and stakeholders to gather input and understand local concerns. A grand Jirga will follow, where a comprehensive policy and action plan will be formulated in collaboration with all stakeholders. He clarified that the government does not intend to conduct any operation that could displace people, as displacement leads to severe social and economic challenges. However,

where terrorist presence is confirmed, targeted actions must be taken to ensure that civilians are not harmed. A strategy is being developed to this effect, aiming solely at eradicating terrorism while safeguarding the lives of innocent citizens. The Chief Minister also addressed misinformation campaigns suggesting that the province's valuable mineral resources are being handed over to others. He rejected such claims as deliberate attempts by enemies to create confusion and distrust. He reaffirmed that all provincial assets and resources remain under the control of the provincial government and belong to the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He urged the public to recognize and confront those spreading false narratives and to view them as enemies of the province, its future generations, and Pakistan as a whole. He called on all political parties, public representatives, security institutions, and the people to unite in the fight against terrorism. In conclusion, Ali Amin Gandapur declared that the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa stands resolutely with its people and will go to every length to eradicate terrorism. "If we fight this war together with sincerity," he said, "then, by the grace of God, not only will we win - we have already begun to win."

PM approves reforms in Hajj Operations, National AI Policy

Saqib Mushtaq
ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday marked major reforms after key decisions in two strategic areas including the approval of the Hajj Policy 2026 and the National Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy 2025. The prime minister chaired a pivotal meeting of the Federal Cabinet here, and directed complete

Federal Cabinet approved third-party validation for all Hajj operations, real-time monitoring of payments and application processes under private operators, mandatory minimum of 2,000 pilgrims per private company, 1,000 seats reserved for hardship cases, enhanced digital tools including Pak Hajj mobile app, digital wristbands, and mobile SIMs for better tracking and service delivery, transparent selection of assistants



and innovation avenues. "Our youth are Pakistan's greatest asset. Providing them with education, skills, and equal opportunities in AI is a top priority," stated PM Shehbaz Sharif. The AI policy outlines training 1 million AI professionals by 2030, establishing an AI Innovation Fund and AI Venture Fund to boost private sector involvement, creation of 50,000 AI-driven civic projects and 1,000 local AI products in the next five years, distribution of 3,000 annual AI scholarships and facilitation of 1,000 research projects, inclusion of women and differently-abled individuals through accessible education and financing, strengthening cybersecurity and national data security protocols, promoting global partnerships and compliance with international AI regulations. However, an AI Council and a comprehensive Master Plan & Action Matrix will oversee the policy's implementation. The prime minister applauded the Ministry of IT and allied institutions for their timely efforts, saying, "AI will not only modernize our economy but also enhance productivity across agriculture, public services, and governance." The Cabinet also ratified decisions made in earlier sessions of the Cabinet Committee on Privatization and the Committee on Legislative Business held on July 8, 17, and 25, respectively. Prime Minister, also called for unwavering commitment and unity in tackling the country's pressing challenges from flood devastation and counterterrorism to power sector reforms and international diplomacy.

(Continued on Back Page)

SBP keeps policy rate unchanged

F.P. Report
KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has decided to maintain the policy rate at 11 percent, disappointing investors and the business community who had anticipated a reduction. SBP Governor Jameel Ahmad announced the first monetary policy of fiscal year 2025-26 at a press conference in Karachi. The governor said the Monetary Policy Committee decided to keep the interest rate unchanged at 11pc. He said that inflation had started to rise again in April, and this upward trend continued in June and July. Considering the potential hike in electricity prices, the decision to maintain the current interest rate was taken, he held. The inflation rate is expected to remain between 5 to 7 percent, which is within the target range, he added. "Country's imports are increasing compared to last year, which is why the current account is likely to remain in deficit," he added. Jameel Ahmed also noted that national exports have increased by 4% compared to last year. Additionally, by controlling the exchange rate, remittances have increased by \$8 billion. Speaking on the current account, he said it was in a very poor state in 2022. However, due to gradual improvements, it turned into a surplus after 14 years, reaching a high level. Despite external debt payments, foreign exchange reserves have improved and have now exceeded \$14 billion, he maintained. He stated that the current account deficit could range between zero and one percent.

Remittances this year are projected to reach up to \$40 billion. As for economic growth, the national GDP could remain between 3.25% and 4.25%, but it will largely depend on the performance of the agriculture sector. The Monetary Policy Committee noted that inflation in June 2025 decelerated to 3.2 percent y/y, led mainly by lower food prices, whereas core inflation also declined slightly. However, the committee noted that the inflation outlook has somewhat worsened in the wake of higher than anticipated adjustment in energy prices, especially gas tariffs. Nonetheless, inflation is projected to stabilize in the target range going forward. Moreover, economic activity is gaining further traction amidst the still-unfolding impact of the earlier reductions in the policy rate. At the same time, the Committee noted that the trade deficit is expected to widen further in FY26 amidst the pickup in economic activity and slowdown in global trade. "Given this macroeconomic outlook and the emerging risks, the MPC considered today's decision as necessary to ensure price stability," reads the press release. The committee also noted the key developments since its last meeting. It noted that the SBP's foreign exchange reserves crossed \$14 billion on the back of improved financial inflows and a current account surplus. "Second, the recent upgrade in Pakistan's sovereign credit rating led to a decline in Eurobond yields and narrowed CDS spreads in international markets. Third, inflation

expectations increased slightly for consumers but declined for businesses in the latest sentiment surveys. Fourth, FBR tax revenue for FY25 was recorded at Rs11.7 trillion, which fell short of the revised estimate by around Rs200 billion. Lastly, global oil prices remained volatile, whereas metal prices increased. At the same time, the impact of global trade tariffs remained uncertain, prompting central banks to maintain their cautious monetary policy stance." In view of these developments and potential risks, the Committee assessed that the real policy rate should continue to be adequately positive to stabilize inflation in the target range of 5 - 7 percent. The MPC emphasized on the need to continue the ongoing prudent monetary and fiscal policy mix to sustain macroeconomic stability. Earlier, the business and Industrial community of Karachi, emphasising the significance of lower policy rate in boosting economic activities in the country, had reiterated their demand to slash the policy rate down into single digit viz-a-viz inflation. Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), North Karachi Association of Trade and Industry (NKATI) and several other chambers and associations of the business community, in separate statements, demanded significant reduction in the policy rate to foster industrialization, boost exports, promote competitiveness and uplift the national economy.

Iranian President to visit Islamabad on August 2

ISLAMABAD: The Iranian president's political adviser said on Wednesday that Dr Masoud Pezeshkian was due to visit Pakistan on August 2 (Saturday) for a two-day visit, Iran's IRNA news agency reported. Pezeshkian will be the second Iranian president to visit Pakistan in as many years. The visit was initially planned for the last week of July. In April 2024, Ebrahim Raisi undertook a three-day official visit to Pakistan. During the trip - which took place a month before Raisi's death in a helicopter crash - the foreign dignitary also visited Lahore and Karachi. In a post on X, Political Adviser to the Iranian President Mehdi Sanai said: "Dr Pezeshkian will travel to Pakistan on Saturday evening, August 11, at the invitation of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif." He said official meetings and discussions with cultural and commercial elites were on the agenda. — Agencies

Saif slams federal govt

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Adviser to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, Barrister Dr. Saif, strongly criticized the federal government, calling it incompetent and illegitimate. He accused the government of politically targeting qualified Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) candidates by disqualifying them without just cause. "These candidates are being punished simply because they won with a clear mandate, as shown in Form-45," said Barrister Dr. Saif. He claimed the disqualifications are part of a plan to bring in preferred candidates using Form-47 manipulation. He also alleged that fake cases are being used to sideline PTI candidates and accused the Election Commission of losing its neutrality, calling it the "B-team of the illegitimate government." Barrister Dr. Saif said the government was clearly nervous about PTI's upcoming protest on August 5 and was trying to stop it through unfair tactics. "These cheap tricks won't work. This protest will be the final blow to this fake government," he said. He added that the government can no longer block the release of Imran Khan, as the public is fully energized and ready to fight for real freedom. Protest preparations are underway not just in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but across the country, he noted, and PTI workers are eagerly awaiting August 5.

Pakistan rejects India's claims on war

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has strongly rejected what it calls "baseless assertions and provocative claims" made during a recent debate in the Indian Lok Sabha regarding the so-called Operation Sindoor, urging the Modi-led government to stop misleading its people and acknowledge the losses incurred by their armed forces. In a detailed response to media questions, Foreign Office Spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan criticized the Indian leadership for its "dangerous tendency to distort facts, justify aggression, and glorify conflict for domestic consumption." The spokesperson said India launched an unprovoked attack on Pakistan in the wake of the Pahalgam incident without conducting any investigation or presenting credible evidence. "The world knows that India attacked Pakistan without any verifiable evidence or a credible investigation... resulting in the martyrdom of innocent men, women, and children," he noted. He added that India failed to achieve any of its military objectives, and Pakistan's swift response - which involved neutralizing Indian fighter jets and military targets - was a clear demonstration of its defensive strength. "This is an indisputable fact and a testament to Pakistan's success," Khan stated. Shafqat Ali Khan also stressed that Indian leaders should acknowledge the active involvement of a third party in facilitating the ceasefire following the escalation back in May. "India chose the path of belligerence and aggression and did not accept the Pakistani prime minister's immediate offer for a transparent and independent investigation into the Pahalgam attack," he said. "India acted as a judge, jury, and executioner." The Foreign Office dismissed any references to Operation Mahadev as completely irrelevant. He further said the statement made by the Indian home minister during

the parliamentary session was "replete with fabrications". "It raises serious questions about the credibility of the Indian minister." He also questioned the timing of the reported killings of those allegedly involved in the Pahalgam attack, calling it a "mere coincidence" as it occurred just before the Lok Sabha debate. Addressing India's narrative of a so-called "new normal" in bilateral relations and accusations of "nuclear blackmail," the spokesperson said such statements are "misleading and self-serving". "For us, the only 'normal' in bilateral relations is respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and adherence to the principles and purposes of the UN Charter," he insisted. He reaffirmed that Pakistan's response in May 2025 - using only its conventional capabilities - disproves any claims of nuclear posturing and showed that it would forcefully counter any future aggression. "India is trying to veil its own escalatory impulses while shifting blame onto Pakistan," he asserted. The spokesperson also rejected recent Indian remarks about the Indus Waters Treaty, stating that suspending or undermining the agreement shows its blatant disregard for the sanctity of international treaties. "India should stop taking pride in unilateral and illegal decisions and instead honour the sanctity of binding global treaties," he said. Concluding the briefing, Shafqat Ali Khan cautioned that India's "reliance on disinformation, jingoism, and chest-thumping" could destabilize the entire South Asian region. He reiterated Pakistan's commitment to "peace, regional stability, and a meaningful dialogue" with India on all outstanding issues, including the Kashmir dispute. "Pakistan has responded firmly in the past, and will continue to do so in the future, should aggression be repeated," the spokesperson warned.

COAS vows to uproot menace of terrorism



F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M) has reaffirmed Pakistan Army's unwavering commitment to uproot the menace of terrorism and inevitability of sociology-economic uplift of Balochistan for national cohesion and integration. Interacting with participants of the 16th National Workshop Balochistan and addressing a diverse group of stakeholders including parliamentarians, representatives of civil society, civil servants, academicians, media personnel and youth, the COAS vehemently condemned India's blatant sponsorship of terror proxies, characterizing them as

a failed attempt to target the deep rooted patriotism of the people of Balochistan. He elucidated that India, having suffered defeat in Ma'arka e Haq has now escalated its proxy war to advance her nefarious designs, specifically referencing to Fitna-al-Khawarij and Fitna-al-Hindustan as pawns of Indian hybrid war against Pakistan, said a news release issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) here Wednesday. The COAS said that these proxies will face a similar fate and humiliation as faced in Ma'arka e Haq, InshaAllah. Field Marshal Asim Munir emphasised that terrorists knew no bounds of religion, sect, or ethnicity, necessitating a unified national response,

stressing the imperative of collective resolve in confronting this menace. The COAS highlighted the pivotal role of development initiatives in Balochistan, advocating for enhanced inter-agency cooperation and a cohesive national approach to propel provincial progress and national advancement. While reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to regional peace, the COAS underscored the nation's preparedness to respond decisively to any external or internal threats, protecting national prestige, and ensuring the wellbeing of its citizens. The session concluded after a candid interactive discourse between the participants and the COAS.

Couple killed in Mastung
F.P. Report
MASTUNG: A married couple was murdered in an alleged honor killing in Mastung, Balochistan, on Wednesday. An FIR has been registered at Levies Station Wali Khan Mastung against five of the wife's brothers. The complaint was filed by the husband's brother. The victims, Shoaib and Benazir, had married in court seven years prior, a decision that reportedly angered Benazir's family.



KARACHI: A view of ongoing construction work on the Red Line Bus Service near Mazar-e-Quaid along University Road during a city development project. —APP Photo

CM Murad chairs Thar Coal & Energy Board meeting, approves key initiatives

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah presided over the 29th meeting of the Thar Coal & Energy Board (TCEB) to review ongoing projects and approved several strategic initiatives aimed at enhancing the region's coal mining and electricity generation capabilities.

The CM stated that since 2019, Thar's coal power initiatives have already generated over 2,600 MW of power generation capacity, supplying electricity to millions of households at a significantly lower cost, around Rs 4.8 per kWh compared to power from imported coal (roughly Rs 19.5 per kWh, resulting in a savings of approximately \$1.3 billion in foreign exchange for the country.

The meeting, held at CM House, was attended by provincial Energy Minister Nasir Shah, Education Minister Syed Sardar Shah, Irrigation Minister Jam Khan Shoro, MNA Shazia Atta Marri, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, Secretaries, and Members of the Board. (On video link) Federal Law Minister Azam, Nazeer Tatar and other federal government representatives.

The chief minister happens to be the chairman

Thar Coal & Energy Board (TCEB). The Board deliberated on pivotal measures to bolster Pakistan's indigenous coal-based energy sector.

The Board, recognised as a decisive entity for accelerating Thar coal development, reviewed ongoing projects and unanimously approved several strategic initiatives aimed at enhancing the region's coal mining and electricity generation capabilities.

The Board ratified the indexed and adjusted coal tariff orders proposed by the Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC) for the periods of October to December 2024 and January to March 2025. This decision aligns coal pricing with current cost indices, ensuring stability and predictability in the fuel supply for power generation.

Further advancing the Thar coal project, the Board sanctioned the Commercial Operations Date (COD) stage tariff for Sino Sindh Resources (Pvt.) Ltd. (SSRL), which operates a coal mine with a capacity of 7.8 million tonnes per annum at Thar Block-I. The approval signifies a major milestone, facilitating the full-scale launch of commercial mining operations that are crucial for domestic energy production.

In a bid to enhance invest-

ment confidence in the Thar coal sector, TCEB has extended the 18 per cent Internal Rate of Return (IRR) incentive on equity for Thar coal mining projects until December 31, 2026. This extension aims to provide financial assurance to both current and prospective investors, mitigating potential delays in project timelines due to adverse investment conditions.

The Board also approved amendments to the Thar Coal & Energy Board Act, 2011, which will empower its Executive Arm to conduct third-party evaluations of water tariff indexation. This legislative improvement is expected to foster better regulatory oversight and transparency.

In addition to discussing coal mining, comprehensive discussions were held regarding the application of Thar coal in industrial sectors, particularly in the production of fertiliser and cement. The Board acknowledged ongoing research by firms like FFC, which are exploring the conversion of coal to fertiliser and cement solutions. Updates were provided on the conversion of the Jamshoro coal-fired power plant to operate on Thar coal.

The meeting also highlighted the progress of key infrastructure projects, including the Thar Railway Link Project, which is currently 35

per cent complete and is projected to enhance coal logistics and regional connectivity by its target completion date in January 2026. Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, addressing the board said, "Thar coal has emerged as a cornerstone of our energy security, and today's decisions represent a significant milestone in our journey towards energy self-sufficiency." He emphasised the government's commitment to providing affordable power through the use of indigenous resources, thereby reducing reliance on imported fuels.

Energy Minister Nasir Shah expressed confidence in the extension of the IRR incentive, stating, "This will sustain investor confidence and maintain the momentum of Thar coal projects, facilitating further expansion of mining operations and reducing per-ton coal costs."

Managing Director of TCEB, Mr. Tariq Shah, said that Thar coalfield, boasting an estimated 175 billion tonnes of lignite coal, is among the largest coal deposits globally. The Sindh Government remains steadfast in its commitment to the transformative development of the Thar coal project, aiming to enhance energy self-reliance, promote socio-economic growth, and secure a sustainable energy future for Pakistan.

Chinese CG meets Punjab home secretary, reviews security

LAHORE (APP): Chinese Consul General in Lahore Zhao Shiren, along with a delegation, called on Punjab Home Secretary Dr Ahmed Javed Qazi at his office on Wednesday and discussed matters relating to law and order as well as security arrangements for Chinese nationals residing and working in the province.

During the meeting, both sides exchanged views on enhancing coordination to ensure the safety and facilitation of Chinese citizens, particularly officials and workers engaged in China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects.

Dr. Ahmed Javed appreciated China's continued support and cooperation and assured that the security of Chinese citizens remains a top priority for the Punjab government. He informed the delegation that the capacity of the Special Protection Unit (SPU) is being enhanced to provide dedicated security to Chinese nationals.

The home secretary stressed that private security guards deployed at Chinese instal-

lations must only be recruited through registered companies. He added that comprehensive security arrangements have been put in place in all industrial zones across Punjab.

He also emphasised strict implementation of the federal government's guidelines regarding the movement of Chinese nationals and assured full cooperation from the department. "Our offices remain open and accessible for Chinese citizens and government representatives," he stated.

Dr. Qazi further briefed the delegation on the government's efforts to maintain law and order through technology-driven initiatives. He said that 14 modern check posts are under construction in border areas of Punjab to strengthen inter-provincial security.

The Chinese consul general congratulated Dr. Qazi on assuming the role of home secretary and conveyed his best wishes for the future. Senior officials from the Intelligence Bureau, SPU, Special Branch and various sections of the Home Department also attended the meeting.

Punjab govt decides to link media payments to timely salaries of journalists

LAHORE (APP): In a major move to safeguard the rights of media workers, the Punjab government has decided to link official payments to media outlets with timely disbursement of salaries to their employees. The decision was taken during the second meeting of the Special Committee addressing issues faced by journalists, held under the chairmanship of Secretary Information Punjab, Syed Tahir Raza Hamdani, on the directives of Minister for Information & Culture Azma Bokhari.

Director General Public Relations (DGPR) Punjab Ghulam Saghir Shahid and prominent representatives from media and journalist organisations were present.

As per the new policy, government advertisements and payments to both electronic and print media outlets will be contingent upon their compliance with timely salary payments. The DGPR has been empowered to withhold payments from media houses found defaulting on salary disbursement.

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LHC rejects bail petition of human trafficker

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Wednesday dismissed the post-arrest bail plea of human trafficker Hashim Raza, who is accused of involvement in the 2025 Morocco boat tragedy that claimed multiple Pakistani lives.

Justice Tanveer Ahmad Sheikh heard the post-arrest bail petition of the accused and dismissed it on completion of arguments by the parties. According to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), the accused had been operating as a land route agent since 2023, facilitating illegal migration to Europe via Morocco's coastal routes.

Raza allegedly defrauded a Pakistani citizen of Rs. 4 million by promising a work visa for Spain. Instead, the victim was sent to Mauritania on a visit visa, where Raza's associates — identified as Ali Hassan and Maulvi Usman — attempted to smuggle him into Spain via boat. The boat capsized in Moroccan waters, resulting in the victim's death.

Despite the victim's family submitting a reconciliation agreement in court, the FIA presented a strong opposition during the hearing, arguing that the accused was part of a larger human smuggling network. The court, siding with the prosecution, rejected Raza's bail application.

3 more held in Shahdara Passport Office raid

LAHORE (APP): The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has intensified its ongoing crackdown on the passport agent mafia, arresting three suspects including a government employee from the Shahdara Passport Office in Lahore.

According to the FIA spokesperson, a team from the Anti-Corruption Circle Lahore conducted a targeted raid at the passport office, leading to the arrest of Nadeem Butt, Akash Shiraz and Ghulam Rasool Pasha.

The suspects were allegedly involved in collecting illegal payments from citizens by falsely promising expedited passport issuance. The raid resulted in the recovery of passports, tokens, bank challans, receipts and other incriminating evidence.

FIA teams are conducting further raids to apprehend additional individuals linked to the racket. Nationwide operations are underway against the passport mafia, and all available resources are being deployed to bring the culprits to justice, the spokesperson added.

PTI's protest on Aug 5 to be a flop show

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Minister for Information and Culture Azma Bokhari believes that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) planned protest on August 5 will prove to be a complete failure.

In a strongly worded statement issued on Wednesday, she said the protest preparations failed to gain momentum, with the current PTI leadership, party workers, and even their close family members showing no interest or willingness to participate.

Mocking the party's internal disarray, Azma remarked, "Phuppo's dream remained unfulfilled — the nephews are not coming to Pakistan. The former sister-in-law has stopped her children from returning." She questioned how a movement could succeed when even the so-called leader's own family members refused to stand by it.

She stated that PTI leader Aleema Khan herself had predicted the protest's failure, adding that the present PTI leadership was not backing the protest either.

Azma Bokhari accused the PTI's Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa government of misappropriating Rs 354 billion in local government funds. She termed the massive financial scandal a "public charge sheet" against PTI's 12-year rule in the province.

"The irony is that those who constantly accuse others of corruption have themselves broken all records of financial irregularities," she asserted.

Govt enforcing zero-tolerance policy against human trafficking: CM

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has said that the Punjab government is enforcing a strict zero-tolerance policy against human trafficking.

In her message on the World Day Against Human Trafficking, the CM said it is her government's resolve to eliminate this grave violation of human rights, particularly the illegal trafficking and exploitation of children.

Calling human trafficking a modern form of slavery, the CM emphasized that this day serves to raise awareness and renew national commitment to combat this menace. "No child must be left behind in

the fight against human trafficking," she said, highlighting the provincial government's special focus on child protection.

"Children are my red line, their protection is my top priority," the CM said. "I am determined that every child in Punjab is shielded from all forms of trafficking and exploitation. Such cruelty towards children will not be tolerated under any circumstances."

She urged parents to remain vigilant, especially when their children seek employment opportunities, and warned against falling prey to traffickers. CM Maryam Nawaz also appealed to the public to

choose legal and safe channels for overseas travel, pointing to recent tragedies involving illegal migration routes. "The drowning of dozens in a boat on their way to Europe was a heart-wrenching human tragedy," she noted.

The CM said, "These criminals do not hesitate to play with innocent lives in their lust for wealth. We are committed to eradicating this evil through strong enforcement, public awareness, and inter-agency coordination." She called on citizens to report any suspicious activity, reiterating that the fight against human trafficking requires joint responsibility and collective vigilance.

India isolated globally: Musadik Malik

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Senator Musadik Masood Malik, on Wednesday said that the message of peace from Pakistan should not be seen as a weakness but as a confident and stable position.

Talking to a private news channel, he said that India now finds itself isolated on the global stage, while Pakistan continues to advocate for peace from a position of strength. Pakistan's recent diplomatic success has followed its achievements on the military front, he said.

He further said that India's myth of global supremacy has been dismantled with the international community now rejecting India's narrative.

Answering a question on domestic politics, he criticized the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), calling it a party driven by chaos and internal divisions.

"There is no leadership, no trust among themselves, and constant infighting," he said.

A political approach, not confrontation, is the only solution to current challenges, he added.

30 cops awarded for anti-crime operations

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr Usman Anwar on Wednesday chaired a commendation ceremony at the Central Police Office to recognise police teams from across the province for their outstanding efforts in operations against hardened criminals.

A spokesperson for Punjab Police said that commendation certificates and cash awards were presented to 30 officers and personnel belonging to six police teams from Gujranwala, Faisalabad, Jhelum and Muzaffargarh. The awarded teams were acknowledged for their remarkable performance in tackling serious crimes, including murder, robbery, drug trafficking and theft.

According to details, in Jhelum, DSP Shahbaz Ahmed Hanjra and his team were honored for rescuing over 400 flood victims. Similarly, DSP Zulfiqar Ali Virk and his team received awards for conducting successful anti-narcotics operations and seizing a substantial quantity of narcotics.

Inspector Farhat Nawaz was awarded for arresting seven criminal gangs and recovering stolen property worth millions of rupees. Sub-Inspector Safdar Atta and his team were also recognized for apprehending a suspect involved in the murder of five individuals.

The recipients of the awards included two deputy superintendents of police (DSPs), three inspectors, six sub-inspectors, four assistant sub-inspectors (ASIs), five head constables, and ten constables.

IGP Dr. Usman congratulated the awardees, praising their dedication and professionalism in safeguarding the public and upholding the rule of law.

The ceremony was attended by Additional IG Punjab Sultan Ahmad Chaudhry, DIG Establishment-II Capt (ret'd) Liaqat Ali Malik, AIG Admin Asad Ijaz Malhi, AIG Inspection Shaista Nadeem and other senior officers.



PESHAWAR: Nimra Hassan, a 9th-grade student of Allama Iqbal Model School Sakhakot, has secured 572 marks out of 600 and topped her school.

OPC vows prompt address of issues affecting overseas Pakistanis

LAHORE (APP): Overseas Pakistanis Commission (OPC) Punjab Vice Chairperson Barrister Amjad Malik, chairing a meeting with senior officials here on Wednesday, reviewed the Commission's performance related to pending complaints of overseas Pakistanis.

Addressing the meeting, Barrister Malik underscored that overseas Pakistanis are the nation's most valuable asset, and the protection of their rights was top priority of the Punjab government. He directed all departments to ensure swift, transparent, and effective resolution of complaints lodged by citizens living abroad.

A comprehensive strategy was approved to accelerate the disposal of pending cases, improve the efficiency of complaint management portals, and enhance inter-departmental coordination.

Emphasizing transparency, accountability, and responsive communication, Barrister Malik said these pillars are essential for regaining the trust of overseas Pakistanis.

PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

INVITES CONTRACT FOR CANTEN IN THE ASSEMBLY SECRETARIAT & MPA'S HOSTEL, PESHAWAR.

The Provincial Assembly Secretariat of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa desires to offer a contract for running Cafeteria / Canteen in the premises of the Assembly Secretariat & MPA's Hostel, Peshawar to provide food facilities to the Honorable Members and relevant Staff of the Hostel/ Shahi Mehman Khana, Peshawar. The Persons/ firms who desire to have contract are required to deposit their tender by 20/08/2025 till 11:00 A.M. The Tenders shall be opened the same day at 12:00 Noon. Interested candidates may visit the Assembly Secretariat any time during office hours.

Terms & Conditions

- Interested persons and firms must submit their financial & technical proposal in single stage; two envelope procedure according to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Procurement Rules, 2014.
- Every Tender shall be annexed Call Deposit of Rs. 200000/- in the name of the Secretary, Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from any scheduled bank branch of the State Bank of Pakistan.
- The Successful bidder shall be exempted from monthly rent.
- Subletting of the Contract is strictly prohibited.
- Electricity, Sui Gas & Water shall be supplied free of charge.
- Furniture i.e tables and chairs will be supplied by the Assembly Secretariat.
- The supply of free items as mentioned above will be subject to given on subsidized rates of food etc to the customers.
- Tender Documents/ Menu may be obtained from the Assembly Secretariat during office hours with 07 days of publication of the advertisement by paying Rs. 1000/- (non-refundable).
- The Secretary, Provincial Assembly Secretariat of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa reserves the power to reject a single or all tenders under Rule 47 of Procurement Rules, 2014.

(Muhammad Arshad Khan)
Assistant Secretary (Admn.)
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly

ZERO TOLERANCE TO CORRUPTION

INF (P) 3335/25



PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to Chief Minister for Communication and Works Muhammad Sohail Afridi presiding over a meeting.

Standing committee on forests, climate change meets

PESHAWAR (APP): A meeting of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly's Standing Committee on Forests, Environment, Wildlife, and Climate Change was held on Wednesday under the chairmanship of Member Provincial Assembly Itfikhkar Ali Mashwani.

The meeting was attended by committee members, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister on Forests and Environment Peer Maswar Khan, Abdul Salam Afridi, Sher Ali Afridi, Mian Sharafat, Secretary of Forests Shahid Zaman, senior officials from the concerned departments, representatives from the Law Department, and officers of the Provincial Assembly.

During the meeting, a detailed briefing was given on the scope, responsibilities, performance, future

goals, windfall policy, and scientific management of the Pakistan Forest Institute and Forest Development Corporation.

An in-depth discussion on the establishment of a tribunal headed by the Secretary of Forests for the Department of Forests and Environment, auction of timber stock in the Chakdara depot, and ongoing tree plantation campaigns were made.

Secretary Forests Shahid Zaman informed the committee that the department has successfully achieved several targets, including plantation campaigns, which have been acknowledged at the international level.

Regular meetings are being held with international organizations on various projects. He assured the committee of a detailed briefing in the next meeting regarding the achieve-

ments, ongoing projects, and future roadmap of the Forest Department and its affiliated bodies.

Chairman of the Committee, Itfikhkar Ali Mashwani, directed the establishment of depots and issuance of licenses for those involved in the eucalyptus tree business in Mardan, Swabi, Charsadda, and Peshawar.

This initiative would not only facilitate the business community but also generate significant revenue for the government. The Secretary of Forests assured that this would be implemented on a priority basis.

The committee also directed the concerned authorities to present the FDC Act in the next meeting and to take further steps for additional plantation along the Hazara Motorway and other major highways.

PHC allows Governor to use Nathia Gali Governor House

PESHAWAR (INP): The Peshawar High Court on Wednesday allowed Governor KP Faisal Karim Kundi to use the Governor House Nathia Gali and issued notices to the provincial government in response to a petition filed against the transfer of the property to the provincial administration.

The bench comprising Justice Ejaz Anwar and Justice Dr. Khurshid Iqbal heard the petition filed by advocate Shumail Ahmad Butt, who argued that the provincial government had unlawfully taken the Governor House Nathia Gali into its control and intended to use it for commercial purposes.

The petitioner maintained that the constitutional status of the Governor House can only be altered through a presidential order. He cited the example of the Governor House in Murree, Punjab, where a presidential notification was issued for its change in status.

Shumail Butt contended that the KP government acted beyond its jurisdiction by changing the use and control of the Nathia Gali Governor House without following the proper constitutional process.

After hearing the initial arguments, the court permitted Governor Faisal Karim Kundi to continue using the Nathia Gali Governor House and sought a reply from the provincial government.

Governor assures Thall Jirga to resolve issues

PESHAWAR (APP): A delegation of the Thall Qaumi Jirga, led by Malik Jamil, called on Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi at the Governor House in here on Wednesday.

The delegation included Tehsil Mayor Mufti Imran and other prominent figures from the area.

During the meeting, the Jirga apprised the Governor of several pressing issues affecting the region, including prolonged electricity load shedding and inadequate healthcare and educational facilities.

The delegation urged the Governor to take immediate steps to address these concerns, especially by engaging with Wapda officials regarding the electricity crisis.

Governor Kundi assured

the delegation that he would personally contact the Chief of PESCO to seek a resolution to the power-related issues.

He expressed concern over the provincial government's lack of attention to crucial public service sectors, saying that health and education fall within its jurisdiction.

The Governor also pledged to speak with relevant authorities about restoring the vocational institute in Thall to provide skills training opportunities for local youth.

Meanwhile, a delegation from the Kurram Chamber of Commerce and Industry, led by its President Niaz Muhammad, called on Governor Faisal Karim Kundi.

The delegation com-

KMU replaces outdated job titles for Class-IV employees

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Medical University (KMU) Peshawar has made a historic decision to replace the outdated and colonial-era job titles of its Class-IV employees with modern and dignified designations. From now on, the terms "Sweeper," "Peon," and "Driver" will officially be replaced with "Services Staff," "Office Attendant," and "Vehicle Operator," respectively. This initiative aims to restore the self-respect of these employees and ensure their social dignity. The decision was taken in the 23rd monthly meeting of all heads of departments and constituent institutes, held at Alexander Fleming Hall under the chairmanship of Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Haq.

Addressing the meeting, Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Haq said that this decision was the result of thorough deliberations and based on the recommendations of a special committee.

"The contribution of Class-IV employees is as important to the university's progress and stability



as that of the faculty, officers, and other staff. It is in recognition of their valuable role that we have adopted these respectful and dignified titles," he remarked.

The Vice Chancellor further stated that, following the consolidation of its constituent institutes and implementation of financial discipline, Khyber Medical University (KMU) is now entering a new era of quality enhancement, research excellence, and reforms. While appreciating the cost-benefit analysis reports presented by various departments, he emphasized that in the

coming academic year, focus must be placed not only on expansion but also on quality improvement.

He noted that to address the financial and administrative challenges faced by public sector universities, there is a need to align curricula with market demands, promote innovation, encourage commercialization, and generate new financial resources.

The meeting also decided to shift Hazara and Mardan campuses to new, more spacious buildings, while work is progressing rapidly on the establishment of new campuses in Dera Ismail Khan, Malakand (Thana), Upper

Dir, and Buner. The Vice Chancellor also directed the relevant authorities to resolve transport, hostel, and other issues at the local level.

In addition, it was decided to establish modern Marquee based, air-conditioned regional Examination Centers in Malakand, Hazara, and southern districts (Dera Ismail Khan), following the successful model of Peshawar.

Earlier in the meeting, heads of various institutes and departments presented their performance and cost-benefit analysis reports, which were appreciated by the house.

'CPEC's second phase to boost economic growth'

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Patron-in-Chief of the United Business Group (UBG), Sheikh Muhammad Tanveer, has stated that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a proud symbol of Pak-China friendship. He expressed confidence that the recent visit of Army Chief Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir to China and his meetings with top Chinese leadership will pave the way for a promising second phase of CPEC, which will significantly contribute to Pakistan's economic and industrial progress.

He made these remarks during a visit to the Chinese cultural center, China Window, in Peshawar. He was accompanied by former President of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Haji Afzal, and President of the Kasur Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Kashif Khokhar. The businessmen delegation toured the state-of-the-art galleries of China Window and showed deep interest in its displays.



Sheikh Tanveer appreciated the Army Chief's focus on trade and investment, calling it a clear indication that the state is serious about promoting commerce and attracting investment alongside the government.

He noted that the first phase of CPEC has been successfully completed, and the upcoming phase will see industrialization and technological transformation, leading the region toward economic prosperity.

He further stated that CPEC will attract not only Chinese but also global investment, creating employment opportunities for millions. Sharing insights from a recent high-

level meeting with the Army Chief, Sheikh Tanveer said that industrial development was discussed in depth and that the business community feels assured their concerns will be addressed on a priority basis.

Praising the ever-strengthening ties between Pakistan and China, Sheikh Tanveer emphasized that the bond between the two nations has withstood the test of time and will continue to grow.

He hailed China Window as a landmark initiative in Peshawar symbolizing Pak-China friendship and expressed hope that such efforts will further enhance people-to-people connections.

Meeting on inclusion of Makhniyal organized

PESHAWAR (APP): A high-level meeting was held at the Department of Local Government under the chairmanship of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Minister Arshad Ayub Khan, to discuss the inclusion of the Makhniyal area in the Urban Area Development Authority (UADA) Haripur.

The meeting was attended by Revenue Minister Nazir Ahmed Abbasi, Advisor to the Chief Minister on Anti-Corruption Muhammad Musaddiq Abbasi, Special Assistant for Environment Masoor Khan, Secretary Local Government Saqib Raza Aslam, and other relevant officials.

A detailed review of the implementation of the cabinet decision regarding the inclusion of Makhniyal (including Barkot, Garam Thor, Muslimabad, and Khairan) within the jurisdiction of UADA Haripur was held.

All ministers and officials shared their views on this important matter.

It was agreed in the meeting that the development of a comprehensive and integrated policy framework is essential for better urban planning, environmental protection, and enforcement of construction regulations in the area.

Minister Arshad Ayub Khan directed that a sub-committee should be formed to conduct a detailed assessment of the legal status of land, ownership conditions, and development needs in Makhniyal and propose a comprehensive framework for UADA.

CM aide directed to conduct detailed survey

PESHAWAR (APP): A departmental meeting was held under the chairmanship of Muhammad Sohail Afridi, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Communication and Works.

The meeting was attended by Secretary of Communication and Works, Muhammad Israr, Managing Director Engineer Sohail Idrees, Chief Engineers, and other relevant officials.

A detailed presentation was given by the Central Design Office, which highlighted the department's current performance, weaknesses in infrastructure, and proposed reform measures.

The recent flood dam-

ages in various districts, especially in Swat, including destroyed bridges, road repairs, and budget issues came under discussion.

The Chief Engineers emphasized the urgent need for resources required for design and construction projects. They pointed out that the lack of timely funding for the repair of roads and bridges is causing delays in developmental work.

The Special Assistant directed the concerned authorities to conduct a detailed survey of all damaged infrastructure and to prepare repair projects on a priority basis.

He also made it clear that the government is giv-

ing top priority to resolving public issues and restoring basic infrastructure.

The meeting also reached a consensus on measures such as modernizing the Central Design Office, establishing surveying and water testing units, providing professional training for engineers and architects, and supplying design software.

Muhammad Sohail Afridi said that serious efforts are being made to transform the Department of Communication and Works Khyber Pakhtunkhwa into a strong institution with financial and administrative autonomy, in order to complete development projects more effectively.

Field Marshal marks Pakistan as "Net Regional Stabilizer"

Abdul Basit Alvi

In the midst of rising geopolitical tensions and shifting global alliances, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff and its first active-duty officer to be elevated to the five-star rank, has publicly declared Pakistan's strategic posture as a "Net Regional Stabilizer." This statement is more than a diplomatic slogan; it represents a comprehensive shift in how Pakistan perceives its role in the region and marks a pivotal evolution in the military doctrine of a nuclear-armed country. Through deliberate policy reforms, calibrated military responses, mature diplomacy, and a renewed emphasis on ideological clarity and internal stability, Field Marshal Munir has repositioned Pakistan as a responsible and stabilizing force in a region long plagued by conflict, mistrust, and external manipulation.

Field Marshal Munir's declaration comes as South Asia faces militarized

nationalism and transnational extremism. India's rising belligerence, post-Article 370 developments in IIOJK, cross-border skirmishes, insurgency spillovers from Afghanistan, and Persian Gulf tensions have made instability the norm. By framing Pakistan as a "Net Regional Stabilizer," Munir offers a new lens for regional neighbors and international powers to view Pakistan—not as a source of volatility but as a pillar of balance, deterrence, and responsibility.

One of the central pillars of Munir's argument is Pakistan's measured and mature military response to repeated provocations. The most striking example came during the 2025 Pahalgam incident, widely believed by international observers to be a false flag operation orchestrated to justify Indian aggression. India's "Operation Sindoor," launched in its wake, targeted alleged terror launchpads, causing civilian casualties and infrastructure damage. Under immense national pressure

to retaliate, Field Marshal Munir opted for strategic restraint coupled with decisive precision through "Operation Buny'n-ul-Marsoos" (Iron Wall). This counter-operation targeted only Indian military assets, avoided civilian casualties, remained confined to tactical objectives, prevented war escalation, immediately opened diplomatic backchannels, and invited UN and OIC observers to investigate ceasefire violations. This disciplined use of force reaffirmed Pakistan's capability and will to defend itself, while demonstrating that it acts out of strategic necessity and calculated deterrence, not vengeance or emotion.

Field Marshal Munir has redefined Pakistan's military deterrence not as a tool of intimidation but as a shield of peace. He has emphasized that nuclear deterrence must not be a license for recklessness but a guarantee against war. Pakistan's continued adherence to the "Minimum Credible Deterrence" principle and its avoidance of

an arms race with India, despite provocations, are core elements of this doctrine. This approach has resonated in international policy circles, with even traditionally skeptical analysts beginning to view Pakistan as more restrained and consistent in its strategic signaling than its eastern neighbor, whose military decision-making is increasingly influenced by internal politics.

Field Marshal Munir has expanded the role of the Pakistan Army from a conventional military force to an active stakeholder in regional diplomacy. Under his leadership, Pakistan has deepened ties with multiple regional powers, not just through arms deals but through shared visions of security, development, and peace. Key initiatives include enhanced military and energy cooperation with Saudi Arabia and the UAE (as defense allies), active participation in the Pakistan-China Economic Corridor (ensuring its security and profitability), strengthening trilateral mil-

itary coordination with Türkiye and Azerbaijan (for collaborative security in Central and South Asia), and dialogue with Iran to secure the border and manage cross-border tribal dynamics. These engagements illustrate Munir's understanding that military strength without regional cooperation is unsustainable.

Field Marshal Munir's role in engaging the Taliban-led government in Afghanistan has been critical. Where previous regimes saw the Durand Line as a source of conflict, Munir has worked to institutionalize cross-border security coordination, create economic incentives for peace, and block the resurgence of transnational terrorist groups such as the TTP. His twofold approach combines intelligence and Special Forces to disrupt hostile elements with diplomatic engagement with Afghan tribal elders and Taliban leadership to create a buffer of cooperation, not confrontation. This has reduced attacks on Pakistani soil and offered a

model for conflict de-escalation in tribal regions.

Munir is acutely aware that a country cannot be a stabilizer abroad if it is unstable at home. His doctrine includes a comprehensive strategy to stabilize Pakistan from within. This involves revamping counterterrorism strategies through coordination between ISI, MI, and provincial law enforcement; cracking down on sectarian violence and hate speech through legal reforms and digital surveillance; promoting unity across ethnic and linguistic lines by emphasizing national identity; and rebuilding civil-military relations by supporting democratic continuity and reducing political interference by military elements. As a result, internal incidents of terrorism have significantly declined, and public trust in state institutions, especially the army, has revived.

Field Marshal Munir embeds his leadership in a moral framework. A Hafiz-e-Quran known for his religious discipline, Munir has

often cited Pakistan's ideological foundations as a guide for its military conduct. He has spoken of the Two-Nation Theory not as a relic of partition history but as a mandate to uphold justice, equality, and Islamic values in the modern world. His insistence on a peaceful resolution for Kashmir and support for Palestine is rooted in this belief—not religious exclusivism, but solidarity with oppressed peoples under international law.

Field Marshal Munir's vision resonates with the international community. In a recent high-level security dialogue hosted by the United Nations, Pakistan was commended for its role in de-escalating the 2025 conflict with India. US and EU think tanks have labeled Pakistan's current military doctrine as "restraint-based realism," a model for other volatile regions. Even adversaries have acknowledged the shift; Indian defense analysts, while critical, have admitted that Munir's responses are increasingly difficult to provoke into

rash action, thereby neutralizing the Cold Start Doctrine.

Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir's declaration that Pakistan is a Net Regional Stabilizer is more than symbolic. It reflects a comprehensive transformation in military philosophy, national identity, and regional engagement. Under his leadership, Pakistan is moving from being a security-obsessed, reactionary state to becoming a confident, balanced, and responsible actor in South Asia. This transformation is rooted in logic, discipline, moral clarity, and strategic foresight. By focusing on stability over aggression, dialogue over escalation, and unity over division, Field Marshal Munir is not just reshaping the Pakistan Army—he is redefining Pakistan's place in the world. If this vision continues to be supported by the country's institutions and its people, Pakistan may well emerge not only as a military power—but as a genuine force for peace and stability in the 21st century.



In brief

DPO installs solar system F.P. Report

KOHIATAN: District Police Officer Lower Kohistan district on Wednesday installed solar system at Jiro police checkpoint and directed police to treat people with empathy. In line with the vision of Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Zulfiqar Hameed, DPO Lower Kohistan, Taimoor Khan installed a solar system at the Kiro Police checkpoint, says a press release. The aim of this initiative is to ensure uninterrupted police services and provide basic facilities to personnel, even in remote areas where electricity is unavailable. DPO Taimoor Khan stated that equipping the police force with modern facilities is a top priority so that officers can serve the public in a better environment. This step will not only enhance police performance but also enable timely and effective responses to the public. Efforts by the Lower Kohistan Police to provide more facilities are ongoing, he added.

Workshop organized F.P. Report

CHINIOT: The training workshop have been organized for police personnel at Saddar police station and City police station to enhance professional capacity of police personnel. According to the vision of Inspector General of Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar, a series of steps were underway to enhance the professional capacity of police personnel, the police spokesman said. The police officers, young men and lady personnel participated in the training workshop. During the training workshop, Rescue 1122 personnel gave lectures on providing first aid to the injured in traffic accidents and any other emergency situation. The first aid training was given on CPR, stopping bleeding, initial care of fractures and firefighting. Training was given on playing an effective role in flood situations. District Police Officer (DPO) Abdullah Ahmed said that the aim of the awareness workshop was to enable police personnel to play an effective role in emergency situations.

Assistive devices distributed F.P. Report

LODHAN: The Social Welfare and Bait-ul-Mal department distributed assistive devices among 84 special persons in the district. The ceremony took place at the District Council Hall Lodhran. During the event, modern activity wheelchairs, white canes, walkers, mobile toilet chairs, and other assistive devices were handed over free of cost to eligible beneficiaries. This marks the second phase of the province-wide distribution programme aimed at ensuring equal participation and independence of persons with disabilities. The event was attended by prominent political and social figure Umair Khan Baloch as the chief guest, while Deputy Commissioner Lodhran Dr Lubna Nazir graced the occasion as guest of honour. Speaking at the event, Umair Khan Baloch stated, "The initiative by Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif reflected a compassionate vision to empower individuals with disabilities and help them lead independent lives. These devices will enable recipients to perform daily tasks without relying on others." Dr Lubna Nazir reaffirmed the administration's support, saying, "it was one of the flagship programmes of the Punjab government under the dynamic leadership of the Chief Minister.

One dead, four injured in Balochistan coal mine blast

F.P. Report

SHANGLA: In a tragic incident, a gas explosion in a coal mine located in Dukki, Harnai district of Balochistan has claimed the life of one coal miner and left four others injured. All victims hail from Shangla district, Tehsil Alpuri.

The deceased has been identified as Sher Afzal, son of Dil Afzar, resident of Mian Kalay Banda. His body was transported to his native village, where he was laid to rest amidst hundreds of mourners and tearful eyes. The injured workers, who were seriously affected by the toxic gas, have been shifted to Civil Hospital Quetta for medical treatment. The names of the injured are as follows: Wajid, Amir Muhammad, Ashraf Ali and Noor Islam.

The incident has cast a pall of grief over the region. Local residents and civil society have expressed

sorrow over the continued loss of life in hazardous coal mining work and urged the government to implement stricter safety regulations for mine workers.

Residents demand immediate relief from load shedding: The residents of Alpuri in the Shangla District are enduring relentless electricity load shedding, causing widespread disruption to daily life. This troubling situation persists despite the presence of two significant power generation facilities in the region i.e. Besham Khan Khwar Power House producing 85 MW and Karora Power House contributing an additional 15 MW.

Students are struggling to continue their studies, small business owners face declining operations, and offices are hampered by repeated outages. For many, even basic house-

hold functions have become difficult as power remains unavailable for long durations throughout the day.

Residents and local stakeholders are urging the government to take immediate steps to restore uninterrupted electricity supply. They emphasized that access to electricity is not a luxury but a fundamental necessity, vital for education, economic stability, and general wellbeing. "This is a basic right," said one affected local. "We generate more electricity than we need, yet we suffer in darkness."

The people of Alpuri call upon provincial authorities and national energy departments to investigate the disconnect between local power generation and supply, and to implement lasting measures ensuring that the community benefits from its own resources.

BISE Kohat announces Matric results 2025

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAAT: The Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE), Kohat has announced the results of Matriculation Annual Examination 2025 while student named Hoorain Saeed and Mehwish secured the 1st position by securing 1149, marks.

Moreover, Alishba Faisal, Aiza Ijaz and Tayyaba Maeen secured the 2nd position by securing 1148,1148 marks. Musa Naem Cadet College, Kohat secured the 3rd position in the board by securing 1147 marks. They all were from the Science Group.

In the Arts group, student of GGHSS No.1 Kohat, Zeenat Bibi got 1st

position by securing 1059 marks. Student of GGHSS Dhok Latifabad Kohat Amara Bibi secured the 2nd position by getting 1049 marks while a student of GGHSS Bilitang, Kohat Sheema Bibi got the 3rd position by securing 1040 marks.

In the Science Group, 44276 candidates participated and 28859 candidates were declared successful, thus the result was 65.18%. In the Arts Group, 4949 candidates participated and 3136 candidates were declared successful. Thus the result was 63.37%. In total, 49225 candidates appeared in 10th, while 31995 passed and their result was 65.00%.

In the 9th Science Group, 46515 candidates appeared and 19765 candi-

dates were declared successful, thus the result was 42.49%. In the 9th Arts Group, 5244 candidates appeared and 1724 candidates were declared successful. Thus, result was 32.88%. In total, a total of 51759 candidates appeared in the 9th while 21489 passed and their result was 41.52%.

A total of 100984 candidates participated in the 9th and 10th out of which total of 53484 candidates were declared successful. Thus, the overall result was 52.96%. Sheryar Khan Afridi MNA who was the Chief Guest on the occasion, distributed gifts and stipends among the position holders' students. Results of the Board can be viewed online at www.bisekt.edu.pk

DEO Female appointed for first time in Buner

F.P. Report

BUNER: The unfortunate female students of Buner district have been deprived of permanent district education officer female (DEOF) for last many years long. At present DEO Female Laila Khan has an additional charge and is permanently posted as DEO Mohmand.

The sources confirmed that the Buner Education Department has been run with an additional charge and sometimes the DEO of Swat is given the charge of Buner and now the DEO of Mohmand has to come for signing one day in a fortnight. Which is an injustice to the DEO herself and students as well. It is unfair to depute a woman so far away just for signing documents and not giving full time and attention to the office staff and students of Buner. This is a great injustice to all of them, it observed. It is necessary that Laila Khan be posted

as permanent DEO Buner or someone else be given this post and have mercy on Buner.

Meanwhile, it has been learned that after years, Madam Samia from Peshawar has been transferred to Buner on the basis of mandatory transfer on the vacant post of DDEO Female due to completion of two years of her tenure in Peshawar Secretariat's. According to credible information, she makes a round once a month and explains the reason as there are neither powers nor vehicle, means, it is equal to be here or there.

By the way, no attention is paid to the education department in Buner, due to which over all education system is quite affected, but female education is being completely ignored. As sometimes a male DEO is given the additional charge of female DEO and sometimes an additional charge has been given to a DEO from Swat, Mardan,

Peshawar and now Mohmand, which shows the lack of attention of the elected members of Buner on education, especially female education.

Now, when hundreds of girls' schools are going to reopen from 1st of August after a long vacation, and it is very important to have a permanent DEO to provide facilities and supervision to the needs of thousands of girls students their teachers and staff members as well. therefore, the the students, their parents and office staff rightly demand from the provincial government that orders for the appointment of a permanent DEO in Buner be issued immediately, otherwise the parents will justified to raise this important issue at every forum. Which will bring disrepute instead of good name to the elected members, the provincial government who well trumpet education emergency in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

KCCI team meet with SIE Managing Director

F.P. Report

KOHAAT: A delegation of the Kohat Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) comprising of the President Rasheed Ahmed Paracha, Senior Vice President Fahimullah Khan, and Coordinator Col (R) Jawad Paracha, called on the Managing Director of Small Industries Development Board (SIDB) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Abdul Hameed Khan in the presence of Noman Fayyaz at his office today in which important issues related to the Kohat Small Industrial Estate (SIE) were discussed.

Members of the delegation demanded that an effective system of facilitation be developed in the Small Industrial Estate Kohat along with the elimination of difficulties for such investors who genuinely want to establish industrial units in the area in the current circumstances. They also empha-

sized the need for steps to activate inactive plots so that obstacles to industrial development in the area can be removed.

Member Board of Directors Rasheed Paracha also suggested to providing special incentives and facilities to those setting up factories for the promotion of industrial activities in the province, provision of employment opportunities and improvement of the local economy so that the goals of the Board and the government can be achieved.

The Managing Director and Deputy MD assured the delegation of full cooperation and said that the Board will provide full support in every positive step of industrial development. He also promised to visit Kohat soon at the invitation of the Kohat Chamber. Members of the delegation thanked the MD SIDB for taking keen interest in resolution of the problems of the SIE Kohat.

RHCs, BHUs performance reviewed F.P. Report

KARAK: Additional Deputy Commissioner (G) Sahibzada Samiullah has chaired a meeting of the District Steering Committee IMU Health in which a detailed review of the performance of Hospitals, RHCs and BHUs across the district was taken.

The meeting, beside the other important matters, also discussed in detail the attendance of doctors and other staff, cleanliness, availability and shortage of medical equipment and medicines and punishment for absenteeism. On this occasion, the Additional DC strictly directed the District Health Officer and all medical superintendents to ensure 100 percent attendance of the staff, take special care of cleanliness.

Girls outshine boys in BISE Malakand matric exams

Haleem Asad

LOWER DIR: Female students from private schools outperformed boys by clinching the top three positions in the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) annual I examination conducted by the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) Malakand Chakdara.

The results were officially announced during a ceremony held on Wednesday at the University of Malakand. The Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Rasheed Ahmad was the chief guest, while board officials, school principals, high-achieving students, their parents, and teachers were also in attendance.

Saman Wahab, daughter of Fazal Wahab from Hira School Dargai, secured the overall top position by obtaining 1169 marks. Ms Komal Mahboob Qazi daughter of Mahboobullah from PIMS School and Girls College Biari, Lower Dir bagged 1165 marks and stood second in the biard. Ms Ayesha Siddiqua, daughter of Muhammad Habib from Dar-e-Arqam School Thana Malakand, Ms Manal Mujahid D/O Mujahid Khan, from the Smart School and College Sakhakit campus, Abdul Rehman, son of Muhammad Iqbal, from Government High School Lal Qila, Lower Dir, and Muhsin Kamal S/O Ubaidullah, from Tameer e Watan Model School Wari Upper Dir shared the third position by obtaining 1155 marks.

In the Humanities Group, students from a religious seminary also made their mark. Huma Hamid D/O Abdul Hameed, and Sana Saleem D/O Saleem Khan of Jamia Muhsinat, Sangolai Maidan, secured 1094 and 1093 marks, respectively, achieving first and second positions in the board's Humanities category. Position-holders were awarded shields and certificates in recognition of their outstanding performance.

Public grievances piled up at open court in Dir: Residents piled up a host of unresolved issues during an open court (kuli kutchery) held at the Timergara Rest House with



Additional Assistant Commissioner Janbaz Ahmad in the chair. Participants expressed frustration that such public forums were regularly held but problems were not addressed.

The event was attended by trainee Assistant Commissioners Yasir Israr, Safullah, Riaz Ahmad, and officers from various departments. Key speakers included President of Anjuman-e-Tajirran Timergara Haji Anwaruddin, Sher Muhammad Khan from Talash, Sajad Ahmad, Mohammad Tahir Khan, VC Hajiabad Chairman Saifullah, social activist Yasir Azam, Ikram Saeed, and others.

Speakers pointed out that despite repeated protests, only a small part of the road from District Jail Timergara to the bazaar had been repaired, while the major portion remained incomplete. "Residents of Shingrai Mohalla are deprived of natural gas and clean drinking water. The hospital link road is damaged due to ongoing gas pipeline work, causing travel difficulties," said one of the participants.

The district administration was urged to intervene. The speakers also highlighted that Timergara bazaar lacked even a single drinking water tap or a public restroom, and the overall cleanliness situation was poor. They said the closure of the old water channel from Mian Banda to Timergara has turned agricultural land barren. Similarly, water supply from Jabagai to Khazana via the Blambat Canal has stopped, forcing residents to rely on tanker water. The road from Blambat to Odigram has

deteriorated severely, and locals are forced to fill potholes themselves.

In front of the District Headquarters Hospital, stagnant dirty water is a major concern, while used syringes discarded near hospitals and labs pose a health risk as children pick them up, potentially spreading diseases. The demolition of Government Girls High School Peto Dara has forced students to travel to far-off areas, while construction of a new building is proceeding at a snail's pace. The public demanded that the work be expedited to make the school functional as soon as possible. The AAC Janbaz assured the public that their concerns were noted and steps would be taken for their resolution.

Traders' body election: The chairman of district development advisory committee (DDAC), and PTI MPA Ubaid ur Rehman expressed serious concern over the 17-year delay in holding traders' elections in Timergara. Speaking to the media, he stressed the need to immediately restore the democratic process to resolve the longstanding issues faced by the business community.

He alleged that a person affiliated with Jamaat-e-Islami has unlawfully held the traders' leadership for nearly two decades and is using the platform to promote party interests instead of serving traders impartially. Calling the situation unconstitutional and harmful, he said it amounts to betrayal of the trader community. He urged that transparent and fair elections be held without delay to ensure proper representation and stability in the market.

Mud house collapsed, two girls dies F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: In a tragic incident amid the ongoing heavy monsoon downpours, a mud house collapsed in Darveshabad, located within the jurisdiction of Bakot Police Station, resulting in the death of two young girls here on Wednesday.

According to local sources, the house, owned by Abdul Rasheed, was constructed from mud and could not withstand the persistent rainfall that has been lashing the region as part of the current monsoon season. At the time of the collapse, the two girls were inside the house and were buried under the debris.

Residents, acting swiftly, carried out a rescue operation on a self-help basis and managed to recover girls from the rubble. However, both had succumbed to their injuries by the time they were pulled out. The incident highlights the growing vulnerability of mud structures during the monsoon season, which has already caused widespread damage and disruption across several areas of Hazara Division.

Crackdown against vehicles F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: Under the "Safe Punjab" vision of Chief Minister, actions against vehicles using LPG cylinders have been intensified across the district. The campaign is being monitored by Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Naem Sindh, who has directed daily inspections in all four tehsils, led by Assistant Commissioners.

The teams also include the Regional Transport Authority, Civil Defence Officer Mehmoood Hussain Gill and Traffic Police. During joint operations today, several vehicles using LPG cylinders illegally were seized and legal action was taken against the transporters.

Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Naem Sindh stated, "In line with the directives of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, a zero-tolerance policy is being implemented against the unsafe use of LPG cylinders in vehicles. This practice poses a serious risk to human lives and will not be tolerated under any circumstances."

Commissioner chairs meeting on plantation drive F.P. Report

MARDAN: A high-level meeting on mass plantation was held under the chairmanship of Commissioner Mardan in which Deputy Commissioner, Additional Deputy Commissioner, traders', officers from Pakistan Railways, NHA, Forest, WSCCM, TMAs, MDA and other relevant land departments. ADC F&P Swabi attended via Zoom, on Wednesday.

The meeting deliberated on the implementation of the mass plantation program in Mardan Division in line with the directives of the provincial government. Key decisions were made regarding the program's rollout.

Commissioner Mardan instructed the concerned departments to develop and implement a detailed plan for planting a large number of shady trees along both sides of the important N 45 Mardan Nowshera road from College Chowk to Bab e Mardan Rashkai. He directed that the execution of the plantation work must begin within one week.

Nisar Ahmad also chaired a meeting regarding the celebration of Independence Week from August 7 to August 14 alongside Maaraka Haq.

He directed the district administrations of Mardan and Swabi to chalk out a comprehensive plan for celebrating the independence week in a befitting manner. Nisar Ahmad stressed to organize plantation and sporting events besides speech and other competitions to pay homage to the martyrs of Independence struggling and those of Maaraka Haq.

SA expresses concern over population growth: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Population Welfare, Malik Liaqat Ali, has expressed grave concern over the unchecked population growth in Pakistan, warning that if effective measures are not taken, the country's population could surge to 490 million in the next 27 years—posing unmanageable challenges for future generations.

Speaking at a Ulema

Conference organized by the Population Welfare Department in collaboration with UNFPA at a local wedding hall, Malik Liaqat emphasized that the growing population is exacerbating economic and social issues. "If we do not build a dam against this flood of population, the consequences will be beyond anyone's control," he remarked.

The conference was attended by Director General of Population Welfare Rehan Gul Khattak, district officers of the department, and a large number of religious scholars and khatheeb from Mardan, Buner, and Swabi. Addressing the gathering, religious scholars highlighted the importance of population welfare in the light of Islamic teachings. They stressed the significance of breastfeeding and appropriate intervals between births. The scholars noted that population planning is permissible within certain limits when aimed at the welfare of society and humanity.

430 female students benefited from scholarships

F.P. Report

FAISALABAD: As many as 430 female students from the University of Agriculture Faisalabad have benefited from the Scotland Pakistan Scholarship worth Rs 48 million so far, whereas 57 students were awarded scholarship certificates during a ceremony held on Wednesday.

Inclusive Education Lead (International Development), at the Scottish Government, James McNulty, Education and Skills, British Council, Hamza Salim, Project Coordinator, Scotland Scholarship Scheme, British Council, Irum Amin visited the University of Agriculture Faisalabad and called on UAF Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Zulfiqar Ali and disbursed the scholarship certificates.

The meeting also discussed the students' training programs, training of trainers' opportunities, supply chain, food certification, and other areas of collaboration for food security and agricultural growth.

James McNulty said that they had long ties in the education sector with Pakistan and provided ample opportunities for

scholarships to excel in their respective field. He said that the Scotland Pakistan Scholarships for young women and girls fund graduate studies for Pakistani women in any HEC-recognized university. Funded by the Scottish Government, these grants aim to make higher education more accessible to women, supporting them in achieving their potential and ambition. He said that women's scholarship is a step towards removing obstacles to quality education and paving the way for economic development.

Prof Dr Zulfiqar Ali said that girls are shining in every sphere of life. He said that the scholarships were opening ample opportunities for the female students to excel in life. He said that the agriculture sector was facing numerous challenges. We need to develop the strategy and train the manpower for food security and agrarian development that will pave the way for a bright future. He pointed out that a good portion of the UAF intake UAF from the rural areas. Being the custodian of agricultural development and the oldest agricultural university in the subcontinent, all possi-

ble measures were being taken to address the agricultural issues on a scientific basis.

Hamza Salim from the British Council said that they were providing opportunities through supporting young people to achieve the education, qualifications, and skills needed to reach their potential in their future careers.

Director Financial Assistance and University Advancement (DFA&UA), Dr. Nazia Ehsan, said many of the students hail from low-income classes, and it is difficult for them to pay the fees. Therefore, the university, with the financial support of the Federal and Provincial Governments, International donors, and philanthropists, is taking all possible measures to provide scholarships for the deserving students so that they can quench their thirst for knowledge.

Senior Tutor Dr Shoukat Ali, Director Business Incubation Center Dr Ifitikhar Ahmad, Director Research Dr Imran Arshad, Dr. Rao Zahid Abbas, Assistant Director DFA&UA Waqar Akbar Khan, Assistant Accounts Office Shehroz Riasat, and other notables attended.

Marcos says stronger alliances make Philippines safer

MANILA (AP): Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said in his annual state of the nation speech that the country has become more confident and better prepared to defend its sovereignty, citing strengthened security alliances amid rising tensions with China in the disputed South China Sea.

In a nationally televised speech before Congress, top government and military officials and diplomats, Marcos said the newly forged alliances would help the Philippines at a time of "grave need." Addressing domestic problems, he acknowledged growing public frustration, citing the midterm elections in May - where only half of his senatorial slate prevailed - as a sign of discontent over basic government services.

He renewed a call for national unity and pledged that the government would be more responsive to the country's many problems, including crushing poverty, inadequate infrastructure and corruption. Marcos vowed to expose and prosecute corruption in flood-control projects, as the Philippines reels from days of deadly flooding and landslides that have killed over 30 people and displaced more than 200,000.

He pledged to publicize a list of all the flood-control projects in the last three years under his presidency to allow the public to scrutinize it. Those found guilty of corruption would be prosecuted, Marcos said to applause. "Let's stop pretending. The public knows that these projects are hounded by anomalies," Marcos said. "To those who conspired to steal public funds and rob the future of our people, you should be ashamed." The pledge comes after more than a week of massive flooding and landslides triggered by storms and seasonal monsoon rains battered the northern region of Luzon, including the capital Manila.

The flooding left more than 30 people dead and affected more than 6 million people in all, according to the country's disaster response agency. More than 200,000 people remain displaced, including 122,000 still in emergency shelters. Since he took office in mid-2022, Marcos has struggled to deal with his country's esca-

lating disputes with Beijing in the contested South China Sea and his stormy relations with Vice President Sara Duterte, who was impeached in February by the House of Representatives, which is dominated by Marcos' allies. "In the face of new threats to our peace and sovereignty, our preparations, surveillance and defense of ourselves have been intensified," Marcos said without mentioning China by name. He underscored that the Philippines would remain "restrained and patient."

Under Marcos, the Philippines has deepened its ties with the United States and broadened security agreements with Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, France and other Western governments. That stance has strained relations with a militarily superior China. "Our confidence is higher because we have more allies, which would support us in the time of grave need," he said. Territorial disputes involving China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan in the disputed waters, a busy global trade route, is an Asian flashpoint and a delicate fault line in the regional rivalry between the United States and China.

Washington lays no claim in the disputed waterway but has repeatedly warned that it it's obligated to defend the Philippines under a 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty if Filipino forces, ships and aircraft come under an armed attack, including in the South China Sea. Last week, US President Donald Trump hosted Marcos in the White House for talks on tariffs, trade and further boosting their countries' treaty alliance. China has warned the US not to meddle in what it calls a purely Asian dispute.

Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro said the Marcos administration would continue to shift the military's role from battling a weakening communist insurgency to focusing on external defense. "We would be unyielding and resistant to Chinese aggression in the West Philippine Sea," Teodoro said in an interview with the ABS-CBN TV network, using the Philippine name for the stretch of disputed waters off the western Philippine coast. "We've been gearing up towards that mission."

Huge quake off Russia sparks tsunami warnings

MOSCOW (AFP): Tsunami hit parts of Russia's Far East and Japan on Wednesday after a huge magnitude 8.8 earthquake, with warnings in place around the Pacific of waves of over three metres (10 feet) in places. Russia's emergency ministry said a tsunami hit and flooded the port town of Severo-Kurilsk, where the population of around 2,000 people was evacuated.

A video posted on Russian social media appeared to show buildings in the town submerged in seawater. Several people were injured in Russia by the quake, state media reported, but none of them seriously. Live footage on Japanese television showed people evacuating by car or on foot to higher ground, including the northern island of Hokkaido, where the first wave, measuring 30 centimetres (one foot) was observed. Wednesday's quake was the strongest since 1952 in Russia's Kamchatka region, the Geophysical Service of the Russian Academy of Sciences reported.

The epicenter of the earthquake is roughly the same as the massive 9.0 temblor that year which resulted in a destructive, Pacific-wide tsunami, according to the USGS. At least six after-shocks have further rattled the region, including one of 6.9 magnitude and another listed at 6.3.

Japanese broadcaster NHK switched to special coverage, with presenters telling people on the coast to

"please evacuate immediately". Its screen showed the messages "Tsunami! Evacuate!" Workers at the stricken Fukushima nuclear plant in northeast Japan -- destroyed by a huge quake and tsunami in 2011 -- were evacuated, its operator said. Japan's weather agency initially warned that the waves would be up to one metre high, but this was later upgraded to a much more potentially dangerous three metres. This covered all the way down the northern and eastern coasts of Japan as far as Wakayama, south of Osaka, as well as outlying smaller islands. Beyond that, as well as in the Tokyo Bay and Osaka Bay, the waves were forecast to be one metre high and to hit between 10:00 am and 11:30 am (0100-0230 GMT). The US Geological Survey (USGS) initially said the tremor measured 8.0 but then upgraded the reading to 8.8. The US Tsunami Warning Centers said the waves exceeding three metres above the tide level were possible along some coasts of Ecuador, northwestern Hawaiian islands and Russia.

Between one- and three-metre waves were possible along some coasts of Chile, Costa Rica, French Polynesia, Guam, Hawaii, Japan and other islands and island groups in the Pacific, it said. Waves of up to one metre were possible elsewhere, including Australia, Colombia, Mexico, New Zealand, Tonga and Taiwan.

It described the potential conditions as "hazardous." The United States further sounded the alarm with a series of alerts of varying levels along North America's West Coast, from Alaska down to the entire coast of California. Tsunami alerts were pushed to mobile phones in California, according to local AFP reporters. The Japan Meteorological Agency warned on X that "tsunamis will strike repeatedly. Do not enter the sea or approach the coast until the warning is lifted." "Residents in regions where warnings have been issued should immediately evacuate to safe locations such as elevated areas or evacuation buildings," top government spokesman Yoshimasa Hayashi said in a short-notice brief news conference. Some train lines in Japan were suspended due to the alert, including lines serving the coast around Chiba, Yokohama, Fujisawa and down the Izu coast. The Philippines urged residents living along the eastern seaboard to move further inland, predicting tsunami waves of as high as one metre to arrive between 1:20 pm and 2:40 pm (0520-0640 GMT). "People are also advised to stay away from the beach and not to go to the coast ... until the cancellation of the advisory," the seismology centre said in a warning. The warning also advised fishermen already out to sea to stay offshore in deep waters until the threat passed.

Taiwan says President Lai not blocked from US stopover

BANGKOK (AFP): Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te has not been blocked from visiting the United States, Taipei's foreign ministry said, insisting he has no plans to travel overseas "in the near future".

The remarks came after US President Donald Trump's administration reportedly denied permission for Lai to transit in New York as part of an official trip to Latin America next month. Lai's office had never confirmed his travel plans, but Paraguay, Taiwan's only diplomatic ally in South America, said in mid-July that Lai would visit the country in 30 days. Such a visit would likely mean Lai would need to fly through US territory.

"There has been no postponement, cancellation, nor any denial of permission for the transit by the US side," spokesman Hsiao Kuang-wei told reporters in Taipei. "Given the ongoing post-disaster recovery efforts in southern Taiwan, the ongoing reciprocal tariff negotiations with the US, and the relevant international situation, the president has no plans for overseas visits in the near future." In Washington, asked about the report, State Department spokeswoman Tammy Bruce told a media briefing that there had been no travel plans presented for Taiwan's president and therefore "nothing canceled."

She reiterated Washington's policy that "transits by high-level Taiwan officials, including presidents, are fully consistent with our long-standing policy and practice. This has not changed." The Financial Times, citing unnamed sources, reported that the Trump administration had denied permission for a Lai stopover in New York, after Beijing objected. China claims Taiwan is part of its territory and opposes any international exchanges with the democratic island. Asked about the reports, Beijing's foreign ministry reiterated its opposition to Taiwan's leaders visiting the United States. "This position is consistent, clear, and firm," spokesman Guo Jiakun said.

The Financial Times said Lai decided not to travel after he was told he couldn't enter New York. Chinese and US officials held trade talks in Stockholm, in a bid to extend a fragile truce in the face of Trump's global tariff war. While the United States does not recognise Taiwan as a country, Washington remains the island's most important partner and biggest arms supplier. Commenting on the Financial Times article, the former US House speaker Nancy Pelosi said the decision "sends a dangerous signal".

"But once again, (Chinese) President Xi has achieved a victory over the values, security and economy of the United States in the Trump Administration blocking the democratically elected president of Taiwan from making a diplomatic trip through New York," Pelosi wrote on Facebook. "Let us hope President Trump's denial of this stopover in New York is not indicative of a dangerous change in US policy on Taiwan."

Ukraine says Russian strike on training camp kills 3 troops

KYIV (AFP): A Russian strike on a military training camp killed at least three Ukrainian soldiers, following an overnight offensive in the south that killed a pregnant woman and a dozen prisoners. The Kremlin has come under intense pressure to end its war on Ukraine, now in its fourth year, with US President Donald Trump issuing a 10-day ultimatum to act or face sanctions.

On social media, the Ukrainian army said a Russian missile hit one of the ground force's training units, without specifying the location. At least "three servicemen are dead and 18 wounded," it said. Over the previous night, a series of Russian attacks killed at least 25 civilians, including a 23-year-old pregnant woman and more than a dozen inmates at the Bilenkiska penal colony in southern Zaporizhzhia region.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky accused Russia of deliberately targeting the prison, which the justice ministry said killed 17 people and wounded another 42. The Kremlin denied the claim, with spokesman Dmitry Peskov telling reporters, "the Russian army does not strike civilian targets". The attacks came hours after Trump said he was shortening the deadline for Russian President Vladimir Putin to halt the war from 50 days to 10-12 days. Hours later, Trump solidified the 10-day timeline, threatening "tariffs and stuff", while also conceding to not knowing if the measures would work.

Peskov said Moscow had "taken note", and that it remained "commit-



ted to the peace process to resolve the conflict around Ukraine and secure our interests". The Ukrainian air force said Russia launched 37 drones and two missiles, with 32 of the drones successfully downed. Zelensky also accused Russia of targeting a hospital in the town of Kamianske in Dnipropetrovsk region, killing three people and wounding 22. Other Russian attacks killed six in the Kharkiv region, where the city of Kharkiv faced another attack at dawn on Wednesday.

"Putin is rejecting a ceasefire, avoiding a leaders' meeting and prolonging the war," Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiga wrote on social media. "He will only end his terror if we break the spine of his economy," he added, calling on

Western allies to impose sanctions. Kyiv has been trying to repel Russia's summer offensive, which has made fresh advances into areas largely spared since the start of the invasion in February 2022. The Russian defence ministry claimed advances across the front line, saying its forces had taken two more villages -- one in the Donetsk region, and another in Zaporizhzhia.

Prison strike fell on the third anniversary of an attack on the Olenivka detention centre in Russian-occupied Donetsk. Ukraine and Russia traded blame for that nighttime strike, which Kyiv said killed dozens of soldiers who had laid down arms after a long Russian siege of the port city of Mariupol.

New poll shows plunging US public support for Israel's war on Gaza

WASHINGTON: A new poll from the research firm Gallup suggests that only 32 percent of Americans approve of Israel's military action in Gaza, a 10-point drop from September 2024, as anger over atrocities against Palestinians continues to rise. The survey, released, also showed an enormous partisan divide over the issue. Seventy-one percent of respondents who identified as members of the Republican Party said they approve of Israel's conduct, compared with 8 percent of Democrats. Overall, 60 percent of respondents said they disapprove of Israel's military action in Gaza.

Shibley Telhami, a professor at the University of Maryland and the director of the Critical Issues Poll, said the latest survey shows a trend of growing discontent with Israel that goes beyond the war on Gaza. "What we're seeing here is an entrenchment of a generational paradigm among particularly young Americans - mostly Democrats and independents, but even some young Republicans - who now perceive the horror in Gaza in a way of describing the character of Israel itself," Telhami told Al Jazeera. Survey, only 9 percent of respondents under the age of 35 said they approve of Israel's military action in Gaza, and 6 percent said they have a favourable opinion of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The study follows an April poll from the

Pew Research Center, which found a majority of respondents - including 50 percent of Republicans under 50 years old - said they had unfavourable views of Israel.

But even as public opinion in the US continues to shift, Washington's policy of unconditional support for Israel has been unwavering. Since the start of the war on Gaza, the US has provided Israel with billions of dollars in military aid, as well as diplomatic backing at the United Nations. Both President Donald Trump and his predecessor, Joe Biden, have been uncompromising backers of the Israeli assault on Gaza, which human rights groups have described as a genocide. Israel has killed more than 60,000 Palestinians in Gaza, imposed a suffocating siege and flattened most of the enclave, reducing its buildings to rubble. The siege is credited with prompting deadly hunger: The UN said there was "mounting evidence of famine and widespread starvation".

Nevertheless, the US Congress also remains staunchly pro-Israel on a bipartisan basis. Earlier this month, a legislative push to block \$500m in missile defence support for Israel failed in a 422-to-six vote in the House of Representatives. So, what explains the schism between the views of average Americans and the policies of their elected representatives? Telhami cited voter "priorities". He explained that foreign poli-

cy traditionally has not been a driving factor in elections. For example, domestic issues like abortion, the economy and gun control usually dominate the electoral agenda for Democrats.

He also noted the influence of pro-Israel groups, like the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), which have spent millions of dollars to defeat critics of the Israeli government, particularly progressives in Democratic primaries. But things are changing, according to the professor. Palestine is rising in public importance, he said, with US voters looking at the issue through the lens of "soul-searching", as a way of questioning what they stand for. "It's not just Gaza. It's that we are enabling the horror in Gaza as a country - in terms of our aid or support or, even in some cases, direct collaboration," Telhami said. "That it is actually creating a paradigmatic shift about who we are, not just about: 'Do we support Israel? Do we support the Palestinians?'" He said the victory of Palestinian rights advocate Zohran Mamdani in New York City's Democratic mayoral primary last month underscores that movement. "The rise of Zohran Mamdani in New York is giving people pause because he's been able to generate excitement, not, as some people thought, despite his views on Israel-Palestine, but actually because of his views on Israel-Palestine." — Aljazeera

Australia to ban under-16s from YouTube

SYDNE (AFP): Australia will use landmark social media laws to ban children under 16 from video-streaming site YouTube, a top minister said Wednesday stressing the need to shield them from "predatory algorithms". Communications Minister Anika Wells said four-in-ten Australian children had reported viewing harmful content on YouTube, one of the most visited websites in the world.

"We want kids to know who they are before platforms assume who they are," Wells said in a statement. "There's a place for social media, but there's not a place for predatory algorithms targeting children." Australia announced last year it was drafting laws that will ban children from social media sites such as Facebook, TikTok and Instagram until they turn 16. The government had previously indicated YouTube would be exempt,

given its widespread use in classrooms. "Young people under the age of 16 will not be able to have accounts on YouTube," Prime Minister Anthony Albanese told reporters on Wednesday. "They will also not be able to have accounts on Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, and X among other platforms." "We want Australian parents and families to know that we have got their back," Albanese said the age limit may not be implemented perfectly -- much like existing restrictions on alcohol -- but it was still the right thing to do. A spokesman for YouTube said Wednesday's announcement was a jarring U-turn from the government.

"Our position remains clear: YouTube is a video sharing platform with a library of free, high-quality content, increasingly viewed on TV screens," the company said in a state-

ment. "It's not social media." On paper, the ban is one of the strictest in the world. But the current legislation offers almost no details on how the rules will be enforced -- prompting concern among experts that it will simply be a symbolic piece of unenforceable legislation. It is due to come into effect on December 10. Social media giants -- which face fines of up to Aus\$49.5 million (US\$32 million) for failing to comply -- have described the laws as "vague", "problematic" and "rushed". TikTok has accused the government of ignoring mental health, online safety and youth experts who had opposed the ban. Meta -- owner of Facebook and Instagram -- has warned that the ban could place "an onerous burden on parents and teens". The legislation has been closely monitored by other countries, with many weighing whether to implement similar bans.

Yak herders struggle to survive a warming world

LADAKH, India (AP): Carrying her 1-year-old son on her back, Tsering Dolma herds a dozen yaks into a stone-walled corral as evening approaches in the desolate mountains of India's remote Ladakh region.

A few herders tending livestock are the only people visible for miles on the wind-swept plains where patchy grass gives way to gravelly foothills and stony peaks. For generations, herders such as Dolma have relied on snowmelt that trickled down the mountain folds to sustain the high-altitude pastures where their herds graze. But now, herders say, the snow and rain are less predictable, and there is less grass for yaks to eat. "Earlier, it used to snow and rain, but now it has reduced a lot," the 32-year-old says. "Even the winters are getting warmer than before."

Much of the herding, milking and gathering of wool is done by women in Ladakh, an area near Tibet that was part of the ancient Silk Route. It's work mostly done by hand. In another valley, Kunzias Dolma is busy making tea with yak milk and checking her yak butter, while spinning her Buddhist prayer wheel with her right

hand. The 73-year-old, who's not related to Tsering Dolma, has spent her life around yaks, working long hours to make products from their milk and sewing blankets from their wool.

"We wake up early morning around 5 a.m. every day," she says. "My husband and I milk the yaks and do all of the other yak-related work until about lunch. Then we take a break and get back to work in the evening. We have been doing this all our life." But that way of life is threatened as climate change makes Ladakh less hospitable to yaks and many in the younger generation seek other jobs.

Rising temperatures and erratic rainfall in the area have made it harder for yaks, which are related to bison and cattle, to find nourishing vegetation and have also exposed the shaggy, cold-loving animals' bodies to more stress. Researchers have found that the average temperature in the Ladakh region has increased by 3 C (5.4 F) in the last four decades, while heat waves have become more extreme and rains more unpredictable. While it's hard to precisely

quantify climate change's impact on yak numbers in the area, scientists say it appears to be a factor in their decline. The government estimates the yak population in Ladakh has fallen from nearly 34,000 in 2012 to fewer than 20,000 in 2019, the most recent year for which the data is available. Globally, the yak population remains in the millions, but scientists say the ecosystem in this part of the Himalayas is particularly vulnerable to global warming. Herder Kunzang Angmo has seen the changes up close. "Earlier, there were a lot of yaks, but now there aren't as many," she says. "It used to snow a lot before, but now the snowfall is decreasing, and due to less water, we have less grass available." Generations of Tsering Angchok's family have relied on yaks, but the number of herders in the area is dropping.

"We get everything from the yak- food, milk, clothing, butter, cheese, meat, wool, even dung," says the 75-year-old who has 80 yaks. "Nothing goes to waste. We and our ancestors have grown up living on all of this." As weather patterns change, native

vegetation is being crowded out by less nourishing shrubs and weeds, according to researchers. Herders say grazing lands are becoming smaller. Thering Norphel, a 70-year-old former yak herder, remembers when pastures had more vegetation and life with yaks was easier.

"When I was younger, there was more grass, more water and more wildlife," he says. Pointing to bare mountains in the distance, he said: "Earlier, all those mountains were filled with snow. Now it's just rock. As there is no snow or ice, there is less water. This affects the growth of grass that yaks feed on." Tashi Dorji, a livestock and rangelands specialist with the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, says the region and its people are being hit especially hard by global warming. "Fast-melting glaciers, intense, erratic rainfall and reducing snow levels are all having a direct impact on both the herders and their animals," Dorji says.

Stanzin Rabgais, a livestock officer with the Ladakh government, attributes a rise in bacterial diseases among yaks in recent years to hotter

temperatures in the region. Experts warn that the decline in yak herding has consequences for Ladakh and its fragile Himalayan ecosystem, because pastoralists manage grazing lands, keep invasive plants in check and help maintain the area's biodiversity. The sparsely populated region, most of which is above 3,000 meters (9,842 feet), is also home to wildlife including the snow leopard, red fox and blue sheep. "If the herders disappear, the landscape changes," Dorji says. "Unpalatable shrubs take over, wildlife loses food sources and the ecosystem starts to collapse. This is not just about animals-it's about a way of life and the health of the land."

Rabgais believes that yak products could sell beyond the area if properly marketed and developed. He describes yak calf wool, for example, as finer than most commercial wool, rivaling cashmere in softness. Jobs in tourism and other industries, along with educational opportunities, also draw people away from herding. Herders say younger Ladakhis prefer less arduous work with potentially better pay than tending to yaks.

Herders travel long distances over rough mountain land to find grazing areas and are constantly on the move. "The next generation doesn't want to do this work. They work for the Indian Army as laborers or are getting an education and looking for other jobs," says Norphel, the former yak herder.

Ladakh, famous for its Buddhist monasteries and hiking trails, has experienced a significant increase in tourism in recent years as transportation infrastructure has made the area easier to reach, which has created new jobs. Rabgais, the government official, says most yak herders are older now and unless greater numbers of young people take up herding, "the future is bleak" for the occupation. Among the exceptions is 32-year-old yak herder Punchuk Namdol, who chose the traditional profession even as other people his age look for different options. "Earlier, we didn't have any other work - we only had yaks and other cattle," Namdol says. "But now, there's no one to take care of them. Yak herding is a difficult task, and fewer people are willing to do it."

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Misdiagnosing terror

THE world has witnessed a war waged not only with weapons but with dangerous assumptions, a war that, for over two decades, promised to eradicate terror. Yet instead of delivering security and stability, it left behind shattered nations, broken societies, and a growing disillusionment with the very idea of peace. Whether in Afghanistan, Iraq, or Somalia, the so-called “War on Terror” has spent trillions of dollars, toppled entire regimes, and claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. But terrorism has not disappeared. It has mutated, adapted, and in many places, grown stronger. Why? Because the problem was fundamentally misdiagnosed and the treatment often made the disease worse.

Rather than confronting the root causes of extremism, deprivation, marginalization, poverty, political exclusion, foreign occupation, and ideological manipulation, the global response focused obsessively on military raids, airstrikes, and mass surveillance. But extremism is rarely a random eruption of violence. It is often the final symptom of deeper wounds: social despair, psychological trauma, and generational hopelessness. The war in Afghanistan was launched under the banner of fighting terrorism and bringing security. Yet tens of thousands of Afghan civilians lost their lives in U.S. and NATO airstrikes. Entire villages were reduced to rubble. Those killed were often hastily labeled as “militants,” a term that blurred the line between combatant and innocent. What was hailed as precision warfare often turned, in Afghan eyes, into a campaign of indiscriminate destruction.

The long-term outcome of foreign intervention in Afghanistan was not the peace that had been promised, but deep and lasting trauma. Entire communities became radicalized as a result of prolonged conflict and disillusionment. Many Afghans who were once portrayed as beneficiaries of Western protection began to see foreign troops not as liberators, but as destructive forces, arriving with promises of freedom and departing with little more than ashes and grief left behind. This enduring sense of betrayal, more than any narrative of democracy or counterterrorism, continues to define how many Afghans remember the war. Those who once justified bombing villages in the name of counterterrorism did not eliminate ideological hatred, but fertilized it. Each airstrike that killed a child, every home reduced to rubble, every funeral misidentified as a militant gathering became a seed of resentment sown deep in the heart of a community.

Hatred did not die under drone fire; it multiplied in the dust of destroyed homes and the silence surrounding unacknowledged grief. The strategy of using force to eradicate extremism failed to grasp the nature of ideological struggle, one that feeds not merely on propaganda, but on real, lived injustice. They tried to bomb their way to peace, but instead carved a legacy of bloodshed and generational rage.

This flawed strategy was compounded by the dangerous oversimplification of complex realities. The world was told this was a war between good and evil, civilization and barbarism, a narrative that left no room for nuance. Binary thinking erased the legitimacy of local grievances and alienated the very populations whose support was essential. Many of the groups hastily labeled as terrorists were, at their origin, resistance movements born out of occupation, exclusion, or national humiliation. By refusing to distinguish between resistance and extremism and between extremism and terrorism, the international response helped fulfill its own worst prophecy: those seeking justice through peaceful means were criminalized, marginalized, and, in some cases, pushed toward radicalization.

Worse still, the global War on Terror was repeatedly exploited by regional powers to pursue their own strategic interests. Under the banner of counterterrorism, some states selectively supported military operations while simultaneously enabling non-state actors aligned with their geopolitical goals. Afghanistan became a theater of proxy conflict, where the language of “security” masked decades of interference and manipulation. Across the broader region, this war was repackaged under different names, doctrines, and visions, but its essence remained a misdiagnosed illness. The ideological battlefield was neglected. Extremism does not only thrive on the frontlines; it spreads quietly, through classrooms, pulpits, prisons, and digital spaces, wherever unaddressed grievances meet manipulative narratives.

Yet instead of investing in inclusive education, critical thinking, and responsible religious discourse, many states restricted dialogue, silenced reformist voices, and allowed regressive institutions to operate unchecked. Perhaps most damaging was the normalization of collective suspicion. Entire ethnic and refugee communities were viewed as security threats, profiled, surveilled, and, in many cases, dehumanized. From drone strike lists to digital blacklists, the presumption of guilt deepened fragile social divides. But radicalization does not emerge in isolation. It thrives wherever identity is criminalized. When people are taught directly or indirectly that their faith, ethnicity, or background makes them inherently suspect, they lose trust in the system, and eventually, faith in the very idea of justice.

True and lasting security cannot be built on fear. It must be rooted in dignity, fairness, and inclusion. That demands far more than military operations; it requires moral clarity, historical honesty, and structural reform. Terror is not just a battlefield problem, it is a symptom of deeper political failures, economic injustices, and broken social contracts. If the goal is truly to eliminate terror, then both the world and the region must stop treating it solely as a military challenge and start addressing it as a human crisis. The cost of failing to do so has already been unbearable. But it is not too late to rethink the strategy, reframe the mindset, and abandon the reckless habit of killing people while labeling them as terrorists, enemies, or agents of instability without due process. Defeating terror requires more than eliminating armed groups. It means dismantling the grievances, illusions, and inequalities that give those groups purpose, recruits, and reason to exist.

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President Asif Ali Zardari: A visionary leader

Qadeer Ahmed Ansari

THE journey of strengthening democracy, upholding constitutional supremacy, restoring public rights, promoting inter-provincial harmony, and becoming the voice of the underprivileged is never easy. It demands persistent struggle, sacrifice, and unwavering resolve. In the political history of Pakistan, if we talk about leaders who not only promoted democratic values but also prioritized national interest over personal comfort, family, and peace, President Asif Ali Zardari's name will be written in golden words.

An unconventional entry into politics: Asif Ali Zardari entered politics at a time when the country was going through a sensitive phase. Following the martyrdom of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and the exile of Benazir Bhutto, the Pakistan People's Party faced intense internal and external challenges. Though initially known as a businessman, Zardari soon proved himself to be a sharp and capable political leader.

A story of sacrifices: Zardari did not enter politics for power or personal gain. He made countless sacrifices on personal, familial, and political fronts. He spent more than 11 years in prison, yet never compromised on his ideology, his party, or democracy. Despite false cases, solitary confinement, and physical and mental torture, his resolve never wavered. He became the living embodiment of the idea that politics is a name of service and sacrifice—not a race for power.

A new era of leadership after Benazir Bhutto's martyrdom: In 2007, after the tragic martyrdom of Benazir Bhutto, when the nation was engulfed in grief and despair, Asif Ali Zardari took charge with exceptional patience, wisdom, and foresight. Rather than resorting to vengeance or confrontation, he chose the path of reconciliation, unity, and democratic continuity. His slogan “Pakistan Khappay” (We want Pakistan) became a symbol of his restraint, insight, and patriotism.

A democratic era and constitutional reforms: After the 2008 general elections, when the PPP came into power at the center, Zardari, as President of Pakistan, made history by voluntarily transferring presidential powers to the parliament. His greatest constitutional achievement was the 18th Amendment, which not only restored the true spirit of the 1973 Constitution, but also strengthened the federation, recognized the principle of provincial autonomy, and ensured equal rights for all federating units.

Provincial autonomy and services for Balochistan: Long neglected, Balochistan became a special focus of President Zardari's attention. His government took the province's issues seriously. Initiatives like the All Parties Conference, Aghaz-e-Huqooq-e-Balochistan, and progress on missing persons' cases, development projects, and empowering local leadership were products of his vision. Today, the feeling of inclusion among the people of Balochistan owes much to Zardari's leadership and foresight.

Inter-Provincial harmony and politics of reconciliation: Zardari promoted reconciliatory politics, marked by tolerance, respect, and dialogue with political rivals. He maintained cordial relations with leaders like Nawaz Sharif and upheld the spirit of the Charter of Democracy. He consistently proved that national interest was far greater than political differences. Whether it was the NFC Award, handing over control of Gwadar Port to Balochistan, or strengthening parliamentary institutions—Zardari always prioritized the state over self.

Foreign policy and international relations: As President, Zardari introduced balance and reconciliation in Pakistan's foreign policy. He expanded ties with China, maintained diplomatic balance with the United States, and fostered close relations with Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, and Arab nations. In matters of economy, trade, and security, he always prioritized national dignity.

Reorganizing PPP and Promoting Youth Leadership: Zardari played a pivotal role in transforming the Pakistan People's Party into a modern, youth-oriented, democratic force. He provided leadership opportunities to youth, women, and minorities, and introduced Bilawal Bhutto Zardari to national politics, paving the way for a new generation that carries forward the legacy of Bhuttoism.

Loyalty to party, nation, and ideology: Despite immense challenges—conspiracies, accusations, political revenge, media trials, and court cases—Zardari never abandoned the PPP, nor deviated from its ideology or from democratic values. He proved that leadership is not about occupying a seat, but about sacrifice, resilience, and commitment to principles.

His role in the present era: Today, as Asif Ali Zardari once again holds the office of the President of Pakistan, his presence symbolizes stability, reconciliation, and adherence to constitutional principles as an experienced, balanced, and democratic head of state. In this second term as President, he has once again demonstrated neutrality, wisdom, and full respect for constitutional boundaries.

Following the revolutionary and passionate political style of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the foresight, vision, and grace of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, and the statesmanlike leadership and political acumen of President Asif Ali Zardari, the Pakistan People's Party today is moving forward with new energy, renewed spirit, and emerging leadership.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Asifa Bhutto Zardari, and many other talented young leaders of the party represent a new political generation that is benefiting from President Zardari's guidance and experience—turning the vision of democracy, constitutionalism, public service, and federal harmony into a living reality. This new generation is not driven merely by emotion, but is nurtured through intellectual maturity, political training, and the ideological legacy of the Bhutto family. The young workers and leaders of the PPP are not only the guarantors of the party's future but also the hope for a democratic and progressive Pakistan, heading toward a brighter path under President Zardari's vision.

On the joyous occasion of his birthday, the dedicated workers and leaders of the Pakistan People's Party, along with the entire Pakistani nation, extend their heartfelt and sincere congratulations to the President of Pakistan, Man of Honour, passionate champion of democracy, and Co-Chairman of the PPP, Mr. Asif Ali Zardari.

Asif Ali Zardari is a remarkable statesman, fearless politician, and visionary leader, who, even in the most difficult times, made service to the country and nation his highest priority. His historic role in the strengthening of democracy, the supremacy of the Constitution, and the achievement of provincial autonomy will be remembered forever. Under President Zardari's leadership, revolutionary initiatives like the 18th Constitutional Amendment were implemented, through which all provinces secured their constitutional and democratic rights. The people of Balochistan, in particular, view this initiative with great respect, as the amendment proved to be a promise of autonomy, development, and justice for underprivileged provinces like Balochistan.

Zardari has consistently used the manifesto of the Pakistan People's Party to advance public welfare, national unity, inter-provincial harmony, and democratic values. His political struggle stands as a shining example of determination, courage, and consistency.

A leader who will live in the pages of history: Asif Ali Zardari belongs to that rare group of leaders who not only made their mark at a crucial turning point in history but also led the nation from darkness toward democracy. His personality is a powerful blend of reconciliation, sacrifice, wisdom, tolerance, and patriotism.

If history delivers justice, Asif Ali Zardari will not merely be remembered as a politician, but as a founding figure of democratic Pakistan, a symbol of political patience and resilience, and the spirit of constitutionalism and federalism. We pray that Allah Almighty grants President Asif Ali Zardari good health, strength, long life, and continued success, so that he may continue his journey of service to the country and nation with the same passion and commitment.

On the joyous occasion of his birthday, the dedicated

How urban growth suffocating nature

Muhammad Ibrahim

IN Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, cities are expanding rapidly, but their green spaces (lungs of the cities) are shrinking just as fast. The province's three most dynamic urban centres, i.e., Peshawar, Mardan, and Nowshera, are losing their public parks, playgrounds, tree cover, and green belts to unregulated construction, poor planning, and political & institutional negligence.

As an urban planner who has analysed the spatial distribution of built-up, and green spaces in KP cities, I came across at first that how accessibility to nature and manmade recreational facilities has become a privilege of the few, rather than a right of the many.

Utilizing the geospatial analysis tool of Geographical Information System (GIS) and ground truthing through field surveys, I came to know that green spaces in these cities are not only declining in area but are also unevenly distributed, with central neighborhoods enjoying far more access than peripheral or underprivileged, marginalised communities.

Public green spaces are more than just places for evening walks or weekend picnics. They are essential urban infrastructure. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends at least 9 square meters of green space per person for a healthy and livable city. Yet in Peshawar, this figure is less than 3 sqm per person—and in rapidly urbanizing areas of Nowshera and Mardan, it's even lower.

Researcher around the globe has confirmed that the loss of green cover has a direct impact on urban heat, air quality, mental health, and biodiversity. The spatial analysis within KP cities exhibited that areas with lower green space concentration also experienced higher land surface temperatures, a phenomenon known as the urban heat island effect. The reduction of vegetation cover is not only making cities hotter but also less livable, particularly for children, the elderly, and low-income families who cannot afford to sustain their lives in such an environment.

One of the most alarming situations is the spatial inequality in the provision of green spaces. By applying the two-step floating catchment area (2SFCA) method using GIS, we assessed how easily people can access recreational spaces within walking or short driving distance. The results? Residents living western side of Peshawar, i.e., Hayatabad Township, are often accessible within 5–10 minutes of a well-maintained park. But residents in peripheral neighborhoods like Pishtakara, Mera Kachori, or areas near Nowshera Cantonment face distances of 3–7 kilometres to reach even the smallest public park. In practice, this means they simply go without.

This disparity creates a new form of urban environmental injustice, where wealthier zones enjoy shaded, walkable

spaces while lower-income populations live in concrete-heavy, overheated, and isolated environments. So, the question is, why are green spaces disappearing in our cities? The answers are familiar but frustrating. In most cities, master plans are either not yet developed, outdated or poorly enforced, allowing green zones to be repurposed or ignored altogether. Designated green belts are frequently encroached upon or converted into commercial plots, often with little transparency. Even when land is officially reserved for parks, it is left undeveloped for years, caught in bureaucratic or political delays. Maintenance budgets, when allocated, are often insufficient or misused, leading to neglected and deteriorating public parks. Additionally, public-private partnerships tend to prioritise revenue generation over community greenery, turning public parks into exclusive or fee-based spaces that discourage inclusive use.

In many cases, parks are turned into gated family parks with entry fees, discouraging inclusive use. In others, green plots are kept vacant for years, waiting for political allocation or speculative development. We don't need to reinvent the wheel—we simply need to implement what is already known and widely recommended. First, urban green spaces must be legally protected within all local development plans and zoning regulations to prevent encroachment and misuse. Second, authorities should map and monitor green space accessibility using GIS tools and community-based reporting to ensure that spatial equity is maintained. It is equally important to enforce minimum green space per capita standards in every new residential or commercial development. In addition, investment in green corridors, urban forests, and pocket parks, especially in underserved neighborhoods, can significantly enhance urban livability. Lastly, we must empower local governments and development authorities with both resources and oversight mechanisms to maintain, protect, and expand urban greenery—while ensuring transparency and meaningful citizen participation in the process.

Green space planning must also be embedded in larger urban development initiatives. Integrating recreational and ecological zones early in the planning process can prevent the green deficits we now face in older urban cores. Urban greenery is not a luxury—it is a basic need. When we pave over our parks and lose our trees, we lose more than shade. We lose health, equity, beauty, and connection. The future of KP's cities depends on how well we balance development with ecology. As we build roads and raise towers, we must also protect what keeps our cities cool, healthy, and humane. It's time to reclaim our right to green cities—before it vanishes completely.

Europe's deadly border theatre is back

Marianna Karakoulaki

ON July 10, Thanos Plevris, the Greek minister for migration, announced new legislation that would effectively deny asylum to those who reach the Greek shores following a treacherous journey through the Mediterranean from Africa.

“Greece will not tolerate the uncontrolled entry of thousands of irregular migrants from North Africa,” Plevris said during an interview. Reactions against Greece's new legislation were immediate: Human rights organisations described it as illegal and called for its withdrawal. The Plenary of Greek Bar Associations emphasised that denying the right to asylum is a violation of international and EU legislation.

On the same day, but on the other side of the continent, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer outlined a “ground-breaking

deal” with France, which he said would target small boats and smuggling gangs and send “a clear message that these life-threatening journeys are pointless”. The UK-France deal has been criticised by all sides of the political spectrum. Organisations such as Doctors Without Borders called it “reckless”, “ill-fated” and “dangerous”, while the Migrants' Rights Network emphasised that the new agreement will not prevent people from trying to cross to the UK.

Greece and the UK's new plans to curb migration are set to fail, and the reason is simple: migration deterrence does not work. A decade ago, in the summer of 2015, the European Union faced a crisis it did not expect and for which it had not prepared. The rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), also known as ISIS), Syria's brutal civil war and instability in Afghanistan led

thousands of people to seek safety and security in the European Union. The “long summer of migration” marked the beginning of the so-called refugee crisis in the EU. Yet the EU did not have a clear plan: the European Agenda for Migration, which had been agreed upon in May 2015, had not yet been tested.

Today, the narrative of a crisis continues to shape migration policy across Europe. In Greece, it has served to justify restrictive deterrence measures since 2015, making new crack-downs unsurprising. For Greece's neoliberal government, migration is a blemish on the narrative of its economic success. In the UK, it is used to fuel far-right sentiment. In both cases, migration policy is crafted not only to deter arrivals but also to satisfy domestic political demands.

Neither migration plan should be viewed in isolation from the rise of the far right across the continent. The adoption of far-right rhetoric surrounding the illegalisation of migrants has been used in both countries to justify inhumane policies.

The justification for Greece's new policy centres on a questionable narrative of an “invasion” from Africa – a trope the Migration Minister has invoked repeatedly. For Greece's minister of migration, the Greek border, and by extension the European border, must be reinforced so that only “real refugees” can enjoy the benefits of European protection. For the British government, small boats have the power to “undermine [the country's] border security”, according to Home Secretary Yvette Cooper, and should therefore be

prevented from entering.

During the border crisis, the European border regime emerged stronger than ever before, and the EU's neoliberal imagination of a borderless world collapsed. Walls were erected throughout the continent, new border technologies were deployed to deter and expel the “undesirables”, and pushbacks, human rights violations and violence were normalised.

Death continues to loom over the European continent's borders. The UK-France deal may have been described as ground-breaking, but the EU-Turkey deal in 2016 paved the way for such “swap” policies. These agreements fail. The EU-Turkey deal may have reduced the number of people crossing the Aegean Sea in the short term; however, it did not stop them. Instead, it shifted migratory routes, opened new ones, and made migratory

journeys more complicated and dangerous. The reason for their failure is simple: human movement cannot be controlled. Arguably, it can be prevented or delayed, but it cannot be stopped.

These policies are rooted in racism and are deliberately designed to create division. Their main aim is to separate human beings and determine who is worthy of living in safety and who should be expelled from Western territory. They should not be viewed in isolation from the EU's and the UK's colonial and capitalist pasts. At the same time, the spectacle of the border is fully staged: It produces the illusion of control over a manufactured crisis that cannot truly be controlled. In reality, the essence of migration deterrence is not to succeed but to convince citizens that it is necessary.

Aljazeera

The quest for survival: Synergic impacts of poverty and severe heat in Pakistan

Hafsa Rauf

A world where 1 in every 10 people lives in extreme poverty can seem hopeless and pessimistic for their survival and future. Poverty, driven by various factors and policies at both the international and national levels, is a matter of concern for Pakistan. World-level fuel consumption contributes to global warming, which in turn exacerbates poverty by triggering natural disasters, such as floods, diseases, property loss, and educational disruptions.

The ongoing impacts of market-driven forces, socioeconomic inequalities, and the stagnation of Pakistan's institutions are the additional driving forces behind the recently reached 45% International Level Poverty (ILP) in Pakistan. Today, almost 700 million people (8.5 per cent of the global population) are living in extreme poverty — on less than \$2.15 per day (World Bank2024). Almost 39.8 million Pakistanis are part of it, comprising 16.5% of Pakistan's population.

"Poverty is a multi-faceted social phenomenon" (Bundestag 2008: 12). It is the condition of the unavailability of the basics of food, clean water, a sustainable infrastructure, and a decent financial income to live a fulfilling life with the fundamentals of education and health. Global warming, intense and extended heatwaves, and severe flooding are the result of high global industrial fuel consumption, which disproportionately affects vulnerable demographic sections of the worldwide population, including the indigent people who are barely financially stable to combat the crisis of waterborne diseases, maintain their education, and repair the fragile infrastructures of their flood-struck homes.

A 1 °C increase in the optimum temperature can raise poverty levels by up to 9.1%, based on the US\$1.90 daily poverty threshold, said the World Bank. Moreover, food prices driven by climate change are likely to exacerbate poverty, particularly in developing countries, said the research. According to the recent World Bank estimates, climate change could push an additional 41 million people into extreme poverty by 2050. Adding to that, income disparities driven by the negative growth pattern of laissez-faire mar-

kets is a second factor causing poverty. The UN, on the other hand, has set the Sustainable Development Goals as its 2030 agenda to end poverty with the symbolic slogan of 'leave no one behind' (LNOB). While most scholars say that merely it's SDG 1 and SDG 2 named 'no poverty' and 'zero hunger' indicates the complete eradication of poverty, but if observe rightly all of them from 1 to 8 targets either the cause prospects of poverty or the repercussions of it ranging from the attainment of the goals of education, health, and ending gender based, societal and financial disparities to the practicality of the objectives of the innovation, clean water and renewable energy production.

Meanwhile, the ill effects of financial inequalities brought about by free markets are being addressed by the international community within the liberal world order and the UN's SDG targets. That is something done on a global scale; however, whether the Pakistani government has undertaken any root-cause solving measures to reduce poverty or not, the authorities are unsure about it. While expanding on our points about the key factors that drive poverty in Pakistan, the extractive institutions of Pakistan are the third factor to be listed here. The indicators outlined by Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson in their book 'Why Nations Fail' reflect Pakistan's political and economic institutions. The indexes of extractive institutions encompass the concentration of power and wealth in the hands of a few elites as well as the lack of opportunities and inclusivity, which limit prosperity for the general public and lead to social unrest and economic stagnation.

The loopholes in the 2025-26 budget open the door for tax evaders, neglecting the health and education sectors of the country's development. Pakistan allocates less than 1% of its GDP to health and education each. As a result, it ranks 164th out of 193 countries, according to recent data from the Human Development Index (HDI). However, limited government data is available on how poverty has evolved in recent years. Considering the reasons given for

the spike in poverty and unemployment, the 2024-25 Economic Survey, which is released by Pakistan's government each year, does not mention any updates related to poverty and unemployment, according to The News International. While searching for some ground-level realities, I conducted a few interviews and observed some prominent and notable effects of poverty on the masses, which were pathetic.

One of these interviewees whom I interviewed was a 60 (or 65) year-old elderly person who was leaning back against the wall of a footpath when I arrived near him at the Board Bazar, Peshawar. He looked sorrowful when I started asking some of my questions related to the synergistic impacts of poverty and the intense heat of global warming on him. He said, "The scorching weather is from God's side, but we can't do anything." While he looked at his dry, hard, and labour-used-to-do cracked hands, he continued, "We are sad with our lives. I am an old man struck by poverty; I can't find work, nor can I beg. I have my whole family behind me to care for, and I don't have an income to support them. We are helpless; here I am sitting to get some shade from the trees, and my children are living without the basics of food and electricity at their home, suffering from heat and starving from hunger."

After crossing the BRT bridge at Board Bazar in Peshawar and emerging from the hustle and bustle and the cacophony of the vegetable sellers and other vendors, I reached the parking lot behind Islamia College Peshawar. From a distance, I glimpsed a security guard in the blurry heat of the intense sun rays, sitting next to the door of the Bank of Khyber, a small, box-like, cornered steel container that served as a one-room bank. I, constrained by time, hurried towards him to ask my few research questions. To connect and build rapport, I introduced myself as a news reporter gathering information, working arduously like a labourer in this sweltering heat. He responded with very sound and logical arguments to what I had claimed. He said, "Public servants and private company workers and even you are not the labourers; we

are the mazdoor (labourers) who earn low wages, face heavy workloads, and endure work exploitation." This left me with a blank expression and a sense of shock, as his eyes reflected the spark of the revolutionary Karl Marx. I countered his revolutionary fanaticism with calmness, acknowledging that he was, indeed, right. I then shifted the conversation elsewhere, but he continued to criticise the hierarchical structures of capitalist society and the gaps in opportunities and privileges between workers and labourers.

The last person I met before returning home, after the tedious task of data collection, was Rahidullah Khan, a father of three boys. Rahidullah runs a small enterprise selling prayer beads, miswak, and attar beneath a steel bridge in front of the Khyber Teaching Hospital in Peshawar. All of Khan's children, Muhammad, Sohail, and Sahil, aim to become doctors and are in grades 2 to 4. Setting aside the ambitions of these innocent schoolboys, their father, who was taking sips of green tea in this baking heat, didn't even know, given his lack of education himself, that how much education is needed for his children's employment, "my kids will become employed after getting passed through 10 or 12 grade", to which I answered, "but it needs a 16 years of education to get a decent public service job". It seemed traumatising for him, apparent by his silence for a while. Then he replied in a painful tone, "Based on the current expenses of education and the income we earn, it is hard for my sons even to reach grade 8 or 10."

In the wake of all this, as I was returning home amidst the humidity-filled, breath-snapping high temperature, my view suddenly fell on a girl. She seemed to be a bureaucrat, stepping out of a white Honda with a green number plate on the back of the car, dressed in an expensive pink outfit, her hair untied, and wearing sunglasses. To sum up, the luxurious mindsets and attitudes of our elite need to be changed to end the 45% poverty of Pakistan at its roots, as rightly said by Nelson Mandela when addressing London's Trafalgar Square in 2005, "Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings."

Eastern Europe must earn its security in a post-American NATO

Sona Muzikárová

FROM the Baltic states to the Black Sea, Central and Eastern European (CEE) governments remain anxious about their security in the face of Russian aggression. Despite NATO's enduring pledge to Article 25, many officials in countries such as Poland, Lithuania, Estonia and Romania continue to express concern over a potential US shift in focus towards Asia-Pacific and the Middle East, creating fears of weakening American vigilance in Europe. This anxiety has heightened in light of Russia's steady military rebuilding and escalating hybrid threats targeting critical infrastructure across the region.

To be clear, President Trump has long criticised NATO members for failing to hit defence spending targets and has even suggested the US might withhold protection from countries that do not meet the 2% percent of GDP target. In response, the June 2025 NATO Summit in The Hague marked a turning point: all member states agreed to raise combined defence and related spending to 5% percent of GDP by 2035, including 3.5% percent for core military capabilities and 1.5% percent for broader security measures such as logistics, cyber resilience and support for Ukraine, which was viewed as an "ironclad" commitment to NATO Article 25 and a pledge of continued backing for Ukraine.

For all the robust signalling, however, the agreement's gradual timeline – 2035, with a review in 2029 – and its flexible accounting, where spending on Ukraine aid, infrastructure upgrades and cyber projects all count, leave the Eastern flank states uneasy because timely implementation will be essential for credibly deterring Russia.

Moreover, tensions over US-EU burden sharing remain, as shown recently when, during a meeting with NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte, Trump announced that the US would send Patriot air defence systems to Europe "for Ukraine" but insisted that European allies foot the bill by donating the interceptor missiles themselves.

The breakdown in diplomatic decorum with European partners has been on display for a while, notably during the March Signalgate incident in which Trump's Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth called Europe "pathetic" and suggested European NATO states were "free-loading", and during the infamous February diplomatic debacle when Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was publicly humiliated during a joint White House news conference with Trump.

Yet despite the turbulence, CEE capitals cannot afford the luxury of disengagement from the second Trump administration. Indeed, the volatility reinforces the need for these states to remain actively engaged and push for better outcomes. This is for several reasons.

First, the US military presence has long served as the cornerstone of regional deterrence against Russian expansionism. Even as Washington's commitment to European security appears uncertain, CEE's security architecture has been fundamentally anchored in US guarantees since the end of the Cold War. The traumatic historical experience of Western abandonment during critical 20th-century junctures, such as the 1938 Munich Agreement, when Czechoslovakia was handed over to Nazi Germany by Western powers, has left a deep-seated awareness that diplomatic decoupling from Washington often correlates with heightened vulnerability along NATO's eastern flank. This is why Poland and the Baltic states (Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia) have for years hosted US troops and air defence systems, alongside NATO battlegroups. NATO's eastern flank countries have routinely cautioned that if Putin succeeds in Ukraine, "they are next."

This concern is particularly acute in light of the Trump administration's active push to broker a flash ceasefire deal between Russia and

Ukraine, reportedly involving territorial concessions to Moscow. President Trump has made clear he wants to be remembered as "a peacemaker and unifier", a theme he emphasised again in his second inaugural address. His advisers have floated frameworks that would freeze the conflict along current front lines, potentially recognise Russian control over Crimea and parts of Donbas, and block Ukraine's NATO aspirations. But Ukrainians are not seeking peace at any price, nor should the Europeans. Any deal that cedes Ukrainian territory or is seen as legitimising Russian aggression risks emboldening the Kremlin, weakening NATO's credibility and undermining Europe's long-term security architecture.

tered or underperforming automotive facilities, such as those in Berlin and Neuss, and rail plants in Gorlitz, to produce Leopard tanks, Puma IFVs and artillery systems, into hybrid military production hubs. This industrial push is enabled by Germany's domestic reforms, notably Berlin approving a sweeping defence procurement law that simplifies contracting, raises tender thresholds and fast-tracks construction for military infrastructure.

Such deliberate reallocating of resources from beleaguered civilian industries toward military industrial output holds clear implications for allied production networks in CEE. In addition, CEE countries have been ramping up their own heavy manufacturing capacity, with Poland and Slovakia stepping up joint production of artillery and armoured vehicles, and

The traumatic historical experience of Western abandonment during critical 20th-century junctures, such as the 1938 Munich Agreement, when Czechoslovakia was handed over to Nazi Germany by Western powers, has left a deep-seated awareness that diplomatic decoupling from Washington often correlates with heightened vulnerability along NATO's eastern flank. This is why Poland and the Baltic states (Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia) have for years hosted US troops and air defence systems, alongside NATO battlegroups. NATO's eastern flank countries have routinely cautioned that if Putin succeeds in Ukraine, "they are next." This concern is particularly acute in light of the Trump administration's active push to broker a flash ceasefire deal between Russia and Ukraine, reportedly involving territorial concessions to Moscow. President Trump has made clear he wants to be remembered as "a peacemaker and unifier", a theme he emphasised again in his second inaugural address. His advisers have floated frameworks that would freeze the conflict along current front lines, potentially recognise Russian control over Crimea and parts of Donbas, and block Ukraine's NATO aspirations.

Since Russia's 2022 full-scale incursion, the Kremlin has repeatedly tested NATO's Article 25 resolve through various provocations along the eastern flank, including airspace violations and missile incidents. For example, in February 2024, Estonia was subjected to electronic warfare from Russian territory that disrupted GPS signals across its eastern border regions, affecting both civilian infrastructure and military communications systems. One month later, a Russian cruise missile entered Polish airspace for 39 seconds before returning to Ukrainian territory. Moreover, in August 2023, Russian fighter jets conducted aggressive intercepts of NATO surveillance aircraft over the Baltic Sea, coming within dangerous proximity and executing unpredictable manoeuvres that risked mid-air collisions.

Such a status quo can deteriorate quickly should Putin's aggression, under a Trump-brokered deal, enable Russia to carve out a piece of Ukraine or achieve troop disengagement from Eastern Europe. Russia may also continue its military buildup after the war stops, buying time for later aggressions and compounding the challenge for CEE and Europe.

Against this backdrop, CEE leaders would do well to pursue a dual-track strategy, despite the volatility of current US foreign policy.

First, the region's engineering workforce and industrial might have an outsized role to play in rearming Europe in the face of US disengagement and Europe's stepped-up defence pledges, particularly in partnership with Germany. In Germany, this shift of actively repurposing idle civilian manufacturing facilities into military production hubs is already firmly under way. Its defence firms have been actively converting shut-

Czechia's Czechoslovak Group surging to the forefront of Europe's munitions supply chain, with a 4-billion-euro (\$4.6bn) revenue spike and an 11-billion-euro (\$12.7bn) order book anchored in Ukraine bound exports.

The CEE region, with its faltering car manufacturing competitiveness now worsened by Trump car tariffs, needs to latch onto this opportunity to tackle both its security and economic imperatives. In doing so, it can benefit from the 800-billion-euro (\$921.8bn) defence mobilisation plan, coupled with its proposal for 150 billion euros (\$172.8bn) in EU-backed loans, approved in Brussels on March 76.

Second, hedging against US security disengagement through the combination of strategic industrial repositioning and European solidarity must be complemented by persistent efforts to secure better outcomes through diplomatic channels with Washington.

This remains necessary even as ideological alignment frays, because transactional partnerships can still deliver meaningful security benefits. To that end, the region can leverage some of its unique strategic assets, including Poland's substantial arms purchases from US manufacturers, Romania's critical Black Sea security infrastructure and the Baltic states' sophisticated cybersecurity capabilities, with an administration that prizes transactional diplomacy.

The path forward requires setting aside both illusions and grievances at a time when security guarantees must be earned rather than assumed. In this emerging reality, Eastern European nations can meaningfully partake in rearming Europe while demonstrating their value as partners, as they navigate the shifting fault lines of post-American Europe.

An effigy of refugees, burned by a crowd

THE burning of an effigy of refugees on a boat to the cheers of a riled-up crowd in Moygashel, Northern Ireland shows where we are today. A decade has passed since Europe's border crisis in 2015 and the shock caused by the image of Alan Kurdi, whose little body was found washed up on a Turkish beach. Sentiments of welcome and solidarity were short lived and have given way to a seemingly never-ending obsession in Europe with "stopping the boats" and reducing the number of migrant arrivals.

In the decade since Angela Merkel's "we can do it", we have become used to hearing that 2015 must not be allowed to happen again. Across Europe, politicians routinely vow to fight migration, "smash" smuggling gangs, ramp up border controls and build up detention and deportation capacities. A much-criticised migration pact was agreed upon while the annual budget of Frontex, the EU border agency, has seen a staggering increase, from 97.9m in 2014 to 922m in 2024. Entire border zones have become militarised and the guarding of borders has been "externalised" so that non-EU countries can prevent migration on Europe's behalf.

In this past decade, we have also become desensitised to the inevitable consequences of such repressive policies in terms of human suffering and loss. Reports and images of people forced into Libyan torture and rape sites,

described by German diplomats as "concentration camp-like" in 2017, no longer prompt a public outcry. Neither do the deaths of thousands in the Mediterranean every year or the criminalisation of activists who seek to avert mass drowning. Shipwrecks have become so common that they hardly make it into the news.

What does make the news, however, is the discourse on migration that characterises it as an emergency. Often dominating headlines, it has become a permanent feature, a sort of enduring state of exception that far-right forces capitalise on. Instead of offering alternative visions of migration, parties of the so-called "centre" or "mainstream" amplify such crisis talk, catering to simplistic control fantasies and offering one solution only: more borders.

Whether it's the Christian Democrats or the Social Democrats in Germany, Labour in the UK or Emmanuel Macron's government in France, mainstream parties seek to outdo parties to the right of them by pushing increasingly extreme and racist narratives, at times dangerously close to invasion and "great replacement" conspiracies.

In January, the French prime minister, François Bayrou, spoke of a "feeling of submersion" in view of the migrant presence in France. In May, the British prime minister, Keir Starmer, suggested that the UK was at risk of turning into an "island of strangers". In June, the German

Maurice Stierl

chancellor, Friedrich Merz, claimed on Fox News that the past decade's migration to Germany had led to "imported" antisemitism, so that fighting antisemitism meant fighting migration.

Promising to solve societal problems through repressive migration policies and more borders, these "centrist" or even "progressive" political leaders are selling a dangerous fantasy. In a world riven by war, genocide, economic disparity, a climate catastrophe and growing authoritarianism, borders will never succeed in averting people's desire and need to migrate or flee. Indeed, the fantasy of borders is met, time and again, by reality: ongoing migration.

More than that, by intensifying migration cooperation with repressive regimes outside Europe, they have contributed to the rise of authoritarianism elsewhere. Tunisia serves as one of many examples where Europe's financial and political support has strengthened the security apparatus of its authoritarian leader, Kais Saied, who himself has spewed great replacement theories on migration.

Second, a shift away from the idea of a "post-national" community. The constant promise that borders will solve migration has reinforced the illusion that renationalisation is the answer. The departure of the UK from the EU, whose disastrous "taking back of control" in fact prompted an increase in migration

post-Brexit, may be the most obvious example.

However, throughout the EU, we see an increase in "borderisation" – the erection of barriers and border controls between member states – as a way to supposedly reclaim "lost" sovereignty. The very core of the European project – internal freedom of movement – is at risk and points to a growing estrangement from the idea of Europe as a post-national community.

Third, an assault on legal norms and institutions. The normalisation of anti-migration violence, including through mass pushbacks, has led to a clear erosion of human rights. Indeed, some EU member states have legalised human rights violations at borders while Greece decided to temporarily suspend asylum altogether this July. International institutions meant to protect refugees, including the UN refugee agency, have been under assault while we see a concerted hollowing out of international rights standards and the gradual death of asylum.

Even if the European obsession with borders fails to do what is desired – effective deterrence – it has real and dangerous consequences, for those seeking refuge and for us all. The burning of an effigy of refugees is what happens after a decade of dehumanisation. In the intervening years, many – from the supposed centre to the far right – have implanted a dangerous border fantasy that will continue to divide, hurt and kill.

The Guardian

‘Savile’ smear won’t stop me defending free speech

Nigel Farage

IT was just after 7am when I received a phone message that a Labour cabinet minister had accused me, live on TV, of being in bed with Britain's most infamous paedophile, Jimmy Savile. Peter Kyle, Secretary of State for Science, told Sky News that, because Reform UK wants to abolish the Online Safety Act, I was on the side of predators and pornographers.

"Make no mistake about it," Kyle assured the somewhat gobsmacked interviewer, "if people like Jimmy Savile were alive today he would be perpetrating his crimes online and Nigel Farage is saying that he is on their side, not the side of children..." How low can these people go? How desperate must Labour be to imagine that smearing me in such a disgusting way will help their losing cause? We asked Kyle for an apology for his revolting slander. Instead, like the worst kind of online troll, this sorry excuse for a British secretary of state simply doubled down on the abuse. "If you want to overturn the Online Safety Act," he tweeted, "you are on the side of predators. It's as simple as that."

No minister, it is not as simple as that, far from it. All of this is of course a deflection from the real problem with the Online Safety Act, proudly passed by the previous Tory government and enthusiastically enforced by Keir Starmer's Labour.

Like Big Brother's Ministry of Truth in 1984, this Orwellian law does the exact opposite of what it claims. In the name of safety, the Act poses the biggest threat to freedom of speech in this country in our lifetimes. In the name of protecting children, the law aims to regulate what adults are allowed to say or see – while doing nothing to make our children safer.

That is why Reform UK is pledged to repealing the Online Safety Act. The Act gives the official state regulator, Ofcom, the power to impose huge fines if big tech platforms fail to do enough to censor what can be said on social media. This week the final section demanding age verification for accessing adult content online came into force.

These apparently well-intentioned checks enforce mandatory ID scans, not just for porn sites, but also for mainstream social media where political or any other content is deemed potentially "harmful". This erosion of privacy could make it easier to identify online critics of government policy on migration and much else. If the Government's priority online is truly protecting the children, then why has the Home Office set up a new elite squad of police officers to monitor social media for "anti-migrant sentiment", as reported in The Telegraph this week?

It also seems suspicious that the

Labour Government is so keen to protect teenagers from receiving "harmful" political messages, at the same time as it wants to grant 16- and 17-year-olds the right to vote. These checks won't prevent enterprising youngsters from accessing adult sites anyway. The number of people in the UK signing up for a Virtual Private Network (VPN), which allows them to sidestep ID scans and parental controls, has soared. And once teenagers are prompted to get a VPN, they can even use it to access the murky depths of the dark web.

It should surely come as a shock to nobody that teenagers know how the internet works better than the dinosaurs who drafted and enforce this worse-than-uneless law. The dangers inherent in the Online Safety Act don't end with ID checks. The extraordinarily wide-ranging Section 179 makes it an offence to publish "false" content which causes "non-trivial psychological harm". Who is to decide what speech is "false" or "harmful"? Like the Roman once asked, who censors the censor?

We already know that coverage of recent protests at a hotel housing illegal migrants in Leeds has been censored, along with posts criticising the Government's soft migration policies and exposing the truth about Britain's mainly-Muslim rape gangs. Social media platforms such as X/Twitter,

The Telegraph



High-Level meeting on insulin imports, JV with Russia held

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan on Wednesday said that the establishment of a pharmaceutical joint venture between Pakistan and Russia marks a significant milestone in strengthening

bilateral relations. The SAPM chaired a high-level meeting, which was also attended by Denis Nazarov, Representative of the Russian Government, senior officials from the Ministry of Industries and Production, Ministry of National Health Services and the Drug Regulatory

Authority of Pakistan (DRAP).

Discussions focused on the import of insulin from Russia, progress on pharmaceutical joint ventures, and the development of protocols for policy board implementation, said a press release.

During the meeting, it was noted that DRAP had earlier granted registration to Genetics Pharmaceuticals, Lahore, for the import of insulin from Russian company Zavod Medsintez.

Haroon Akhtar noted that Pakistan is a major consumer of insulin, and the regular supply of insulin from Russia could greatly benefit diabetic patients across the country.

He further stated that in line with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's vision, efforts are underway to initiate local manufacturing of insulin in Pakistan. A joint protocol between local manufacturers and Russian companies is expected to be finalized and presented soon.

Haroon Akhtar Khan directed all stakeholders to develop a comprehensive proposal prior to its presentation in the Federal Cabinet.

SAPM meets president NBP

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan on Wednesday held a meeting with President of NBP Rehmat Ali Hasni to deliberate on enhancing financial support for industrial development.

During the meeting, matters related to industrial loans, investment promotion, and strengthening the partnership between the banking sector and the industrial landscape were discussed in detail, said a news release. Haroon emphasized that the promotion of financial facilities is essential for sustainable industrial growth. He appreciated the National Bank's pivotal role in providing loans to industries, stating that such support is critical for boosting economic activity.

"The collaboration of the banking sector is crucial for economic development," said SAPM, adding that a stable industrial infrastructure requires strong participation from financial institutions.

He further stressed that banks must play a key role in increasing investment in Pakistan, and reiterated the government's commitment to creating a favorable financial environment for businesses. Rehmat assured SAPM of NBP's full support for the government's vision for industrial development, pledging continued cooperation to foster economic progress.



ISLAMABAD: President of National Bank of Pakistan Rehmat Ali Hasni meeting Special Assistant to Prime Minister Haroon Akhtar Khan.

PSX turns bullish, gains 447 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 Index turned around to bullish trend on Wednesday, gaining 447.43 points, a positive of 0.32 percent, closing at 138,412.25 points against 137,964.82 points last trading day.

A total of 425,836,625 shares were traded during the day as compared to 606,334,880 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 24,999 billion against Rs 32,685 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 476 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 152 of them recorded gains and 290 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 34 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Bank of Punjab with 24,809,434 shares at Rs 13.72 per

share, Cres Star Ins with 20,904,522 shares at Rs4.34 per share and Maple Leaf with 14,501,544 shares at Rs 79.62 per share.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 399.61 per share price, closing at Rs 33,020.02, whereas the runner-up was PIA Holding Company LimitedB with Rs 141.57 rise in its per share price to Rs 31,299.00.

SS Oil Mills Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs87.90 per share closing at Rs 791.08 followed by Nestle Pakistan Limited with Rs78.52 decline in its share price to close at Rs7,611.32.

Rupee gains 10 paise against US Dollar

The Rupee on Wednesday appreciated by 10 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 282.95

against the previous day's closing Rs 283.05.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 285 and Rs 285.5, respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by Rs 0.19 to close at Rs 327.00 against the last day's closing of Rs 327.19, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese yen gained 01 paise and closed at Rs 1.91, whereas an increase of Rs 0.69 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 378.19 compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 377.50.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal came down by 03 paise each to close at Rs 77.03 and Rs 75.42, respectively.

FFC announces half-yearly financial results

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Fauji Fertilizer Company Limited (FFC) has announced its half-yearly financial results for the period ended June 30, 2025.

According to the announcement made at the Board of Directors' meeting on July 29, the Company achieved net profitably of Rs 38.5 billion as compared to Rs 26 billion translating into an earnings per share (EPS) of Rs 27, an FFC spokesman said on Wednesday.

The FFC, he added, attained aggregate Urea production of 1,419 million tonnes and registered aggregate sales revenue of Rs 155 billion.

The spokesman said other income of Company also increased due to higher dividend distribution by associated companies.

The Company, he said, also declared its second interim dividend of Rs 12 per share, with a total distribution of Rs 19 per share for the period.

FF launches 'Dil Se Sarsabz' Milli Naghma Competition

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Giving a new spirit to the Independence Day celebrations, Fatima Fertilizer has, for the first time, taken a unique approach by engaging the youth through its 'Dil Se Sarsabz' Milli Naghma singing competition. This nationwide contest aims to revive the patriotic spirit and empower young Pakistanis through music and digital creativity, making Independence Day celebrations more vibrant and inclusive than ever before.

The campaign invites people across Pakistan to participate by recording a

video of themselves singing any classic Milli Naghma and uploading it on TikTok using the hashtag #DilSeSarsabz. From the pool of submissions, 10 finalists will be shortlisted to perform live in front of a distinguished jury panel.

"At Fatima Fertilizer, we believe that true progress comes from empowering people and celebrating their potential," said Rabel Sadozai, Director Marketing and Sales at Fatima Fertilizer.

"Dil Se Sarsabz is a campaign designed to empower our youth through the timeless tradition of Milli Naghma. It's not just

a competition; it's a platform to amplify the voices of our youth, celebrate our shared identity, and inspire national pride through music. We're proud to stand with the people of Pakistan in honoring the spirit of Independence with hope, unity, and heart."

Through 'Dil Se Sarsabz', Fatima Fertilizer aims to foster a deeper emotional connection with the people of Pakistan while encouraging youth to express their patriotism through creativity. This initiative blends patriotism, music, and user-generated content to celebrate national pride and discover

emerging local talent. It reflects Fatima Fertilizer's commitment to youth empowerment and cultural pride, inviting everyone to let their voices be heard this Independence Day and sing from the heart.

As a trailblazer in the agri industry, Sarsabz yet again leads through innovative content, which connects with the hearts of the nation. Truly, this is a celebration that is Dil Se Sarsabz.

To take part in the competition, simply upload a video of yourself singing a Milli Naghma on TikTok and use the hashtag #DilSeSarsabz in your post.

Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan increased

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's export of goods and services to Afghanistan witnessed an increase of 38.68 percent during the fiscal year 2024-25 as compared to the exports of the last year 2023-24.

The overall exports to Afghanistan were recorded at US \$773.892 million during July-June (2024-25) against exports of US \$558.032 million during July-June (2023-24), State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reported.

On a year-on-year basis, the exports to Afghanistan increased by 8.24 percent from \$46,405 million in June 2024, against the exports of \$50,230 million in June 2025.

Meanwhile, on a month-on-month basis, the exports to Afghanistan however decreased by 11.63 percent during June 2025 as compared to the exports of \$56,843 million in May 2025, the SBP data revealed. Overall Pakistan's exports to other countries witnessed an increase of 4.24 percent in the fiscal year under review, from US \$30,979 billion to US \$32,295 billion, the SBP data revealed.

On the other hand, the imports from Afghanistan into the country during the year under review were recorded at US \$25,898 million against US \$11,960 million last year, showing an increase of 116.53 percent in July-June (2024-25).

On a year-on-year basis, the imports for Afghanistan witnessed a decrease of 33.55 percent from US \$1,773 million in June 2024, against the imports of US \$1,178 million in June 2025. On a month-on-month basis, the imports from Afghanistan into the country also decreased by 39.55 percent during June 2025, as compared to the imports of US \$1,949 million during May 2025, according to the data.

In a media statement issue here, he highlighted that reducing the policy rate would enable businesses, especially small and medium enterprises (SMEs), to access loans at lower costs. This would boost economic activity, create employment opportunities, and enhance exports. He stressed that the current high-interest rate is non-lucrative to investment and places an excessive financial burden on industries already struggling with inflation and economic challenges.

He urged policymakers

Sehgal represents HCSTSI in Education Expo 2025

HYDERABAD (APP): Vice President Hyderabad Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industry (HCSTSI), Shan Sehgal has said that without a strong combination of education, skill development and modern technology, it was impossible to prepare our youth for global challenges.

He expressed these views while addressing at Education Expo 2025, held at Bahria Town Auditorium, Karachi on Wednesday.

This grand expo served as a unique platform, bringing together renowned educationists, former ministers of education, industry experts, CEOs, university vice chancellors and representatives from various chambers of commerce including FPCCI all under one roof to share insights

and shape the future of education and career development in Pakistan.

On this occasion, Shan Sehgal held productive meetings with several distinguished individuals including former Education Minister Rana Hussain, Head of CHBTK Muhammad Uzair and other esteemed guests.

Speaking at the event, Vice President Shan Sehgal remarked that without a strong combination of education, skill development, and modern technology, it is impossible to prepare our youth for global challenges.

He noted that Education Expo 2025 is not just an event, but a critical platform that bridges the gap between academic institutions and industry, while also helping young individ-

uals identify their potential and career direction. He reaffirmed HCSTSI's ongoing commitment to support and promote youth-focused initiatives in education, skill-building, and entrepreneurship.

The Expo featured panel discussions, workshops and sessions on key topics such as The Future of Education, Digital Skills and the New Economy, Youth Empowerment and Academia Industry Linkages, drawing participation from thousands of students, teachers, parents and professionals.

Shan Sehgal concluded by stating that the leadership of HCSTSI is determined to play a proactive role in national progress by empowering youth through education and technology-driven initiatives.

Malik calls for reducing policy rate to single digit

LAHORE (APP): SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry former President, Iftikhar Ali Malik Wednesday urged the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to gradually reduce the policy rate and bring it down to a single digit.

In a media statement issue here, he highlighted that reducing the policy rate would enable businesses, especially small and medium enterprises (SMEs), to access loans at lower costs. This would boost economic activity, create employment opportunities, and enhance exports. He stressed that the current high-interest rate is non-lucrative to investment and places an excessive financial burden on industries already struggling with inflation and economic challenges.

He urged policymakers

to adopt business-friendly monetary policies to support local industries and promote economic stability.

He also pointed out that regional competitors offer lower borrowing rates, making Pakistani industries less competitive in the global market.

Calling for a gradual reduction, Iftikhar Ali Malik suggested that lowering the policy rate would restore investor confidence and attract foreign direct investment (FDI). He reiterated that a stable and growth-oriented economic policy is crucial for Pakistan's economic revival and long-term sustainability.

Highlighting Pakistan's struggle with inflation, sluggish growth, and low industrial productivity, he noted that accessible credit

could spur sectors like manufacturing, agriculture, and exports, which are critical for economic stability. He suggested that Pakistan should adopt global approach and a similar strategy to counter rising input costs and stagnant demand.

Malik argued that high borrowing costs under the current monetary policy have stifled business expansion, hampered job creation, and limited access to affordable financing for industries, particularly small and medium enterprises (SMEs). He emphasized that lowering the policy rate would reduce loan costs, enabling businesses to invest in modernization, scale operations, and enhance competitiveness amid persistent economic challenges.

Dhaka Chamber pledge economic cooperation

ISLAMABAD (APP): President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI), Nasir Mansoor Qureshi on Wednesday invited Bangladeshi entrepreneurs to explore trade and investment opportunities in Pakistan across key sectors, including textiles, IT, agriculture, renewable energy, food processing, infrastructure, pharmaceuticals, mining, and construction.

He addressed the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI) during a significant business visit to Bangladesh and urged the need for strengthening economic cooperation between Pakistan and Bangladesh, said a press release.

Accompanied by ICCI Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry, President Qureshi emphasized the deep-rooted bond between Pakistan and Bangladesh, a relationship founded on shared history, cultural affinity, and promising economic potential.

He welcomed the recent development of visa-free access between the two countries as a visionary and long-overdue initiative, and further called for the early conclusion of a Pakistan-Bangladesh Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and the enhancement of direct air connectivity to

bolster trade, tourism, and investment flows.

Earlier, DCCI President Taskeen Ahmed extended a warm welcome to the ICCI delegation and appreciated its proactive role in fostering regional economic ties.

"Bangladesh is committed to a new era of cooperation with Pakistan, that prioritizes trade, mutual growth, and regional harmony," said Taskeen Ahmed.

He underlined the importance of institutional linkages, collaborative ventures, and knowledge sharing between the business communities of both nations. "Our chambers must lead the way in building an economically integrated South Asia that is modern, resilient, and inclusive," he noted.

The meeting concluded with exchange of shields between the Presidents of ICCI and DCCI, a gesture reaffirming the spirit of friendship and collaboration between the two institutions.

Following the session, Business-to-Business (B2B) meetings were held between Pakistani and Bangladeshi entrepreneurs. Delegates explored potential joint ventures and discussed areas of collaboration in various sectors.

CCP enforcement gains pace, 223 cases resolved

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has made significant progress in reducing its legal backlog and recovering penalties, marking a major turnaround in the enforcement of competition law.

When the new management took charge in August 2023, the CCP faced 567 pending cases across different courts.

Through early hearing applications and aggressive follow-up, 223 cases have since been decided, cutting the backlog by more than 40 percent, said a release issued here on Wednesday.

The biggest relief came in the Competition Appellate Tribunal (CAT), where 121 cases were decided out of 210, bringing down pendency by 58 percent. The Lahore High Court decided 39 cases, reducing backlog by 78 percent, while the Sindh High Court disposed of 40 cases, a 61 percent cut.

The Islamabad High Court decided 13 cases, lowering pendency by 43 percent. At the Supreme Court, 11 cases were decided, and 171 cases challenging CCP's mandate have been clubbed for a single hearing.

The resolution of cases has enabled the CCP to recover imposed penalties. In the past year alone, the Commission recovered PKR 360 million, surpassing the total PKR 201 million collected since its establishment in 2007.

RCCI asks State Bank of Pakistan to reduce policy rate to single digit

ISLAMABAD (APP): Usman Shaukat, President of the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), has called on the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to slash the policy rate to single digits in the upcoming Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting.

The RCCI reiterated its call for urgent monetary and structural reforms to revive industrial activity, attract investment and enhance Pakistan's regional competitiveness, he said in a statement issued on Wednesday.

He emphasized that

aligning Pakistan's interest rates with those of regional economies is crucial to easing the mounting cost of doing business in the country.

Shaukat stressed that a reduction of at least single in the interest rate would provide vital relief to busi-

nesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which are disproportionately burdened by high financing costs.

Competitive business environment is required in the country, the RCCI President added.



In brief

Street Child Football qualify to knockout stage

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Street Child Football Team has successfully qualified for the knockout stage of the Norway Cup 2025, held in Oslo. The team completed the group stage with an impressive performance, securing their spot in the next round. In their first knockout match, Pakistan will face Sweden, said a press release. The team's consistent successes have been a source of joy for the nation, and their next objective is to triumph over Sweden. The coaching staff and players are determined to continue their winning streak with the same passion and team spirit that has propelled them to this stage. The Pakistani community, both at home and abroad, have extended their best wishes to the team, wishing them continued success in the tournament. The team's advancement to the knockout stage shows their hard work and dedication.

FIFA WC draws in Vegas on December 5

LOS ANGELES (AFP): Las Vegas will play host to the 2026 World Cup draw on December 5, according to multiple reports on Tuesday. ESPN and TUDN/Mexico said Vegas had been picked for the draw of the expanded 48-team event, which will be hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico. In all, 12 groups of four nations will be drawn. When the United States played host to the 1994 World Cup, the draw ceremony was also conducted in Las Vegas. ESPN's original report said that The Sphere, a 17,500-seat venue which opened in 2023, was seen as the front-runner for the draw site. But Sphere sources confirmed to AFP the World Cup draw would not take place there, and ESPN later reported Sphere sources told the sports network it would not be held there. In 1994, the draw was staged in Las Vegas even though it was not a host city for any matches, a situation that is also the case for next year's event.

ECB confirms sale of six hundred franchises

LONDON (AFP): Six teams in English cricket's controversial Hundred competition have now been sold to private investors, with deals for the Oval Invincibles and Trent Rockets still to be formally completed, officials announced Wednesday. The England and Wales Cricket Board expect a windfall of nearly £1 billion (\$1.32 billion) from an auction of Hundred franchises, with the fifth edition of the 100 balls per side tournament due to start next week. Global investors, including four groups with links to the cash-rich Indian Premier League, have sunk vast sums of money into the competition's eight city-based teams. The 100-balls-a-side format, which features men's and women's sides, was launched to great fanfare in 2021. It has proved controversial, with many county cricket fans angry at the way the tournament deprives their clubs of key players at the height of the season. The Hundred has also squeezed a marquee five-match Test series such as England's ongoing clash with India into a congested seven-week schedule so it can have much of August to itself. But the ECB is confident that £520 million of new investment will eventually work its way into the game following a franchise auction earlier this year.

German Olympian Laura Dahlmeier dies in tragic accident on Laila Peak

ISLAMABAD (APP): German Olympic gold medalist and world-renowned biathlete Laura Dahlmeier has been confirmed dead following a tragic mountaineering accident on Laila Peak in the Gilgit-Baltistan, the Alpine Club of Pakistan (ACP) said on Wednesday.

Dahlmeier, 31, was reported missing after being struck by falling rocks at an altitude of approximately 5,700 metres during a climbing expedition on July 28. Despite days of intense rescue efforts, challenging weather conditions,

marked by rain, poor visibility and high winds had severely hampered both aerial and ground operations.

"It is with great sorrow that we confirm the death of Laura Dahlmeier," a statement issued by the ACP said.

Maj Gen Irfan Arshad, President of the ACP extended heartfelt condolences to Dahlmeier's family, friends and the international mountaineering community. He said this was a moment of profound loss for all.

Her climbing partner, Marina Eva, also referred to as

Marina Krauss in some local reports escaped unharmed and was able to send a distress signal. She safely descended to base camp with assistance from local rescuers.

Dahlmeier was widely respected not only for her extraordinary achievements in biathlon, including multiple Olympic and world championship titles but also for her passion for mountaineering and the outdoors.

Vice President of the Alpine Club of Pakistan, Karrar Haidri, also expressed his deep grief and solidarity with the

bereaved family, calling Dahlmeier's death a "devastating loss to the global adventure sports community."

Rescue teams had been attempting to reach her through treacherous terrain after helicopters were grounded due to persistent bad weather. Her body is expected to be brought down once conditions allow safe access to the site.

The ACP and local authorities are coordinating efforts to facilitate the recovery process and to honour Dahlmeier's memory in the spirit of international mountaineering solidarity.



Indian team pulls out of WCL semi-final against Pakistan

LONDON: India Champions have refused to play their semi-final against Pakistan Champions in the World Championship of Legends due to strained political relations between the two countries.

The match was scheduled to be played in Birmingham on Thursday; Pakistan Champions will progress to the final and play the winner of the second semi-final between Australia Champions and South Africa Champions.

The India Champions

team, which includes players such as Yuvraj Singh, Suresh Raina, Harbhajan Singh, Piyush Chawla, Yusuf Pathan, Robin Uthappa, had also refused to play their group match against Pakistan Champions on July 20.

While the teams had shared points on that occasion, Pakistan Champions progressed to the final after India Champions refused to play the semi-final because they finished top of the group with nine points. India Champions had placed fourth with three points.

Sporting relations between India and Pakistan have deteriorated due to the terror attack in Pahalgam in Jammu & Kashmir in April this year, and the military skirmish that followed between the two.

While the international teams of India and Pakistan have not yet faced each other since then, the men's teams are due to face each other in the Asia Cup in the UAE on September 14, while the women's teams have their ODI World Cup match in Colombo on October 6. —spnrcinfo

Zimbabwe's Taylor to return after corruption and drugs ban

BULAWAYO (AFP): Zimbabwe batsman Brendan Taylor has been added to his country's Test squad after serving a three-and-a-half year ban, Zimbabwe Cricket announced on Wednesday.

The announcement was made during the first day of play in the first Test between Zimbabwe and New Zealand at Queens Sports Club. He will be available for the second Test, starting at the same venue on August 7.

"I certainly did think it was all done, but here I am — and it's an overwhelming feeling of gratitude," said Taylor, 39. "The last year and a half has certainly been dedicated to my return. I've put in an immense amount of work — from fitness to the technical side to diet — and I'm feeling a lot leaner, fitter and mentally stronger.

"That's only been possible through sobriety," Taylor was found guilty in January 2022 of four charges under the International Cricket Council's (ICC) anti-corruption code and separately for failing a drugs test.

Taylor admitted to travelling to India in 2019 and meeting an unknown individual who paid him \$15,000. He initially claimed the money was an appearance fee but later admitted that he was paid following discussions about match fixing, which he said he had no intention of carrying out.

He reported his contact with the individual to the ICC in March 2020 but did not mention discussions about corruption. He also deleted all communications with the individual.

He tested positive for a cocaine metabolite in September 2021. Before the ban, Taylor was one of Zimbabwe's leading batsmen and racked up 2,320 runs in 34 Tests. He has also played in 205 one-day internationals and 45 Twenty20 internationals.

Zimbabwe Cricket managing director Givemore Makoni welcomed Taylor's return. "Brendan has endured an incredibly difficult chapter in his life and shown genuine remorse.

Pakistan battles bravely, falls to Poland in FIVB Boys' U19 World C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): In one of the most gripping encounters of the FIVB Boys' U19 World Championship 2025, the Pakistan volleyball team lost against European powerhouse Poland in the Round of 16 by 2-3 sets, with set scores of 25-21, 23-25, 25-17, 21-25, 16-18 at Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

The match, played at the packed arena in Tashkent, kept spectators on the edge of their seats as both teams traded blows in a contest that showcased world-class skill, determination, and resilience. Pakistan started strong by winning the first set 25-21 with powerful attacks and disciplined blocking. Poland fought back in the second set, narrowly edging Pakistan 25-23, said a press release.

With the match level at 1-1, Pakistan regained momentum to convincingly

take the third set 25-17, driven by aggressive net play and precise serves. However, Poland refused to back down and responded with a 25-21 win in the fourth set. The deciding fifth set saw a nail-biting finish as both teams battled point-for-point, but it was Poland who narrowly claimed the set 18-16, bringing the match to a dramatic close.

While the result did not favor Pakistan, the young team won the admiration of volleyball fans worldwide for their fighting spirit, technical excellence, and composure under pressure.

Their run in this tournament has been historic—registering four consecutive victories in the group stage, topping Pool A, and qualifying for the Round of 16 for the first time in Pakistan's volleyball history. Pakistan will now enter the classification round for

final tournament rankings.

Chaudhary Muhammad Yaqoob, Chairman of Pakistan Volleyball Federation, commented, "Our boys played with great heart and determination against a top European side. This narrow defeat is heartbreaking but also a proud moment because it shows that Pakistan belongs among the volleyball elite. I congratulate the entire team and coaching staff on their exceptional performance throughout the tournament."

Sohail Khawar Mir, President of the Federation, added, "This team has inspired a new generation of volleyball players in Pakistan. Their commitment, skill, and unity have been outstanding. Although we fell short today, this is not the end—it's the beginning of a bright future for Pakistan Volleyball."

England captain Stokes out of India series decider

LONDON (AFP/APP): England captain Ben Stokes has been ruled out of the fifth and deciding Test against India with a shoulder injury in a devastating blow for the home side.

The England and Wales Cricket Board said vice-captain Ollie Pope would lead the side in the match at The Oval starting Thursday, with England 2-1 up in the five-Test series.

All-rounder Stokes has struggled with various fitness issues during the four Tests against India during which he has sent down 140 overs -- the most he has bowled in any series.

The 34-year-old, who is leading wicket-taker on either side with 17 scalps, has injured his right shoulder -- his bowling arm -- and it is understood he will need up to 10 weeks to recover. "I am obviously disappointed to not be able to finish the series," an emotional Stokes told a pre-match press conference on Wednesday.

He added: "I have got a decent tear of one of the

(shoulder) muscles I can't pronounce. I don't know how to say it, but we took as long as we could to make that decision around that."

"A bit of emotion goes into this kind of stuff when you find out what you have done -- bowling was ruled out as soon as we got the scan results. "But you need that time chatting with the medical team," Baz (England coach Brendon McCullum), then just 20 minutes to myself out there in the morning just to really be clear around the decision that we made."

England do not play Test cricket again until they face Australia in the first match of the Ashes tour in late November, with Stokes considered central to their hopes of regaining the urn.

The drawn fourth match of the India series at Old Trafford that ended on Sunday was a personal triumph for Stokes, who became just the fourth England cricketer to score a hundred and take five wickets in the same Test.

But that came at a cost as

Stokes, whose career has been blighted by hamstring trouble, struggled with a number of fitness issues.

The tourists lost just four wickets in their second innings as they batted out a marathon 143 overs to keep the series alive. England have made four changes in all following that gruelling encounter. Spin-bowling all-rounder Jacob Bethell makes his first Test appearance of the year, effectively as a replacement for Stokes.

Pacemen Josh Tongue, Gus Atkinson and Jamie Overton all come into the side, with Jofra Archer and Brydon Carse rested. Liam Dawson's return to Test cricket lasted just one match, with England going into the India finale without a specialist spinner, the hosts entrusting slow-bowling duties to Bethell and Joe Root.

England team for fifth Test: Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Ollie Pope (capt), Joe Root, Harry Brook, Jacob Bethell, Jamie Smith (wkt), Chris Woakes, Gus Atkinson, Jamie Overton, Josh Tongue.

Lahore Qalandars conducts cricket trials at IUB

BAHAWALPUR (APP): Under the auspices of the Prime Minister Talent Hunt Programme and the Higher Education Commission, Lahore Qalandars organised incentive cricket trials for male and female players at the cricket ground of the Islamia University of Bahawalpur (IUB).

The two-day event saw enthusiastic participation from hundreds of talented boys and girls. The trials were conducted over two days: the first day featured trials for male players, followed by female players on the second day. After rigorous assessments, Lahore Qalandars short-

listed 16 boys and 16 girls, who are now poised to compete against other teams from across Pakistan. Outstanding performers among these players may earn the opportunity to join the Lahore Qalandars' squad and showcase their talent on a national stage.

Chief Executive Officer Lahore Qalandars Atif Rana expressed his gratitude to Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Muhammad Kamran and the university administration for their excellent arrangements and facilities. He appreciated the lush and well-maintained cricket ground, high lighting its potential for

nurturing future cricket stars. During the event, Atif Rana also shared his interest in establishing a branch of the Lahore Qalandars' High Performance Academy at the university. He conveyed his eagerness to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Islamia University of Bahawalpur to foster cricket development and talent nurturing in the region.

This initiative emphasizes Lahore Qalandars' commitment to promoting cricket talent at the grassroots level and strengthening partnerships with educational institutions to build a brighter future for Pakistani cricket.

Kingscote revels in being the 'villain' of Sussex Stakes shock



LONDON (AFP): Richard Kingscote said with a grin on his face he felt like a "villain" after the 2022 Epsom Derby winning jockey landed a massive shock in guiding 150/1 outsider Qirat to victory in the Sussex Stakes at Glorious Goodwood on Wednesday.

The 39-year-old Englishman had been instructed to set the pace on the Ralph Beckett-trained four-year-old for the odds-on favourite Field of Gold in the Group One mile feature.

However, Field of Gold never picked up pace at the crucial moment and it was only Rosalillon of the fancied runners that threw down a challenge but Kingscote had enough to hold him off. Kingscote, soon to leave for Hong Kong, may have felt like a villain but Beckett laughed and said "I do not feel that sorry for spoiling the party".

"We were there as a helping hand to go an even gallop," said Kingscote.

"However, he is a horse that likes the track and Ralph said even though we are here to help let him run his best. "I feel like a villain! However, when I saw

it was not a grey nose (Field of Gold) coming to me I thought give it my all. "I am delighted and for Ralph, who has been a staple of my career for 15 years now." For Field of Gold's handler John Gosden his star never really fired. "He has done nothing wrong," said Gosden.

"He was sitting back a long way, that is life. "He ignored the pace-maker and paid the price."

Wednesday was a stark contrast for Beckett compared to the opening day on Tuesday. Beckett's stable star Kinross was withdrawn shortly before his race, but the Group Three Oak Tree Stakes put a smile back on his face. Dead heats are rare enough, but one shared by stablemates even rarer than a penny black stamp -- Beckett's duo of Tabiti and Saqqara Sands, though, could not be separated by the judges.

Rossa Ryan, who had been on board Kinross, managed to conjure up a final burst from Saqqara Sands and pin back Ryan Moore on Tabiti. "My daughter was laughing at me because I was going 'go

on Rossa, go on Ryan, go on Rossa...'," laughed Beckett.

"I have definitely not been involved in a finish when two of my horses dead-heated before. William Easterby just told me his father (Tim) did it at Pontefract about 10 years ago, so I am in good company.

"It is one to remember. "Such a buzz"

Moore did not have to share the honours in the next, though, as he eased home on Irish runner Lady Iman in the Group Three Molecomb Stakes -- a fortunate winner for him as regular jockey Colin Keane is suspended.

She was the 17th filly to get the better of the colts in this sprint.

"Ralph (Beckett) said I looked like one of the Beverley Hillbillies," joked trainer Ger Lyons about his panama hat.

"I am delighted for Tony O'Callaghan the owner and breeder who gave me lots of breaks. Just goes to show you you can be a long time in the game and you still make mistakes as I did in her previous race.

Marchand shatters record as US, Australia win more world gold

SINGAPORE (AFP): Leon Marchand smashed the 200m individual medley world record in Singapore on Wednesday with another breathtaking swim while Australia and the United States celebrated more gold.

Racing in the semi-finals at the world championships, the Frenchman clocked 1min 52.69sec to wipe more than a second off the previous record of 1:54.00 set by Ryan Lochte in 2011. Marchand beat Michael Phelps' long-standing 400m medley record at the world championships in Japan two years ago.

"Actually I can't believe it right now," said Marchand, who won four individual golds in front of his home fans at the Paris Olympics a year ago and was the face of the Games.

"I knew I was going to be close to my PB (personal best) because I felt really good today and preparation has been pretty good.

"But 1:52 is unbelievable for me," Marchand, 23, took an extended break from swimming after Paris



and only returned to competition in May. He is focusing on the individual medley events in Singapore and had said he was gunning for Lochte's record.

Marchand got his world championships campaign under way on Wednesday morning, clocking a time of 1:57.63 in the heats.

He said he would go all-out for the record in the semi-finals rather than conserve his energy for Thursday's final.

"Whirlwind" In Wednesday's finals, Tunisia's Ahmed Jaouadi won the 800m freestyle thanks to a

perfectly timed attack.

Jaouadi made his move midway through the race and eased away to touch the wall in 7min 36.88sec, ahead of German pair Sven Schwarz (7:39.96) and 400m champion Lukas Maertens (7:40.19).

Jaouadi, who finished fourth at last year's Paris Olympics, clocked the third-fastest time ever.

"At some point I saw that the rhythm wasn't that fast so I decided to just go and make the move," said the 20-year-old, Ireland's Olympic champion Daniel Wiffen finished last.

Australia's Olympic champion Mollie O'Callaghan was just as emphatic in romping to victory in the women's 200m freestyle in 1:53.48.

Second was China's Li Bingjie (1:54.52) and third Claire Weinstein of the United States (1:54.67).

O'Callaghan said it had been a "whirlwind". Since winning gold at the Paris Games, O'Callaghan has been injured and had some badly needed time to recharge. She has spoken about struggling to live up to the hype since Paris.

"I know it's been hard for a lot of people to come back after the Olympics but very grateful to have a good support team behind me to get me through this mentally and physically," said the 21-year-old. Luca Orlando of the United States celebrated the biggest title of his career with gold in the 200m butterfly in 1:51.87.

Italy's Simone Cerasuolo pipped Russian Kirill Prigoda to 50m breaststroke gold, touching home in 26.54sec.



In brief

Crackdown against beggars continues

RAWALPINDI (APP): Some 160 professional beggars have been arrested so far in the crackdown launched across the Rawalpindi city on the instructions of City Police Officer Syed Khalid Hamdani. The crackdown against beggars continued without let-up for last 17 days and would continue till the elimination of the menace as per the vision of Punjab chief minister, the Rawalpindi Police spokesman said on Tuesday. He said special squads had been formed to take action against the professional beggars as most of them were also involved in theft, drug trafficking and other crimes. Strict surveillance was being maintained to prevent begging in busy markets and roads, the spokesman said.

IRSA releases 382,200 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 382,200 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 408,300 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1537.00 feet which was 135.00 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 264,800 cusecs and 264,400 cusecs, respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1199.60 feet, which was 149.60 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 32,700 cusecs and 7,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 285,800, 296,600, 390,100 and 315,900 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 30,300 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 53,600 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Excise deptt fines over Rs 1.3 mln to 113 vehicles

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Excise Department of Islamabad on Wednesday conducted a citywide crackdown and imposed fine of over Rs 1.3 million to 113 vehicles. On the instructions of the Director General of Excise, the department launched a series of enforcement operations across five locations in the city, said the spokesman of Excise department. The focus was on recovering outstanding token taxes and taking action against vehicles with tinted windows and illegal number plates. During the operation, Excise teams issued challans to 113 vehicles. Officials also recovered over Rs 1.3 million in token tax dues on the spot. In addition to tax recovery, several vehicle owners were heavily fined for using black-tinted windows and number plates that did not match the approved format. The DG Excise, Irfan Memon, has directed officials to ensure token tax collection without any exceptions. He also made it clear that there would be no leniency in cases involving tinted windows or non-standard number plates. Speaking on the campaign, DG Excise urged citizens to avoid using unapproved number plates and to ensure their vehicle documents, including token tax payments, are up to date. He added that such violations not only breach traffic regulations but also affect enforcement systems. The operations are part of a wider effort to improve compliance and ensure transparency in vehicle documentation across the city. Further checks and recovery drives are expected to continue in the coming days.



ISLAMABAD: A beautiful view of clouds' hovering over sky seen on president and parliament house in capita city. —INP Photo

Marri urges stronger cross-border measures to combat child trafficking

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) senior leader Shazia Atta Marri on Wednesday, marking the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, urged for immediate and coordinated efforts at both national and international levels to crush the criminal networks behind human trafficking, labeling it a dire and growing menace. In an exclusive conversation with a local news channel, Shazia Atta Marri emphasized that women and children living below the poverty line were particularly vulnerable to human trafficking. She noted that traffickers often exploit the desperation of impoverished families, luring victims with false promises of jobs, education, or a better life abroad. "The intersection of poverty and lack of aware-

ness creates a breeding ground for traffickers," she said, urging the government to intensify awareness campaigns in marginalized communities. Highlighting the gendered impact of trafficking, Marri expressed grave concern over the rising number of women and young girls falling prey to exploitation. "Women, especially from underserved rural areas are disproportionately targeted for forced labor and sexual exploitation," she stated. She called for greater protective legislation and enhanced enforcement of existing laws to ensure justice for victims and harsher punishments for perpetrators. Marri also underscored the importance of international cooperation in tackling trafficking networks that operate across borders.

She called on regional partners and global organizations to share intelligence, strengthen border controls, and invest in rehabilitation programs for survivors. "This is not a problem any one country can solve alone," she said. "We must work together to dismantle the financial and logistical structures that allow these criminal enterprises to thrive." She said it is a global challenge affecting millions, one that transcends borders and demands a unified national and international response, emphasizing that traffickers thrive on desperation, exploit vulnerable populations and must be confronted through coordinated legal action, institution-strengthening and victim-centered awareness initiatives.

Rawalpindi prepares for anti-cancer vaccination program

RAWALPINDI (APP): In a historic move for cancer preventive measures, Rawalpindi is preparing to launch a historic anti-cancer vaccine vaccination drive in the district. The anti 'Human Papillomavirus (HPV)' vaccine stands as a critical tool in global public health, offering robust protection against infections that can lead to various types of cancer, as well as other serious health conditions.

Dr. Waqar Ahmad, heading District Disease Surveillance and Response Unit (DDSRU), informed APP that HPV vaccine is a highly effective immunization designed to prevent infection from specific types of Human Papillomavirus. "HPV is a common virus, typically transmitted through skin-to-skin or physical contact," he said. While many HPV types are harmless, certain high-risk strains are known to cause cancers and genital warts. "The vaccine works by introducing virus-like particles (VLPs) which are non-infectious components that mimic the virus's outer shell," he added. These VLPs prompt the body's immune system to produce protective antibodies and ultimately prepares the immune system to swiftly recognize and neutralize the actual HPV if encountered, thereby preventing infection and subsequent disease development.

The vaccine is most effective when administered before exposure to the virus, typically in pre-adolescent years. Dr. Waqar observed that the widespread adoption of HPV vaccination programs yields significant and far-reaching public health benefits including primary cancer prevention with the most profound impact on cervical cancer, with nearly all cases attributable to HPV. The vaccine specifically targets the high-risk HPV types responsible for the majority of these cancers, leading to substantial reductions in HPV infections and pre-cancerous lesions among vaccinated populations globally.

"Beyond the cervical cancer, the vaccine offers protection against other HPV-related cancers, including those of the anus, mouth, throat, genital organs. It also prevents the common occurrence of genital warts," said Dr. Waqar who is also the spokesman of the District Health Authority.

Pakistan and Australia Reaffirm Commitment to Human Rights Cooperation

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Mr. Neil Hawkins, met with the Federal Minister for Human Rights, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar, to discuss ongoing collaboration in the promotion and protection of human rights in Pakistan. The Secretary of the Ministry of Human Rights, Mr. Abdul Khaliq Shaikh, was also present during the meeting.

The meeting focused on strengthening bilateral cooperation and sharing best practices for inclusive rights-based governance.

During the meeting, the High Commissioner appreciated Pakistan's recent advancements in human rights laws, policies, and institutional reforms. He acknowledged the Government's continued efforts to strengthen legal

and administrative frameworks for the protection of vulnerable and marginalized communities.

The Minister welcomed the High Commissioner and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to promoting inclusive human rights protections across all communities. He briefed the High Commissioner on some key initiatives, including the implementation of the National Action Plan on Human Rights, which focuses on six strategic areas such as legal reforms, access to justice, institutional strengthening, and treaty compliance.

He also apprised the High Commissioner of recent legislative developments and structural reforms. These include progressive amendments related to the death penalty, including those recently

passed by the Senate to abolish capital punishment for certain offenses and introduce enhanced legal safeguards. Other developments include enhanced protections against child marriage through the Islamabad Capital Territory Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2025 and the passage of the National Commission for Minorities Rights Bill, 2025. The Minister further outlined the State's response to concerns surrounding the misuse of blasphemy laws, emphasizing efforts to ensure legal safeguards and institutional accountability.

Both sides expressed a mutual commitment to deepening bilateral cooperation in the field of human rights and agreed to continue working closely to promote shared values of dignity, inclusivity, and equality.



ISLAMABAD: Australian HC Neil Hawkins met with Federal Minister for Human Rights, Senator Azam Nazeer, to discuss ongoing cooperation on human rights.

Govt closely monitoring sugar crisis: Rana Ihsan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coordinator to the Prime Minister Rana Ihsan Afzal Khan on Wednesday informed that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has issued uncompromising directives to the committee under the Ministry of Food Security to conduct an urgent and comprehensive review of the sugar sector and enforce stringent monitoring mechanisms without delay.

While in an exclusive conversation with a local news channel coordinator to PM stated that the government is actively monitoring the sugar sector amid a climate-induced shortfall, with swift corrective measures expected in the coming days. Rana Ihsan Afzal Khan confirmed that the sugar supply situation is under strict review by a high-level committee formed under the Ministry of Food Security.

He emphasized that while this year's crop yielded better returns for farmers compared to previous seasons, unexpected climate impacts have led to temporary disruptions. "The Prime Minister had already imposed a ban on sugar exports in January to protect domestic needs," Khan noted. "Now, the government is fully focused on ensuring market stability and based on the committee's findings, immediate action

will be taken to control prices and safeguard consumers."

The recent increase in sugar prices is due to a short-fall caused by climate change and weather not due to any artificial manipulation or malicious practices, he replied when he asked about. He emphasized that while the shortage stems from environmental factors, the government is fully committed to ensuring that consumers are not burdened with unjustified price hikes.

The Prime Minister has issued clear instructions to the committee under the Ministry of Food Security to urgently review the situation and monitor the sector closely," Khan said. "Within the next few days, based on the committee's recommendations, strict measures will be implemented to bring sugar prices under control," he mentioned. Khan reiterated the government's resolve to maintain price stability and act decisively against any attempts to exploit the situation, ensuring relief for the public amid the ongoing supply challenges. "However, the situation is under active review, he said, adding, the committee formed under the Ministry of Food Security has been tasked for 30 days with closely examining the matter and its recommendations will guide timely.

Court issues notice over high electricity charges in shopping mall

ISLAMABAD (APP): The lower court of Islamabad on Wednesday taken up a case challenging high electricity rates being charged by a shopping mall in a private housing society, following complaints from shop owners. Civil Judge Arif Ali's court issued notices to relevant parties over a complaint that the shopping mall in question is charging electricity at Rs84 per unit—much higher than the standard rate set by the Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO).

The case was brought by a citizen, Ubaid-ur-Rehman, who claimed that the mall management has installed its own electricity meters and is not using any IESCO-installed connection. Instead, the mall is acting as an independent electricity provider and charging shop owners its own rates. The petitioner argued that electricity should be billed according to IESCO's official tariff. He also said that the high monthly bills have forced several well-known brands to shut down their outlets inside the mall. The court has taken notice of the matter and sought replies from IESCO, the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA), and the management of the private housing society.

Ethiopian envoy named Ambassador of Margalla Hills National Park



ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Envoy and Ambassador Extraordinary of Ethiopia, Dr. Jemal Beker Abdula has been bestowed with the title of "Ambassador of Margalla Hills National Park" for his tireless efforts in promoting a clean and green environment within the park.

The honor was conferred upon him by Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Randhawa during a meeting at the CDA Headquarters.

During their discussion, Dr. Jemal Beker briefed the CDA Chairman on Ethiopia's corridor development project, a large-scale

urban transformation initiative led by Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed, focusing on infrastructure development, mass plantations, and riverside beautification.

The Ambassador proposed establishing a sister city relationship between Addis Ababa and Islamabad to foster cultural and commercial ties between the two nations.

The Ethiopian Embassy Islamabad is set to launch a tree plantation campaign in Islamabad as part of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's "Green Legacy Initiative," aiming to raise awareness about climate change. Dr. Jemal Beker extended an invitation to the CDA Chairman to participate in

the campaign. CDA Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa shared insights into the CDA's performance, highlighting key development projects completed and underway in Islamabad.

He emphasized the authority's strategic vision to develop the capital into a modern, inclusive, and environmentally sustainable city. The Chairman commended Dr. Jemal Beker's leadership in various clean and green campaigns in Islamabad, particularly within the Margalla Hills National Park, and expressed interest in learning from Ethiopia's experiences in sustainable urban development and riverside uplifting initiatives.

Sahiwal Power Plant keeps country's grid steady during harshest season

ISLAMABAD (APP): As Pakistan battled record-breaking heatwaves and relentless monsoon rains in 2025, the Sahiwal Coal-Fired Power Plant (CFPP), with its 1,320 MW generation capacity, emerged as a key pillar of national grid stability, ensuring uninterrupted electricity supply when it was needed the most.

According to official sources from Sahiwal Coal-Fired Power Plant, as electricity demand surged due to unprecedented heatwaves and heavy rainfall events, the plant's strategic location, robust base-load capability, and technical integration into the national transmission network allowed it to play a vital role in supporting the Independent System & Market Operator (ISMO) in maintaining uninterrupted power delivery across major regions.

During the peak summer months of May to July 2025, Pakistan experienced some of the highest recorded temperatures in recent years. This led to a dramatic spike in electricity consump-

tion, particularly in major urban and agricultural areas within the Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO), Multan Electric Power Company Limited (MEPCO), and Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) jurisdictions. Air conditioning, refrigeration, irrigation pumping, and industrial operations collectively strained the system, pushing daily peak demand to nearly 30,000 MW.

This surge put immense stress on the grid, increasing the risk of power imbalances, voltage drops, and forced load-shedding. In this critical scenario, the Sahiwal plant operated as a reliable anchor for the power system, delivering consistent base-load generation and helping keep system frequency close to the ideal 50 Hz mark. When other sources such as hydropower and wind showed variability due to changing water inflows and wind speeds, Sahiwal's steady output provided much-needed balance.

Beyond frequency stability, the plant also helped manage voltage levels, especially in cen-

tral and southern Punjab. Prior to the commissioning of Sahiwal, voltage fluctuations and overloaded transformers caused frequent outages in these regions. However, in 2025, the reactive power support from Sahiwal's generators stabilized voltages across the 500 kV and 220 kV networks, particularly during hot afternoons when air-conditioning demand was at its peak. This helped prevent under-voltage issues and reduced stress on downstream transformers.

The plant's contribution extended beyond generation. Its integration into the national grid through the Yousafwala 500 kV substation improved power flow to high-demand areas. In past years, transformer banks at Yousafwala were operating below their rated capacities. However, with the operational stability and load dispatch coordination established between Sahiwal and ISMO, these assets were now being utilized optimally. In fact, an additional 600 MVA transformer was added to Yousafwala

to accommodate the consistent power being injected from the plant. This led to improved voltage regulation and reduced technical losses in transmission.

Another key strength was the plant's connectivity through a bi-directional loop at Qadirabad on the 500 kV line linking Yousafwala to Lahore. This design gave ISMO the flexibility to reverse power flow based on shifting demand and supply conditions. During the summer evenings, when load patterns shifted and generation ramped up from hydel sources in the north, the reverse flow capability helped prevent transmission congestion and balanced the system dynamically. The flexibility offered by this arrangement became particularly important during emergency situations when ISMO had to make split-second decisions to reroute power and avoid cascading failures.

As monsoon rains set in, the challenges shifted. Heavy downpours, lightning, and flooding

disrupted hydropower generation in the north and damaged transmission lines. In several instances, cloud bursts and landslides damaged transmission lines or reduced water availability in key dams. Sahiwal filled this gap by ramping up production, keeping the power supply stable even during extreme weather events.

Its real-time coordination with ISMO's National Power Control Center, supported by automated generation control systems and fast communication protocols, enabled it to respond swiftly to grid needs. Whether it was ramping up during a sudden voltage dip in southern Punjab or providing frequency support after a wind generation drop in Sindh, the plant's responsiveness greatly reduced ISMO's burden during system stress periods.

A noticeable outcome of Sahiwal's performance in 2025 was the significant reduction in forced load-shedding across MEPCO, LESCO, and parts of

GEPCO. Consumers in areas served via the Yousafwala transmission corridor reported fewer interruptions, more consistent voltage, and better service reliability compared to previous years. This improvement was not only a testament to the plant's technical performance but also a reflection of strategic planning and execution between Huaneng Shandong Ruyi and national grid operators.

In a year marked by climate extremes and rising demand, the Sahiwal CFPP stood tall as a dependable backbone of the national grid. Through its consistent output, voltage and frequency support, transformer optimization, flexible power flow, and rapid response to emergencies, the plant played a decisive role in helping ISMO maintain national grid stability. Its contribution once again affirmed the importance of well-integrated, base-load thermal generation in complementing variable renewable sources and managing peak seasonal stress.

Educational center opened

BAGHLAN (BNA): Baghlan province of Afghanistan has inaugurated its first special educational center for blind and deaf students in Pul-e-Khumri. Engineer Amanullah Mullahkhil, the head of technical and vocational education in Baghlan, shared details about the center, which operates under his department. The facility will offer education to blind and deaf students from grades 1 to 12, following a specially designed curriculum.

Supreme Leader met officials

KABUL (BNA):The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan held a meeting with officials from the Ulema Council of Herat Province and the Ulema Council of Shindand District. During the meeting, the Supreme Leader emphasized the crucial role of Ulema in safeguarding the religion. He noted that over the past twenty years, considerable resources had been used to undermine Islam and to alter public sentiment towards Sharia.

WB-funded projects worth 40m afs being executed in Parwan

KABUL (Pajhwok): Work on some public welfare projects has been launched with the World Bank's 40 million afghanis assistance in Parwan province, an official said on Wednesday.

Rural Rehabilitation and Development Director Mullah Abdul Samad Sadiq told Pajhwok Afghan News the projects included construction of a 10-kilometer long and four-kilometer wide road, 1,050 meters long and three meters high

retaining and protective walls, 332 meters of side-walks in Chap Qol and Chinara villages, an eight meter long, four meter wide motor bridge, and 650 meters of agricultural water canals in Qol Hocha, Saye and Tehreego villages.

According to him, a total of 4,000 families will benefit from these projects.

He said the projects will be implemented within six months by the ACTID organization, with assis-

tance of 40 million afghanis from the World Bank, within the framework of Rural Rehabilitation and Development Department.

Local residents are happy with the start of these projects.

Mohammad Salim, a resident of Chap Qol village, welcomed the construction of the road and said it would help farmers transport their agricultural products, including apricots, to the market on time.

Baradar inaugurates raisin processing factory

KABUL (Ariana News): Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, on Wednesday inaugurated a raisin processing factory in Afghanistan's Istalif district of Kabul province.

In a statement issued by the deputy PM's office, Baradar described the launch of the factory as an important step toward increasing the value of agricultural products, adding that this initiative will stimulate the local economy, standardize exports, and create employment opportunities for hundreds of people.

At the inauguration ceremony of the factory, Baradar emphasized that the Islamic Emirate, alongside other sectors, has given special attention to the agricultural sector and has launched several projects related to water management to support the growth of the agricultural economy.

Baradar stated that the IEA has created the necessary conditions to facilitate the export of agricultural products to regional and global markets. He added that it has organized exhibitions to promote these products and has increased



tariffs on imported goods that are produced domestically.

According to him, IEA has prioritized the use of domestic agricultural products to strengthen the agricultural sector, and progress has been made in improving irrigation systems, establishing cold storage facilities, and constructing processing and packaging centers.

He emphasized the importance of the quality and packaging of agricultural exports, considering it vital for Afghanistan's credibility and the development of trade relations.

Baradar noted that the IEA is placing special focus on regional connectivity to increase the level of trade. Fortunately, he said, Afghanistan's railway network has now expanded, strengthening and broaden-

ing trade relations with various countries.

Baradar added that the IEA is working to fully activate the Lapis Lazuli Corridor, and in the recent ECO (Economic Cooperation Organization) summit, it held discussions with relevant countries to help Afghanistan gain access to European markets.

During the factory's inauguration ceremony, he also highlighted the important role of the private sector and investors in the country's economic growth, stating that the necessary facilities have been provided in various areas to support investment.

He added that investors can invest not only in agriculture and industry but also in the sectors of mining, energy, telecommunications, transportation, and services.

1.8m migrants deported from Iran in three months

KABUL (Amu TV): At least 1.8 million Afghan migrants were forcibly deported from Iran over the past three months, Taliban officials said Wednesday, a surge that has intensified the country's already severe humanitarian and economic crisis.

Abdul Rahman Rashid, the Taliban's deputy minister of refugees, said at an annual briefing in Kabul that another 184,000 Afghans had been expelled from Pakistan and about 5,000 from Turkey this year.

Rashid said the ministry had signed 125 agreements with national and interna-

tional organizations over the past year, securing more than \$78 million in aid for returnees and displaced families. That assistance, he said, included vocational training for 34,000 people, cash support for 8,000 families, and food and other essentials for more than 420,000 households.

He also said that 9,951 Afghan prisoners had been released from jails in Iran and Pakistan and returned home. Under an order from the Taliban's supreme leader, the ministry has begun work on 38 residential settlements for

returnees across 29 provinces, with surveying and mapping already completed in some areas.

Still, many Afghans who have recently returned from Iran dispute the government's claims, saying they have received little or no support. Several have reported being subjected to violence, humiliation, beatings and the confiscation of property during their deportation.

Taliban officials said the ministry had distributed 2.7 billion afghanis — about \$38.8 million — in food, clothing and cash to more than 420,000 families.

Work on 7 water supply networks kicks off



BAMYAN (Pajhwok): Construction of seven water supply networks has begun at a cost of 28 million afghanis in different areas of Bamyan province, an official said on Wednesday.

Governor spokesman Sabour Farzan Saighani said work on these projects was officially kicked off during a ceremony attended by local officials, representatives of implementing

agency, tribal elders and residents on Tuesday.

According to Saighani, the projects were aimed at providing safe drinking water to residents, and upon completion, about 8,119 people, including 1,027 families, eight mosques, one religious school, and two schools, will find access to clean water.

These projects are funded by the World Bank and

implemented through the Aga Khan Development Foundation under the technical supervision of the Bamyan Rural Rehabilitation and Development Department, he added.

The projects would be implemented in the villages of Dahan Katuk, Ali Beg, Bam Sarai, Chahar Cheshme, Qala Sabzi, Kohne Qala and Qom Jok, all located in Bamyan City.

Afghanistan faces worsening climate crisis

KABUL (Arian News): Afghanistan experienced an alarming surge in climate-related disasters during the first three months of 2025, with nearly five million people impacted by a series of severe environmental shocks, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Between January and March, the country was hit by a wave of extreme weather events including severe drought, flash floods, heavy snow, and extreme cold. These climate and disaster events swept across all regions, disrupting lives, livelihoods, and critical infrastructure.

The IOM reports that nearly 175,000 Afghans were internally displaced during this period, with 79 percent of displacements linked directly to environmental hazards. In total, more than 396,000 people were forced to migrate either within Afghanistan or across international borders, marking a significant spike in climate-induced mobility.

Rural areas were the hardest hit. Already fragile and under-resourced, these communities suffered widespread damage to homes, agricultural land, and infrastructure. More than 80 percent of rural communities reported lacking access to any formal water systems, while many faced unsafe drinking water, destroyed shelters, and no available healthcare services.

Food insecurity emerged as the most urgent concern. In the IOM's assessment, 47 percent of communities cited lack of food as their biggest challenge, a figure expected to rise as recurring drought and displacement disrupt agricultural production and market access. While Afghanistan remains one of the countries least responsible for global greenhouse gas emissions, it is among the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

"Climate shocks are becoming a permanent feature of life for millions of Afghans," said an IOM spokesperson. "But data can drive smarter action—now is the time to invest in community resilience and sustainable solutions."

As forecasts point to continued extreme weather patterns in the months ahead, aid agencies are calling for urgent investment in disaster risk reduction, early warning systems, and long-term climate adaptation strategies. Without sustained support, experts warn, environmental hazards could become one of the leading drivers of displacement and humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan sends back 153 tankers

KABUL (BNA): The National Standards Authority of Afghanistan has confirmed the rejection and return of 153 tankers carrying substandard fuel to Iran.

Qari Rahimullah Sajid, spokesperson for the Nimroz provincial government, told Bakhtar News Agency in an official statement that out of 250 tankers of imported fuel received over two days, 153 tankers of diesel and petrol failed to meet the authority's quality standards and were sent back to the neighboring country.

The statement highlighted that in recent years, the National Standards Authority has taken serious and practical measures to prevent the import of low-quality fuel into Afghanistan.

Officials urged all traders to ensure that only quality products are brought into the country, warning that failure to comply will result in strict legal action.

The statement further noted that the remaining 97 tankers of substandard fuel will also be returned to Iran shortly. Since IE regained control, the authority has reportedly rejected and sent back hundreds of tankers carrying poor-quality petroleum products to their countries of origin as part of its efforts to safeguard national standards.

NSIA report: Progress in IDs and vital records

KABUL (TOLOnews): The National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA), in its annual reporting program, announced significant progress across the areas of statistics, surveys, vital records registration, and national ID card distribution throughout the country.

Over the past year, more than two million individuals have successfully received their national ID cards. Additionally, three "Asan Khedmat" centers have been established in neighboring countries, and four others inside Afghanistan.

Abdul Qahar Haji Idris, the head of NSIA, stated: "With one center established in the United Arab Emirates, the total number of Asan Khedmat centers has reached 11, offering streamlined public services under one roof."

Beyond identity registration, the NSIA reported that more than 400,000 vital events including births, deaths, marriages, and divorces were registered in the past year.



Mohammad Nabi Nasrat, Deputy Director of Population Registration, said: "Last year, 482,000 vital events were recorded across the country, of which 442,000 were births, including 242,000 boys and 200,000 girls."

According to official data, the country's exports over the past year amounted to nearly 2 billion USD. Inflation saw a decrease of 4.2 percent, irrigated and

rained farmland under cultivation reached 2.7 million hectares, and the number of civil service employees was reported to be over 517,000.

Esmatullah Hakimi, Deputy Technical Director of NSIA, said: "In the year 1403 (solar calendar), export earnings totaled 1.7 billion USD. The top exported goods were dried figs, cotton, raisins, asafetida, and coal, accounting for

about 41 percent of the total exports."

Officials of the authority stressed that based on the 2020 survey, approximately 47.1 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, and only 15 percent of the population enjoys food security.

The country's population is reported to be 36.4 million, with Kabul city being the most populous, hosting over 6.1 million residents.

\$ 8 million raisin processing plant inaugurated in Kabul

KABUL (Pajhwok): A raisin processing factory has been set up with an investment of eight million US dollars in Istalif district of capital Kabul.

The factory has the annual capacity to process 10,000 tonnes of raisins.

Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, addressing the inauguration ceremony, described the execution of the factory as a significant step toward enhancing the value of agricultural products and had made progress in areas such as irrigation system improvement, construction of cold storage facilities and the establishment of processing and packaging factories.

Baradar stressed the importance of quality and packaging standards for agricultural exports and

highlighted their role in boosting Afghanistan's credibility and trade relations.

He said: "IEA is focusing heavily on regional connectivity to enhance trade, and fortunately, Afghanistan's railway network has expanded, strengthening and broadening the country's commercial ties with many nations."

He added that efforts were being made to fully activate the Lapis Lazuli Corridor, and discussions on this matter were recently held with participating countries during the latest ECO summit, aiming to improve Afghanistan's access to European markets.

According to him, the interim government has created favourable conditions for investment across various sectors, and investors can now engage

in agriculture, industry, mining, energy, telecommunications, transport, and services.

Mullah Baradar welcomed the investment and operational launch of the Afghan Samun Raisin Processing Factory and assured its officials of all necessary cooperation.

He urged them to prioritize quality and standardized processing and packaging over quantity.

The Afghan Samun Raisin Processing Factory is built on 64 acres of land, with an investment of \$8 million.

It has the capacity to process 10,000 tonnes of raisins annually. The processed and packaged raisins will be exported to Russia, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, India, Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and East Asian countries.

Natural disaster risk reduction training starts in Ghazni, Zabul

KABUL (BNA): Educational Programs Launched to Reduce Natural Disasters, Conflict Resolution, and Boost Preparedness in 60 Villages of Ghazni and Zabul Provinces.

According to Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA), educational programs are being launched in cooperation with the international NGO People in Need to raise awareness and preparedness in 60 villages across the Ghazni and Zabul provinces.

Based on a memorandum of understanding between the ANDMA and People in Need, training programs will be provided for 1,800 individuals on topics such as natural disaster awareness, prevention, conflict resolution, and decision-making. The project is funded with \$478,342 USD.

The programs will be implemented in 60 villages of Jaghori and Gelan districts in Ghazni province, and Arghandab and Daichopan districts in Zabul province.

Additionally, 15 local committees will be formed to prevent disaster risks. These committees will receive training in risk management, preparedness, public awareness, climate change, and strengthening community resilience. Risk management kits containing essential tools and supplies will also be distributed.

Furthermore, in coordi-

ation with these committees, work will be done to develop and assess 3D maps for more accurate development planning. An additional \$8,992 USD will be allocated to these committees for disaster prevention activities.

At the signing ceremony, Mullah Nooruddin Turabi emphasized that



these projects must be implemented with transparency and speed so that the beneficiaries can receive support in a timely manner.

Ehsanullah Naem, Deputy of People in Need, added that the project will be implemented in full coordination with provincial authorities.

Continued efforts to clear Kabul streets of beggars

KABUL (TOLOnews): These days, children can be seen in the streets of Kabul who, instead of playing and learning, bear the burden of providing for their families. Some sell goods on the streets, while others, due to lack of better options, have turned to begging, a situation that has made it difficult to distinguish between child laborers and child beggars.

One of these children told TOLOnews: "I go to school and then I work. I take the money home. We have nothing."

Child beggars have repeatedly been collected by the beggar collection committee.

Sahel, a ten-year-old boy, was recently taken from the Kabul airport area to a collection center by the committee.

He said: "Today my mother told me to go work and bring bread. I got the bread but got caught."

Ebrahim, another beggar, said: "I regret why I did this. I will not beg anymore and will work. I am young, Allah provides sustenance."

At the beggar collection center, some familiar faces are seen individuals who have been taken in multiple times but returned to the streets due to poverty and lack of support.

Zabihullah, a 58-year-

old man brought to the center, said: "What can I do? They don't hire me because I'm an elder. I used to work in the past, but now I can't and had to resort to begging. I do this out of necessity."

Official statistics from the Beggar Collection Committee show that over the past four years, around 77,845 people have been collected in Kabul, of which 42,177 were men and 26,700 women.

According to the data, 33,718 individuals were identified as potentially deserving, while 35,159 were deemed undeserving.

Mohammad Arif Faiq, the acting head of the

Beggar Collection Committee, said: "The first time individuals are brought in, they are biometrically registered and then released. If they are caught again, they stay here for seven to ten days. If they are caught a third or fourth time, they are referred to the court."

This comes after the re-establishment of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, when the leader of the Islamic Emirate issued a special decree to collect beggars to reduce the number of beggars, support genuine and deserving individuals, and prevent organized and professional begging activities.

Volcano erupts after quake in Russia’s far east

MOSCOW (AP): A volcano in Russia’s far east erupted on Wednesday, Russian scientists said, hours after a major quake prompted evacuations and tsunami alerts across parts of the Pacific coast.

Eruptions of the Klyuchevskoy volcano — the highest active in Europe and Asia — are quite common, with at least 18 of them happening since 2000 according to the Smithsonian Institution’s Global Volcanism Program. “The Klyuchevskoy is erupting right now,” Russia’s Geophysical Survey said on Telegram, posting photos of an orange blaze on top of the 4,700 meter (15,000 feet) volcano.

“Red-hot lava is observed flowing down the western slope. There is a powerful glow above the volcano and explosions,” it added. Earlier on Wednesday, an 8.8 magnitude earthquake struck off the coast of Russia’s far eastern Kamchatka region.

The tsunami warning in Kamchatka was lifted 11 hours later as the quake causing massive waves have spared the sparsely populated area close to Japan. No major damage or casualties from its eruptions were ever recorded, with the closest big city of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsk located hundreds of kilometers away.

Meanwhile, tsunami warnings and advisories have been issued for several countries with Pacific coastlines, including Japan, after a massive earthquake off Russia’s Far East coast. Waves generated by the powerful magnitude 8.8 earthquake in Kamchatka Peninsula struck parts of Russia, Japan and Hawaii on Wednesday. The earthquake and the subsequent tsunami warning have triggered evacuations across the Pacific, with Japan asking nearly two million people to evacuate.

Tsunami warnings were also

issued for Taiwan, the Philippines and Alaska’s Aleutian Islands, with advisories issued for much of the US West Coast.

So, how strong was the quake and how many countries have been hit by tsunami waves? Tsunami waves struck parts of Kamchatka, partially flooding the port and a fish processing plant in the town of Severo-Kurilsk and sweeping vessels from their moorings, regional officials and Russia’s emergency ministry said. A tsunami height of 3-4 metres (10 to 13 feet) was recorded in Kamchatka.

The Russian Pacific town of Severo-Kurilsk was hit by waves at least 3 metres (9.8ft) high, and the most powerful was as big as 5 metres (16.4ft), Russia’s Ria Novosti news agency reported, citing emergency services. The seaport town in the Sakhalin region was flooded, forcing the evacuation of its 2,000 residents, Russia’s Ministry of Emergencies and Disaster Relief said.

“A state of emergency is in effect in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy” Mayor Yevgeny Belyaev said in a social media post. Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy, home to some 165,000 people, is the administrative centre of the Kamchatka Peninsula. Japan, which was affected by a devastating 2011 tsunami, has been hit by four to five rounds of waves. The Japan Meteorological Agency warned tsunami waves showed no signs of receding. The height of waves continues to grow, from 20cm (0.6ft) earlier today to 1.3 metres (4.2ft) in the northeast of the country, it said.

Tsunami alarms sounded in coastal towns across Japan’s Pacific coast and evacuation orders were issued for tens of thousands of people. Workers evacuated the stricken Fukushima nuclear plant, where a meltdown following the 2011 tsunami caused a

radioactive disaster, operator TEPCO said.

Footage on public broadcaster NHK showed scores of people on the northern island of Hokkaido on the roof of a building, sheltering under tents from the beating sun, as fishing boats left harbours to avoid potential damage from incoming waves. Shortly after 07:30 GMT, the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center said waves of up to 1.7 metres (5.5ft) were affecting the Hawaiian islands. Hawaii Governor Josh Green said data from Midway Atoll, between Japan and Hawaii, measured waves from peak to trough of 6 feet (1.8 metres). Governor Green had earlier said all flights in and out of Maui had been cancelled. The first tsunami waves were detected in Monterey, California at 12:48am local time (05:48 GMT), according to data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association. Elsewhere, the US Tsunami Warning Centres said waves as high as 3 metres (9.8ft) could hit Ecuador, while waves of 1 to 3 metres (3.3-9.8ft) were possible in Chile, Peru, Costa Rica, Japan and some Pacific islands.

Chris Elders, a structural geology expert at Curtin University in Australia, told Al Jazeera that Wednesday’s earthquake occurred in the Pacific Ring of Fire, an “area of significant volcanic activity and also earthquake activity”. “In this particular part of the Pacific Ocean, the Pacific Ocean is moving down underneath the eastern side of Russia ... and it’s that movement of the tectonic plates that produces these very large earthquakes,” Elders said. “The earthquake causes the seabed to lift up a little bit, and that displaces the water sideways, producing the tsunami wave, and it’ll spread away from the epicentre,” he said.



MOSCOW: Klyuchevskoy volcano in Russia’s far east erupted, Russian scientists said, hours after a major quake prompted evacuations and tsunami alerts across parts of the Pacific coast.

ATC adjourns cases against PTI founder, workers

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: An Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) on Wednesday adjourned hearing till October 4, against PTI Leaders and workers in a case pertaining to protest of November 26. ATC Judge Tahir Abbas Sappra heard the case and also issued the arrest warrants against absent accused. Opposition Leader Omar Ayub submitted requests for exemption from attendance which was approved. The court on the occasion ordered to provide the copes of case challan to PTI leader Azam Khan Swati.

The court noted that the prosecution has also submitted challans of those accused whose bails could not be decided yet. It asked the prosecution to present arguments at the next hearing whether challans of those accused whose bail has not been decided can be presented. The court adjourned hearing of Kohsar and Noon police station cases till August 4.

Hearing of Aabpara and Tarnol police station cases adjourned till August 11. Meanwhile, the court also heard two cases of Azadi March against the workers and PTI founder. The hearing of case number 242 of Khanna police station adjourned without any action till September 5. The process of declaring the three accused of case number 243 of Khanna police station also initiated and case is adjourned until August 2.

Hearing of case number 1033 of Kohsar police station adjourned until tomorrow. Arrest warrants issued for the absent accused. The challan of case number 551 of Kohsar police station also submitted to the court. The court issued summons notices to Ali Bukhari, Shoaib Shaheen and other accused. The hearing of the case adjourned until September 6. Sardar Muhammad Masroof Khan, Aamna Ali and Murtaza Tori appeared in the court on behalf of the PTI workers. PTI leaders and workers were booked under terrorism and other sections at Noon, Kohsar, Aabpara and Cases are registered in other.

NDMA issues warning

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Wednesday issued a warning about the heightened risk of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs) in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), amid intensified monsoon activity across the country.

In a nationwide, impact-based weather alert, the NDMA cautioned against potential urban flooding, landslides, and GLOFs, urging citizens to take precautionary measures and avoid unnecessary travel during the forecast period from July 31 to August 3. Weak monsoon are currently entering upper and central Pakistan and are expected to intensify due to the influence of a westerly wave. This weather system poses significant hazards, particularly for urban and low-lying areas of Punjab and KP. Urban flooding is forecast in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Gujranwala, Lahore, Sialkot, Khushab, Narowal, and other cities, with sudden swellings expected in Punjab’s Bein, Basanter, and Deg Nullahs. Residents of flood-prone areas are advised to remain vigilant, limit outdoor activities, and stay informed of weather updates.

The prime minister paid tribute to the sacrifices made by officers, soldiers, and civilians in the war against terror, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. "Their sacrifices will not be forgotten. Peace and stability come at a heavy cost, and our nation stands indebted," he said. PM Shehbaz directed the cabinet's attention to major achievements in the power sector.

He lauded Minister for Power Sardar Owais Leghari, Secretary Dr. Fakhre Alam, and their teams for their "revolutionary steps" and disciplined efforts. Special praise was extended to the Privatization Commission Chairman Muhammad Ali, the taskforce, and notably the Pakistan Army’s leader-

US to impose 25% tariff on India, says Trump

WASHINGTON (Reuters): US President Donald Trump said on Wednesday that United States will impose a 25% tariff on goods imported from India starting on August 1. Trump said India will also face an unspecified penalty on Aug 1, but he did elaborate on the amount or what it was for.

"While India is our friend, we have, over the years, done relatively little business with them because their Tariffs are far too high, among the highest in the World, and they have the most strenuous and obnoxious non-monetary Trade Barriers of any Country," Trump wrote in a Truth Social post.

"They have always bought a vast majority of their military equipment from Russia, and are Russia's largest buyer of energy, along with China, at a time when everyone wants Russia to stop the killin in Ukraine — all things not good!" India's commerce ministry, which is leading the trade negotiations with the United States, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Trump's decision dashes hopes of a limited trade agreement between the two countries, which had been under negotiation for several months. US and Indian trade negotiators had held multiple rounds of discussions to resolve contentious issues, particularly over market access for American agricultural and dairy products.

Despite progress in some areas, Indian officials resisted opening the domestic market to imports of wheat, corn, rice and genetically modified soybeans, citing risks to the livelihood of millions of Indian farmers. The new tariffs are expected to impact India's goods exports to the US, estimated at around \$87 billion in 2024, including labour-intensive products such as garments, pharmaceuticals, gems and jeweler, and petrochemicals.

The United States currently has a \$45.7 billion trade deficit with India. India now joins a growing list of countries facing higher tariffs under Trump's "Liberation Day" trade policy, aimed at reshaping US trade relations by demanding greater reciprocity. The White House had previously warned India about its high average applied tariffs — nearly 39% on agricultural products, with rates climbing to 45% on vegetable oils and around 50% on apples and corn.

The setback comes despite earlier commitments by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Trump to conclude the first phase of a trade deal by autumn 2025 and expand bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030, up from \$191 billion in 2024. US manufacturing exports to India, valued at around \$42 billion in 2024, as well as energy exports such as liquefied natural

gas, crude oil, and coal, could also face retaliatory action if India chooses to respond in kind. Indian officials have previously indicated that they view the US as a key strategic partner, particularly in counterbalancing China. But they have emphasized the need to preserve policy space on agriculture, data governance, and state subsidies.

Washington has long sought to develop a deeper partnership with New Delhi, which is seen as a bulwark against China. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has established a good working relationship with Trump, and the two leaders are likely to further boost cooperation between their countries.

The Census Bureau reported that the US ran a \$45.8 billion trade imbalance in goods with India last year, meaning it imported more than it exported. At a population exceeding 1.4 billion people, India is the world's largest country and a possible geopolitical counterbalance to China. India and Russia have close relations, and New Delhi has not supported Western sanctions on Moscow over its war in Ukraine. The new tariffs could put India at a disadvantage in the US market relative to Vietnam, Bangladesh and, possibly, China, said Ajay Sahai, director general of the Federation of Indian Export Organizations. "We are back to square one as Trump hasn't spelled out what the penalties would be in addition to the tariff," Sahai said. "The demand for Indian goods is bound to be hit."

The new tariffs on India could complicate its goal of doubling bilateral trade with the US to \$500 billion by 2030. The two countries have had five rounds of negotiations for a bilateral trade agreement. While US has been seeking greater market access and zero tariff on almost all its exports, India has expressed reservations on throwing open sectors such as agriculture and dairy, which employ a bulk of the country's population for livelihood, Indian officials said.

When Trump in February met with Modi, the US president said that India would start buying American oil and natural gas. Trump discussed his policies on trade and tariffs with reporters accompanying him Tuesday on the flight home following a five-day visit to Scotland. He declined to comment then when asked about reports that India was bracing for a US tariff rate of at least 25 percent, saying, "We're going to see." Trump also said the outlines of a trade framework with India had not yet been finalized. Once back at the White House on Tuesday, Trump indicated that there were no plans to announce new tariff rates on Wednesday, a claim that turned out to be inaccurate.

PM approves reforms

(Continued from Page 1)

While addressing a meeting of the federal cabinet, the prime minister expressed concern over the recent heavy rains and floods in northern Pakistan. PM Shehbaz expressed grief over the loss of lives and widespread destruction, particularly in Diamer, Gilgit-Baltistan, and parts of Punjab.

"These floods have left many families shattered. Houses were swept away and lives lost. Our response must be swift and compassionate," he stated. He requested Minister for Religious Affairs, Sardar Yousaf, to lead a Fateha for the victims of the floods and the martyrs in the fight against terrorism.

The prime minister paid tribute to the sacrifices made by officers, soldiers, and civilians in the war against terror, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. "Their sacrifices will not be forgotten. Peace and stability come at a heavy cost, and our nation stands indebted," he said. PM Shehbaz directed the cabinet's attention to major achievements in the power sector.

He lauded Minister for Power Sardar Owais Leghari, Secretary Dr. Fakhre Alam, and their teams for their "revolutionary steps" and disciplined efforts. Special praise was extended to the Privatization Commission Chairman Muhammad Ali, the taskforce, and notably the Pakistan Army’s leader-

ship for their successful negotiations with Independent Producers (IPPs), which he said had saved "billions of rupees for the national exchequer."

"The performance of our officers and taskforces sets a new benchmark. We dismissed non-performing distribution companies, saved the public purse, and restored public confidence. This is the kind of dedication every ministry must emulate," he said. PM Shehbaz recounted his visit to the Lahore Railway Station, which he last visited in 1993. He commended Federal Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi and his team for modernizing the station. "It's now a facility worthy of the people, air-conditioned, organized, and dignified. This model should be replicated nationwide," he added.

Addressing international developments, PM Shehbaz hailed Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar's recent diplomatic engagements in the U.S., particularly his participation in the US-France Conference on Gaza at the United Nations. "Pakistan raised a clear voice for Gaza at a time when silence was not an option. The suffering of the children of Gaza is unbearable. No one with a conscience can turn away," said the prime minister.

He revealed that he had directed the Chairman of NDMA to dispatch two special aid consignments to Gaza via Egypt and Jordan, underlining Pakistan's

unwavering humanitarian commitment. Looking ahead to the UN General Assembly in September, PM Shehbaz vowed that Pakistan would join the international community in calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. "We are united as a nation on this. Our stance is clear, principled, and unwavering." PM Shehbaz urged the cabinet to maintain focus on performance. "Each of you holds my respect, but this is not about positions, it's about results. Nothing succeeds like success, and that's what Pakistan deserves."

Federal Cabinet has also approved the Green Building Code of Pakistan, and the Rainwater Harvesting Provisions for Building Code of Pakistan. These new national standards will ensure green, energy-efficient and water-conserving buildings.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's vision for environmental preservation, cleaner air for citizens and energy efficiency is the main force behind this wonderful development, aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Federal Minister for Science and Technology, Khalid Hussain Magasi, and Federal Secretary, Sajid Baloch, spearheaded the development of these codes, under Prime Minister's vision, through extensive consultations with provinces, federal ministries and other relevant stakeholders and developed consensus.

PHC seeks KP govt’s response

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has issued a notice to Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa regarding use of the Governor's House in Nathia Gali for commercial purposes, on Wednesday.

PHC two-member bench comprising Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Dr. Khurshid Iqbal has also allowed the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to use the Governor's House for official purposes.

The counsel Shumail Ahmad Butt and Sheraz Butt advocates argued that the Governor's House has a constitutional and historical status and should be used for official purposes. The court has issued a notice to the provincial government, seeking a response on how the government allowed the Governor's House to be used for commercial purposes.

The lawyer has stated that the Governor's House is provided to the Governor as an official residence under the Constitution and its status can only be changed through a presidential order.

The provincial government had handed over the Governor's House to the Tourism Department, which started using it as a rest house and opened it to the public. Moreover, this action is unlawful and the status of the Governor's House cannot be changed without a presidential order, the lawyers argued.

PHC has allowed the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to use the Governor's House in Nathia Gali and has sought a response from the provincial government.

Bilawal shocked over losses in China

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has expressed deep sorrow over the tragic loss of lives and property in China caused by heavy monsoon rains, flooding, and landslides.

According to the press release issued by the Media Cell Bilawal House, Chairman PPP conveyed heartfelt condolences to the people and government of China, stating that the thoughts and prayers of every Pakistani, including those of the Pakistan Peoples Party, are with the affected families during this difficult time. Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari further said that Pakistan and China are not merely neighboring countries, but nations whose peoples' hearts beat in unison. He said the Pakistan-China relationship is a time-tested bond between two steadfast friends and brothers, founded on unwavering trust and unmatched affection.

46 more Palestinians killed by Israeli fire

GAZA STRIP (AP): Israeli strikes and gunfire in the Gaza Strip killed at least 46 Palestinians overnight into Wednesday morning, most of them among crowds seeking food, local hospitals said.

The dead include more than 30 people who were killed while seeking humanitarian aid, according to that treated dozens of wounded people. The Israeli military didn't immediately comment on any of the strikes, but says it only targets militants and blames civilian deaths on Hamas, because the group's militants operate in densely populated areas.

The deaths came as the United Kingdom announced that it would recognize a Palestinian state in September, unless Israel agrees to a ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war, following a similar declaration by France's president. Israel's foreign ministry said that it rejected the British statement. The Shifa hospital in Gaza City said that it received 12 people who were killed Tuesday night when Israeli forces opened fire toward crowds awaiting aid trucks coming from the Zikim crossing in northwestern Gaza. Thirteen others were killed in strikes in the Jabaliya refugee camp, and the northern towns of Beit Lahiya and Beit Hanoun, the hospital said.

In the southern city of Khan Younis, the Nasser hospital said it received the bodies of 16 people who it says were killed Tuesday evening while waiting for aid trucks close to the newly-built Morag corridor, which separates Khan Younis from the southernmost city of Rafah. The hospital received another body for a man killed in a strike on a tent in Khan Younis, it said.

The Awda hospital in the urban Nuseirat refugee camp said that it received the bodies of four Palestinians who it says were killed Wednesday by Israeli fire close to an aid distribution site run by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, or GHF, in the Netzarim corridor area, south of the Wadi Gaza. In addition, seven Palestinians, including a child, have died of malnutrition-related causes in the Gaza Strip in the past 24 hours, the territory's health ministry said on Wednesday. A total of 89 children have died of malnutrition since the war began in Gaza. The ministry said that 65 Palestinian adults have also died of

malnutrition-related causes across Gaza since late June, when it started counting deaths among adults.

Israel's military offensive has killed more than 60,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. Its count doesn't distinguish between militants and civilians. The ministry operates under the Hamas government. The UN and other international organizations see it as the most reliable source of data on casualties.

Meanwhile, King Abdullah II of Jordan said on Wednesday that the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip is among the worst in modern history, as the Israeli military campaign in the Palestinian coastal enclave reaches its 22nd month.

He affirmed that "Jordan has been, and will remain, the greatest support for Gaza's people, who are suffering from a humanitarian catastrophe unlike anything witnessed in recent history." During a meeting with palace representatives at Al Husseininya Palace, King Abdullah emphasized Jordan's ongoing diplomatic efforts to end the Gaza conflict. He highlighted discussions with Germany and Canada, as well as coordination with Arab leaders and international partners, aimed at enhancing the humanitarian response in Gaza.

"The suffering of our brethren in Gaza strikes at the very sense of our humanity, not just because it is happening at our doorstep, but also because this country was built on compassion, on standing with those who suffer," he said. "No matter how much we do, it can never measure up to the scale of the horror Palestinians in Gaza endure every single day, not when entire families are being erased and children are being starved."

"But that doesn't mean that we are not doing everything in our power. We are. And we will continue to do so, relentlessly and without hesitation," he said, Petra news agency reported. The Jordanian leadership has been steadfast in its support of Palestinian rights, including the establishment of statehood and an end to Israeli occupation policies. Jordan was one of the first countries to conduct airlift missions in the early days of the Israeli war, delivering relief to Gaza, and dispatching hundreds of aid convoy trucks to the territory since late 2023.

PMS Shamsher conducts exercise with USS Fitzgerald

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: PNS SHAMSHEER and USS FITZGERALD conducted a Passage Exercise (PASSEX) in the North Indian Ocean, underscoring the maritime cooperation between the two navies.

The exercise featured a series of professional naval



engagements aimed at enhancing interoperability. These interactions reaffirm the shared commitment of both navies to maritime security and regional stability

35 pleas filed against freezing assets in Kohistan Scandal

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Almost 35 applications have been filed at Accountability courts against freezing of assets in Kohistan financial scandal. The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has frozen assets worth billions of rupees in connection with the Kohistan financial scandal.

According to NAB sources, the assets were frozen after court orders, and several individuals have filed objections against the freezing of their assets. The Kohistan scandal involves

the embezzlement of over 40 billion rupees from the national treasury under the guise of development projects. NAB has launched an investigation into the scandal and has arrested eight suspects.

NAB has frozen various movable and immovable assets of the suspects, including cash, foreign currency, gold, luxury vehicles, and properties. According to NAB, 20 freezing orders have been issued, and 35 objections have been filed against the freezing of assets. The objections have been

filed in four special accountability courts in Peshawar, and the courts are currently hearing the cases. NAB has stated that the suspects have requested the courts to unfreeze their assets.

NAB has arrested eight suspects in connection with the scandal, and seven of them have been sent to jail on judicial remand after completing their investigation. One suspect, Fazal Rahim, is still under investigation and is in NAB's custody. NAB has taken swift action in this case, freezing assets and arresting suspects.k