

Head Constable killed F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: A speeding dumper on Thursday hit a motorcycle, killing a Head Constable from Mohmand police and injuring his fellow rider in Shabqadar tehsil of Charsadda district, police said. According to police report, the incident took place near Dhand Pul on Mohmand Highway, where a speeding dumper truck collided with a motorcycle.



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Iran committed to NPT, says FM

TEHRAN (Reuters): Iran remains committed to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and its safeguards agreement, Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said on Thursday, a day after Tehran enacted a law suspending cooperation with the UN nuclear watchdog.

“Our cooperation with the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) will be channelled through Iran’s Supreme National Security Council for obvious safety and security reasons,” Araqchi wrote in a post on X. President Masoud Pezeshkian on Wednesday enacted the legislation passed by parliament last week to suspend cooperation with the IAEA, a move the US called “unacceptable.”

Araqchi’s comment on X was in response to a call from Germany’s Foreign Ministry urging Tehran to reverse its decision to shelve cooperation with the IAEA. Araqchi accused Germany of “explicit support for Israel’s unlawful attack on Iran, including safeguarded nuclear sites.”

Iran has accused the IAEA of siding with Western countries and providing a justification for Israel’s June 13-24 airstrikes on Iranian nuclear installations, which began a day after the UN agency’s board of governors voted to declare Tehran in violation of its obligations under the NPT. Western powers have long suspected that Iran has sought to develop the means to build atomic bombs through its declared civilian atomic energy program. Iran has repeatedly said it is enriching uranium only for peaceful nuclear ends.

IAEA inspectors are mandated to ensure compliance with the NPT by seeking to verify that nuclear programs in treaty countries are not diverted for military purposes. The law that went into effect on Wednesday mandates that any future inspection of Iranian nuclear sites by the IAEA needs approval by Tehran’s Supreme National Security Council.

“We are aware of these reports. The

IAEA is awaiting further official information from Iran,” the Vienna-based global nuclear watchdog said in a statement. US State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce told a regular briefing on Wednesday that Iran needed to cooperate fully with the IAEA without further delay.

Meanwhile, a senior Iranian diplomat said on Thursday his country remains open to diplomacy provided the United States offers guarantees it will not resort to military action against the Islamic Republic. The remarks came as US news website Axios, citing two unidentified sources, reported that White House Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff was planning to meet Iran’s foreign minister and chief negotiator, Abbas Araghchi, in Oslo next week.

Neither Tehran nor Washington confirmed the Axios report, which said a final date for the talks has yet to be set. “We are for diplomacy,” Iran’s deputy foreign minister, Majid Takht-Ravanchi told NBC News, adding that the US should “convince us that they are not going to use military force while we are negotiating.”

“That is an essential element for our leadership to be in a position to decide about the future round of talks,” he added. Tehran and Washington had held five rounds of nuclear talks since April 12 and were set to hold a new round two days before Israel launched a bombing campaign against Iran on June 13.

The Israeli strikes targeted Iranian nuclear sites and killed several senior military officials and nuclear scientists. On June 22, the US launched unprecedented strikes of its own on Iranian nuclear facilities at Fordow, Isfahan and Natanz. More than 900 people were killed in Iran during the conflict, according to the judiciary.

The Israeli attacks drew waves of retaliatory drone and missile fire, killing 28 people in Israel, according to authorities. A ceasefire between Iran and Israel was agreed on June 24.

During the nuclear talks, which were stalled because of the fighting, Iran and the US had been at sharp odds over Iran’s uranium enrichment, which Tehran considers a “non-negotiable” right and which Washington has called a “red line”. Iran has insisted on its right to enrich uranium even after the 12-day war with Israel.

“Our policy has not changed on enrichment,” Takht-Ravanchi told NBC News. “Iran has every right to do enrichment within its territory. The only thing that we have to observe is not to go for militarisation. “ At the same time, Iran affirmed its commitment to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), as it accused Germany of “malice” over its criticism of Tehran’s decision to suspend cooperation with the UN nuclear watchdog.

“Iran remains committed to the NPT and its Safeguards Agreement,” Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said in a post on X. “The explicit German support for the bombing of Iran has obliterated the notion that the German regime harbours anything but malice towards Iranians,” he added in response to a German foreign office post criticising the move.

On Wednesday, Iran officially suspended its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency, citing the agency’s failure to condemn Israeli and US strikes on Iranian nuclear sites. In a post on X, Germany’s foreign office called on Iran to “reverse this decision,” saying it sends a “devastating message”. “It eliminates any possibility of international oversight of the Iranian nuclear programme, which is crucial for a diplomatic solution,” it added. Araghchi lambasted what he called Germany’s “explicit support for Israel’s unlawful attack on Iran” on June 13, killing top Iranian military commanders and nuclear scientists. On June 17, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said Israel was doing the “dirty work ... for all of us” by targeting Iran’s nuclear infrastructure.

PM arrives in Azerbaijan to attend ECO Summit

SHUSHA-Azerbaijan (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday arrived at Shusha city of Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan on a two-day official visit to participate in the Summit of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

Upon his arrival at Fuzuli International Airport, the Prime Minister and his delegation were warmly received by Azerbaijan’s Minister of Culture Adil Karimli, Azerbaijan’s Ambassador to Pakistan Khazar Farhadov, Pakistan’s Ambassador to Azerbaijan Qasim Mueenuddin, and other senior diplomatic and government officials, a Prime Minister’s Office news release said.

The Pakistani delegation accompanying the prime minister includes Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Tariq Fatemi.

During his visit, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will address the ECO Summit in Khankendi, where he is expected to highlight Pakistan’s vision for enhanced regional cooperation, trade, and connectivity among member states. On the sidelines of the summit, the Prime Minister will also hold important bilateral meetings with other world leaders attending the event, aiming to strengthen Pakistan’s diplomatic and economic ties in the region.

4 terrorists killed in Mastung

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Four terrorists were killed by security personnel in Mastung following a bank robbery.

This was revealed by spokesman for provincial government, Shahid Rind on Thursday in a press conference at the Chief Minister’s Secretariat, disclosing that the criminals stole Rs40 million from various financial institutions in Mastung. He acknowledged the incident briefly created a perception of terrorist dominance, but emphasized the swift response by law enforcement.

The spokesman announced enhanced security protocols for both public buildings and financial establishments. Rind also highlighted the allocation of funds within the current budget for the District Coordination Committee, aiming to strengthen local governance. He clarified that no Deputy Commissioner in the province currently holds the position of project director for any developmental scheme. Rind stated the administration has reevaluated its security strategy in light of recent events.

Speaker writes to PM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A heated exchange has erupted between National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq and Defence Minister Khawaja Asif over the controversial issue of salary hikes for top parliamentary positions.

Following persistent criticism and allegations from Khawaja Asif, the Speaker has written a formal letter to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, clarifying his stance on the matter. According to sources, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has completely dissociated himself from the pay raise issue, stating in his letter that he neither initiated nor supports the salary increase.

“I have no connection or interest in this matter. Feel free not to increase my salary—I am not involved,” the speaker wrote, effectively leaving the decision in the hands of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Public holidays announced F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has announced public holidays on July 5 and 6, corresponding to the 9th and 10th of Muharram-ul-Haram. According to an official notification issued, the holidays, falling on a Saturday and Sunday typically non-working days in Pakistan will further facilitate citizens in observing the religious significance of these days with solemnity and respect.



SHUSHA: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif arriving in Azerbaijan to attend 17th Summit of ECO.

Digital transaction system essential: PM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday stressed to implement the digital transaction system across the country saying it was vital to bring transparency to the economy.

He was chairing a weekly meeting on cashless and digital economy at the Prime Minister’s House. On the occasion, the prime minister emphasized the need to facilitate payments between citizens and businesses and to raise awareness about the use of digital systems. He instructed the committees formed for the cashless economy to work closely with all stakeholders to present doable recommendations.

During the meeting, the prime minister was briefed that following the previous meeting, the Digital Payments Innovation and Adoption Committee, the Digital Public Infrastructure Committee, and the Government Payments Committee had been established. A detailed briefing was given in the meeting with respect to the committee’s proposals and strategies regarding the digitization of the economy.

It was informed that the State Bank of Pakistan was developing a strategy to simplify and ease digital payment methods for merchants. A simplified package will be introduced to encourage and include small businesses in digital payments. The target is to increase the number of mobile app users for digital payments from 95 million to 120 million, and the number of merchants using QR codes will be increased from 0.9 million to 2 million. The total volume of digital payments is aimed to increase from Rs 7.5 billion to Rs 12 billion.

The prime minister directed that all these targets should be doubled. The meeting was further informed that the “Digital National Pakistan” project for the digital economy had been initiated. The Islamabad City mobile application has so far recorded 1.3 million downloads, offering 15 services. Through the Islamabad City App, Rs 15.5 billion has been collected under ICT Excise and Taxation, the meeting was informed. Work is progressing rapidly on the completion of the

Digital Pakistan ID project, while E-stamping facilities will also be launched in Islamabad soon. The meeting was further informed that efforts were underway to provide Wi-Fi internet services across Islamabad, particularly in hospitals, educational institutions, government offices, parks, and metro bus lines.

The prime minister instructed that all these facilities should also be introduced in all federal areas, Azad Jammu & Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan. The meeting was attended by Minister for Information Technology and Telecom Shaza Fatima, Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik, Prime Minister’s Advisor Dr. Tauqir Shah, Minister of State for Finance and Railways Bilal Azhar Kayani, and other senior government officials.

Shehbaz stresses accelerated efforts to eradicate polio from Pakistan: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif stressing to accelerate efforts to eradicate polio from the country, expressed the resolve that despite all challenges and difficulties, the government, with the support of international, provincial, and local teams, will soon achieve the goal of a polio-free Pakistan.

“We are committed to protect every child in Pakistan from this crippling disease and achieve a polio-free Pakistan,” the prime minister said while chairing a meeting of the Anti-Polio Task Force here. He stressed the need for full dedication and seriousness to ensure that every child across the country receives multiple doses of the polio vaccine and remains protected.

The prime minister acknowledged significant progress in the fight against polio due to the dedication of frontline workers, the commitment of the government of Pakistan, and support from the partners. He praised the efforts and cooperation of provincial governments, Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Jammu & Kashmir, and law enforcement agencies in the anti-polio campaign.

“The safety of polio workers is our top priority,” he said adding that all stakeholders, including provincial governments, must unite and intensify their efforts to eradicate polio. The prime minister expressed gratitude to all partners supporting the government in its polio eradication efforts.

Top Russian navy general killed in Ukraine

MOSCOW: The deputy head of the Russian navy, Mikhail Gudkov, has been killed in Russia’s Kursk region, the country’s Ministry of Defence has confirmed. He is one of the most senior Russian commanders to have been killed since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine more than three years ago.

The 42-year-old Gudkov, who was appointed to the position by Russian President Vladimir Putin in March, died “during combat operations” in the border region on Wednesday, the state RIA news agency quoted the ministry as saying on Thursday.

Unofficial Russian and Ukrainian military Telegram channels suggested Gudkov and other Russian officers died as a result of a Ukrainian missile attack on a command post in Kursk. Kyiv’s troops seized parts of the Russian region in a surprise offensive in August 2024.

Although Moscow claimed in April to have fully recovered it, clashes in the area have continued.

Oleg Kozhemyako, the governor of the eastern Russian region of Primorye, where the country’s Pacific Fleet is based, said Gudkov was killed while “carrying out his duty as an officer”. The regional governor added that the naval commander had, until earlier this year, led the fleet’s 155th Guards Naval Infantry Brigade.

“When he became deputy chief of the navy, he did not stop personally visiting the positions of our marines,” Kozhemyako said on Telegram. The confirmation of Gudkov’s death came as Moscow said on Thursday that it had captured the villages of Razine and Milove in eastern Ukraine.

The Ukrainian army, which has not commented on the claim, said earlier in the day that it was “steadfastly holding back” Aljazeera

Russian attempts to gain ground in the area. In other developments, a Russian air strike on port infrastructure in the southern Ukrainian city of Odesa killed two people, authorities said on Thursday.

The attack involved a ballistic missile fitted with cluster munitions, according to the regional governor, Oleh Kiper. Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was in Denmark on Thursday as Copenhagen assumed its six-month presidency of the European Union.

His Danish counterpart, Mette Frederiksen, promised to help Kyiv join the bloc, saying her country would “do everything ... to help Ukraine on its path towards EU membership”. Zelenskyy announced on Thursday that his country had signed an agreement with United States company Swift Beat to manufacture hundreds of thousands of drones this year. — Aljazeera

PA Speaker files references against 26 SIC MPs with ECP

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Punjab Assembly Speaker Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan has filed disqualification references against 26 members of the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) with the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

On June 27, 2025, the opposition MPs allegedly caused disruption and damaging property during a Punjab Assembly session. In response, Speaker Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan suspended the membership of these 26 SIC lawmakers.

Later on June 28, the Speaker announced his decision to refer the matter to the ECP for the disqualification of the suspended members. According to sources, he visited the ECP office in Islamabad to formally submit the references, which include evidence of the MPs’ disorderly actions. The references aim to terminate the membership of the 26 SIC MPs, citing their violation of assembly decorum and constitutional norms. The ECP is expected to review the references and decide on the lawmakers’ fate in accordance with legal provisions.

IHC acquits four PTI members

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court on Thursday acquitted four PTI members, who were previously convicted for attacking Islamabad’s Ramna police station during the May 9 riots.

The acquitted individuals – Mira Khan, Muhammad Akram, Shahzeb, and Sohail Khan – had been handed multiple sentences by an Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) in May this year. The riots erupted on May 9, 2023 following the arrest of PTI founder Imran Khan, leading to violent protests across the country. The ATC had convicted several PTI supporters under numerous sections of the PPC, CrPC, and Section 7 of the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA), 1997, imposing sentences ranging from a few months to 10 years.

CM visits CMH, inquires after injured of suicide attack

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur visited CMH Peshawar to inquire after the security personnel injured in the recent suicide attack in North Waziristan.

He was accompanied by Adviser to the Chief Minister on Information and Public Relations, Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif, Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shahab Ali Shah and Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Muhammad Abid Majeed.

The Chief Minister individually met with the injured security personnel under treatment at the hospital, presented them with bouquets and expressed good wishes for their speedy recovery.

He prayed for the martyrs of the terrorist attack, stating that the fallen heroes and wounded soldiers had valiantly thwarted the suicide bombing attempt. “The sacrifices of our security forces in restoring peace and fighting terrorism are unparalleled,” he said, adding, “We salute those who laid down their lives and their families for the sake of the country.”

The Chief Minister emphasized that the morale of both the security forces and the public remains high in the fight against terrorism and that the entire nation stands united with its armed forces. He also announced special support package for the injured personnel and the families of the martyrs.

Eradication of poliovirus discussed: A delegation comprising members of the Polio Oversight Board (POB) called on Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur in Islamabad the other day. The delegation was led by Dr. Christopher Elias, Chair of the POB, and included representatives from the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, Rotary International, and other partner organizations.

Prime Minister’s Focal Person for Polio

Achakzai offers PM talks on unity govt

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Tehreek Tahafuz Ayeen-e-Pakistan (TTAP) chief Mahmood Khan Achakzai has offered to hold talks with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for the formation of a unity government.

“I am ready to hold talks with the prime minister on the matter of unity government formation,” he said while addressing a press conference in Islamabad. Addressing the presser, the veteran politician and Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) chairman

said the country is facing a “constitutional crisis, institutional corruption, and political victimisation.”

“This is not the time to hurl abuses at each other but to unite for the country’s sake,” he said. The PkMAP leader also condemned the “undermining of democratic values” and the arrest of elected representatives from parliament premises. While criticising the role of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and judiciary, Achakzai claimed the general elections 2024 were “manipulated” against the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf

(PTI) and its electoral symbol was “unjustly” revoked.

“We may have differences with [Imran Khan], but the treatment meted out to his party is unjust,” he said, adding that PTI lawmakers and their families were left waiting outside Adiala jail without being allowed to meet.

Commenting over the SC’s reserved seats verdict which had declared PTI ineligible for reserved seats for women and minorities, Achakzai said political parties have “begged for seats” instead of upholding democratic principles.



Catalysing economic renaissance in Pakistan

Muhammad Umair Khan

In the face of mounting economic challenges and a pressing need to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), Pakistan has established the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) which is a first ever initiative of its type designed not just as a reform body, but as a transformative engine for economic revival of the country.

The Council emerges at a critical juncture in Pakistan's trajectory and reflects the unprecedented move towards a progressive Pakistan. SIFC (Special Investment Facilitation Council) was formed back in 2023 by the Government of Pakistan with an aim to facilitate investments, especially foreign into the key sectors of the economy. It will not only act as a catalyst for the economy but will also help bring the Federal Government, Provincial Governments, Military leadership, and private sector experts.

This unprecedented convergence ensures swift decision-making, streamlined regulatory processes, and a high degree of coordination among stakeholders. At its core, SIFC functions as a fast-track decision-making and investment facilitation body. It is structured to bypass the labyrinth of

red tape that has historically plagued investment processes in Pakistan. Through high-level inter-agency cooperation and empowered working groups, SIFC identifies promising projects, removes administrative bottlenecks, and presents ready-to-execute investment opportunities to domestic and foreign investors.

With its focus on Agriculture & Livestock, Mining and Minerals, IT, Energy, Defense production, Tourism, and Hospitality. Each of these sectors has been chosen for its untapped potential and strategic significance for Pakistan's long-term growth. SIFC is not merely an economic instrument it represents a mindset shift in how Pakistan approaches investment and development. It reflects urgency, clarity, and direction. By creating a predictable and secure investment climate, SIFC is working to regain the trust of foreign investors many of whom have previously been wary of political instability, unclear policies, and procedural delays.

Pakistan's economy has often suffered from institutional silos. SIFC acts as a converging point for policy, regulation, and execution, enabling coherence in national economic planning. Instead of offering abstract promises,

SIFC aims to present pre-vetted, fully structured projects with clear returns, ensuring that investors can engage without fear of procedural traps.

Its integrated structure allows the Council to fast-track approvals, settle disputes swiftly, and execute decisions in days instead of months. With Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves fluctuating and external debts mounting, Foreign Direct Investment is a necessity. SIFC's model is engineered to make Pakistan an investment destination, not just a regional footnote. Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar, have shown renewed interest in investing in Pakistan through the SIFC mechanism, especially in energy, agriculture, and infrastructure.

Pakistan's diaspora and private equity groups are also being targeted to return with capital and confidence. SIFC is Pakistan's boldest economic initiative in decades with a fusion of policy, power, and pragmatism. With consistency, transparency, and vision, it could herald a new era of economic sovereignty. In the grand story of Pakistan's economic evolution, SIFC may very well be the inflection point a pivot from potential to performance.

Tessori visits Embassy of Iran

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori visited the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Islamabad and met with Iranian Ambassador Reza Amiri Moghaddam to express solidarity in light of recent Israeli aggression in the region.

During the visit, the Governor paid tribute to those martyred in the attacks and recorded his sentiments in the embassy's condolence book, according to a news release issued here on Thursday.

He strongly condemned the Israeli strikes, calling them a serious threat to global peace, and extended his best wishes for the health and well-being of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei.

Ambassador Reza Amiri Moghaddam congratulated the Governor Sindh on performing Hajj and hosted a luncheon in his honor. He also expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the Government of Pakistan for their continued support during this critical time.

Kotli inland revenue tax collection rised

F.P. Report

MIRPUR: The AJK State Inland Revenue Department, Circle-03 Kotli, has set a new benchmark by collecting a record-breaking sum of over Rs. 1.32 billion in tax revenue during the fiscal year 2024-25.

Assistant Commissioner Inland Revenue Kotli, Shakeel Ahmed Awan, announced this achievement in a press statement, revealing that Rs 1.09 billion was collected in income tax and over Rs. 230 million in other taxes.

Disclosing this, Awan told on Thursday that as compared to the previous fiscal year, there had been a significant improvement, with total collections rising from Rs 1.10 billion to over Rs 1.32 billion. According to him, the final calculations were still underway, and it was expected that these figures might improve further.

Shakeel Ahmed Awan attributed this success not only to teamwork, office discipline, and continuous hard work, but also to departmental reforms and the implementation of modern digital systems.

APHC-AJK invites Mufti Qasim

F.P. Report

KARACHI: A delegation of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir (APHC-AJK) chapter met Mufti Muhammad Qasim Fakhri and Allama Shahenshah Hussain Naqvi and invited them to participate in the rally to be taken out on the occasion of the martyrdom anniversary of Burhan Muzaffar Wani on July 8.

The delegation met with Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan leader and member of the Sindh Assembly Mufti Muhammad Qasim Fakhri, prominent leader of the Shia Ulema Council Allama Syed Shahenshah Hussain Naqvi and head of the Palestine Foundation Dr Maryam Abu Sabir.



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Wafaqi Mohstasib's inspection team visits EOBI



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Responding to a large number of complaints against the Employees Old-Age Benefit Institution (EOBI), a Wafaqi Mohtasib Inspection Team headed by Senior Advisor, Mr. Ahmad Farooq, which visited the EOBI Regional Office here today, directed the organization to ensure safeguarding the rights and interests of the EOBI pensioners and registered employees. It also instructed to provide details regarding the unregistered companies in the country within one week.

The Team included the Wafaqi Mohtasib Office's Registrar Mr. Muhammad Saqib Khan, Consultant Khalid Sial, Investigation

Officer Jamil Ahmad and Assistant Liaison Officer Ijaz Hussain.

The Inspection Team instructed the EOBI administration to conduct a countrywide survey for ascertaining how many companies are still unregistered, which should have been registered with the EOBI, and what action has been initiated against the companies evading registration as per legal requirement. The Senior Advisor on the occasion observed that EOBI is meant for the protection of the rights of the pensioners and registered employees, which it must fulfil as its fundamental responsibility.

The Inspection Team also handed over a questionnaire with the instruction to furnish detailed

reply within one week. It also reviewed the progress on implementation of recommendations made to the organization during the course of previous visits.

Earlier, during a briefing, the Inspection Team was informed that any company or business concern having ten or more than ten employees, must get itself registered with the EOBI and the total number of such organizations presently stood at 155,888, whereas the employees registered with them numbered at 11,555,309. It was further informed that as of today, the EOBI pensioners stood at nearly 802,000, who are getting pension ranging from Rs.10,000/- to Rs.34,000/- per month.

BML calls for long-term financial stability, growth

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Bank Makramah Limited (BML) is making significant strides in its recapitalization efforts, reinforcing its commitment to long-term financial stability and growth. This progress is supported by a recent PKR 5 billion deposit from His Excellency Nasser Abdulla Hussain Lootah, BML's esteemed Sponsor.

This amount, to be recorded as an advance against share subscription pending regulatory approvals, follows his earlier PKR 10 billion capital injection in 2023. In addition,

the proposed merger of Global Haly Development Limited, a company owned by the Sponsor, into BML reflects his substantial commitment, which will total PKR 41 billion. The Bank extends its deepest gratitude to the Sponsor for his unwavering support and vision for BML and Pakistan's banking sector.

In a concurrent strategic move, BML's Board of Directors has approved the sale of Cullinan Tower in Clifton, Karachi, for a confirmed offer of PKR 12 billion. This landmark transaction represents a major

step, which will result in significant liquidity and capital gains for the Bank.

Further bolstering its financial position, the Bank is in the final stage of recovering over PKR 13 billion of its legacy non-performing loans in the near future resulting in a strong impact on its profitability and capital base. All of the above initiatives are projected to increase BML's net assets by around PKR 50 billion. This shall further strengthen the Bank's commitment to better serve its customers and play a significant role in the financial sector of Pakistan.

NAB launches probe into 'illegal recruitments' in SPSC

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has initiated a probe into alleged illegal recruitments and corruption in Sindh Public Service Commission (SPSC). The investigation launched against former Chairman Noor Muhammad Jadhmani and 15 other officials, claims of irregularities in the commission's hiring processes, favoritism and misuse of authority.

NAB has summoned records from the SPSC, demanding comprehensive documentation related to appointments made by the commission. This includes records of court petitions, both pending and resolved, filed against the SPSC. Authorities have directed the current SPSC Chairman to provide the complete record within one week.

Sources within NAB revealed that the 16 officials, including former chairmen,

members, secretaries, controllers, and additional controllers, submitted incomplete recruitment records during initial inquiries. Expressing dissatisfaction, NAB officials have reiterated their demand for a full account of all appointments within the stipulated timeframe.

The investigation has uncovered allegations that government officers manipulated the SPSC examination process to secure jobs for their children and other relatives.

GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA COMMUNICATION & WORKS DEPARTMENT

NOTICE INVITING E-BIDDING

(Single Stage Two Envelope E-Pak Acquisition & Disposal System (EPADS).

The C&W Division No-I Swat at Saidu Sharif, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa invites Electronic Bids from eligible firms / contractors in accordance with KPPRA Procurement rule-2014, amended upto 10-05-2022 on Single Stage Two Envelop procedure for the following works.

S#	Name of Work	E/Cost in Million	Required Category of PEC	Bid Security	Period of completion	Last date and time of submission of E-Bids	Date & Time of opening of Technical Bid
01	Construction/Rehabilitation of Various Black Topping & PCC Roads in UC Dangram, Sangota, Kokarai, Islampur, Manglawar, Akamaroo, Bamakhela, Seer Taligram, Kishawa and VC Guligram, Balogram (PK-05 District Swat). Sub Head: Construction/ Rehabilitation of Various Black Topping & PCC Roads in UC Dangram, Sangota, UC Kokarai, and VC Guligram (PK-5 District Swat	30.00	C-5 & Above	Rs: 600000/-	As per work order	16-07-2025 at 12.00 hours	16-07-2025 at 14.30 hours

- Instruction to Bidders, bidding documents and evaluation criteria can be obtained from this office on any working day or downloaded from E-Pak Acquisition & Disposal System (EPADS) before the submission date/time.
- The bidder should submit their E-bids as per KPPRA Notification No.S.R.O(14)/Vol: 1-24/2021-22 dated: 10-05-2022.
- Complete Detail of Bid Security in shape of CDR i.e Bank Name, CDR Number (s) and Date (s) must be uploaded electronically along with E-bid on the E-Pak Acquisition & Disposal System (EPADS).
- Original copies of Call Deposit for bid security should be enclosed in the Technical Proposal and shall reach to this office before closing date/time.
- All bidders are required to be registered with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Finance Act, 2013 Act No. XXI of 2013.
- Pre-Bid meeting will be scheduled on 03-07-2025 in the office of the undersigned at 11:00 AM.
- The Financial bid will be opened after the approval of Technical bids from competent authority.
- Venue of Bids opening is **Office of the Executive Engineer C&W Division No-I Swat.**

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER

C&W DIVISION NO-I SWAT

Ph: No. 0946-9240117, 920005

Email: xen.cnwbswat@gmail.com

INF (P) 2811/25

Two wanted target killers shot dead in joint operation

F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: In a successful joint operation, City Police and the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) Mardan Region killed two wanted target killers in an exchange of fire on Ghani Khan Road, who were involved in the killing of police constable Farooq.

According to police sources, intelligence was received that two proclaimed offenders wanted in cases of terrorism, murder, and attempted murder -

identified as Ismail, son of Mir Alam, and Hamza, son of Alam Zeb, residents of Kachay Konar, Tehsil Dargai, District Malakand - had arrived at their relatives' house and were planning another terrorist attack.

Acting on the information, police, together with CTD, set up a checkpoint in the Dhabb Banda area. During this, two suspicious motorcycle riders were signaled to stop, but they opened fire on the police upon seeing them. Police returned fire in self-

defense, killing both attackers on the spot.

Police recovered two pistols and a motorcycle from the scene. According to initial identification, both killed suspects were involved in the attack on April 30 on Ghani Khan Road, in which police constable Farooq was martyred while on duty, and an accompanying Health Department employee was injured. Police are verifying the complete criminal record of the killed target killers, and further investigation is underway.

Punjab on edge as rains, lightning, floods predicted

F.P. Report

MULTAN: As the second spell of the monsoon approaches, the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) has issued a high-level alert across Punjab, warning of heavy rains and potential flooding from Saturday, July 5, through Thursday, July 10.

The anticipation of the severe weather, PDMA has directed all provincial departments, including WASA, Rescue 1122, and local administrations, to remain on high alert. Additional instructions have also been sent to the Health Department, Irrigation Department, Communication and Works, Local Government, and Livestock Department to prepare for emergency response.

According to PDMA Punjab, the second phase of monsoon rainfall is expected to hit several parts of the province. Showers will

drench Rawalpindi, Murree, Galiyat, Attock, Chakwal, Jhelum, Mandi Bahauddin, Gujranwala, Hafizabad, Wazirabad, Lahore, Sheikhpura, Sialkot, Narowal, Sahiwal, Jhang, Toba Tek Singh, Nankana Sahib, Chiniot, and Faisalabad.

Meanwhile, intense rainfall with thunder and lightning is forecast in Okara, Kasur, Khushab, Sargodha, Bhakkar, and Mianwali. On Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, regions in South Punjab — Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar, Dera Ghazi Khan, Multan, Muzaffargarh, Khanewal, Lodhran, Rajanpur, Rahim Yar Khan, and Layyah — may also experience thunderstorms and heavy showers.

Director General of PDMA Punjab, Irfan Ali Kathia, stated that water levels in major rivers across the province are expected to rise significantly starting July 7. There is a strong possibility of flooding in

river-adjacent areas, hill torrents, and seasonal streams. He also warned that heavy rainfall may lead to urban flooding, particularly in cities of northern and central Punjab.

In line with instructions from Chief Minister Punjab, Maryam Nawaz, all relevant departments have already been alerted in advance to take proactive measures. DG PDMA Irfan Ali Kathia also urged citizens to take safety precautions during inclement weather. "During storms and strong winds, stay in safe places and avoid unnecessary travel," he advised.

He further stressed the importance of protecting children by keeping them away from low-lying waterlogged areas, electric poles, and power lines. Residents were also asked to seek shelter to protect themselves from lightning and to act responsibly during weather emergencies.

Heavy rainfall predicted for parts of Balochistan

F.P. Report

QUETTA: The Meteorological Department Quetta Regional Center issued a weather advisory on Thursday, predicting heavy rain, wind, and thunderstorms in northeastern and southern Balochistan. Districts expected to be affected between the evening of July 3rd and July 4th, and again from July 6th to 8th, include Kalat, Labella, Khuzdar, Awaran, Musakhel, Loralai, Sibbi, Panjgur,

Barkhan, Naseerabad, Jaffarabad, Dera Bugti, and Kohlu.

Hot and humid conditions are anticipated across much of the province. Heavy downpours are also forecast for Khuzdar, Surab, Kalat, Ziarat, Harnai, Kacchi, Sibbi, Zhob, Musakhel, Barkhan, Kohlu, Labella, and Awaran over the next 24 hours. Light to moderate precipitation is also possible in Quetta, Noshki, Loralai, Dukki, Mastung, Killa Saifullah, Panjgur,

Nasirabad, and Jaafarabad.

The forecast for the next 48 hours continues to predict hot and very humid conditions for most areas.

پی اے ایف کیمنپ بڈہ بیر

ایئر ہیڈ کوارٹرز یونٹ پشاور

ٹیکنیکل نوٹس

ٹیکنیکل نوٹس برائے کٹرونی کنٹرولنگ، بالائی سال 2025-26 ایک سال کی مدت کے لیے

نی اے ایف کیمنپ بڈہ بیر سے کوڈ آرکٹ اور فضلہ اٹھانے کے لیے سرپرہ ٹینڈر مطلوب ہیں۔ صرف گورنمنٹ رجسٹرڈ ٹیکنیکل فرمیں ہی شرکت کر سکتی ہیں۔

کوارٹرز یونٹ (پشاور) کے نام 21 جولائی 2025 کو پوٹ 10 بجے ٹیکنیکل کال ٹرنڈ کیلکس،

نی اے ایف کیمنپ بڈہ بیر میں اصل کے ٹیکنیکل کے نام 11 بجے کو ملے جائیں گے۔ ٹیکنیکل نظام کو یہ حق حاصل ہے کہ وہ ٹیکنیکل دعوہ کی بنا پر کوئی بھی ٹینڈر روک دے۔ ٹینڈر کے قواعد و ضوابط ایک کال ٹرنڈ کیلکس نی اے ایف کیمنپ بڈہ بیر سے حاصل کیے جاسکتے ہیں۔ مزید معلومات ان نمبروں سے حاصل کی جاسکتی ہیں۔ / (5201) 091-9210888

03208108062 پراپرٹی رائٹر۔

KARACHI: The Met Office Thursday said that the second spell of this monsoon season has entered in Karachi adding that light rainfall is expected in this spell. "Drizzling and light rainfall will continue in the city until tomorrow (Friday)".

Light rainfall will continue in different areas of the city entire day with intervals. Karachi will again experience drizzling from 08 to 11 July. Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) earlier forecast rainfall in southeastern districts as well as Karachi and other coastal areas of Sindh today.

According to the weather report light to moderate rain with strong winds expected in Sindh's Thar Parkar, Mirpur Khas, Sanghar, Hyderabad, Thatta, Badin, Karachi, Sukkur, Larkana, Jacobabad and Khairpur on 03rd and 04th July. "Isolated heavy fall also expected in southeastern/lower Sindh," according to the weather report.

PMD earlier predicted enhanced monsoon activity in country from 05th July, a westerly wave also approaching upper parts of Pakistan on 06th July. Rainfall is expected in northeastern/southern parts of Baluchistan on July 3-4 and 06th to 08th.



Election Commission to eliminate gender gap in electoral goals: PEC

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Provincial Election Commissioner, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Mr. Saeed Gul, stated that the Election Commission is committed to eliminating the gender gap in the electoral rolls. He expressed these views while inaugurating a one-day training session at the office of the Provincial Election Commissioner, aimed at devising strategies to assist women in obtaining their CNICs. He further informed that the fifth phase of the Inclusive Women CNIC &

Voter Registration Campaign has been launched to reduce the gender gap in the electoral rolls. The campaign is currently underway in the districts of Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera, Hangu, Kohat, Lower Dir, Upper Dir, Mardan, Swabi, Swat, Khyber, Shangla, and Battagram. The training session is expected to significantly contribute to the effectiveness of this campaign. Participants included Joint Provincial Election Commissioners Mr. Muhammad Fareed Afridi and Mr. Shahid Iqbal,

Director Elections Mr. Muhammad Nadeem Khan, Regional Election Commissioners, District Election Commissioners from the concerned districts, and NADRA officials. Saeed Gul highlighted that the previous four phases of the campaign have greatly promoted equal electoral participation for women and other marginalized groups, thereby strengthening democratic inclusion. He emphasized that democracy flourishes when every voice is heard, and every citizen has the oppor-

tunity to shape their future through the power of their vote. The Provincial Election Commissioner proudly shared that the gender gap in the electoral rolls has been reduced from 11.8% to 7.4% by January 2025, which reflects the tireless efforts of the Election Commission and the dedication shown in the earlier phases of the campaign. Deputy Director Media Coordination Mr. Sohail Ahmad and District Election Commissioner Abbottabad Mr. Naved ur Rehman served as Master Trainers during the session.



PESHAWAR Provincial Election Commissioner KP Saeed Gul addressing the participants of ECP and NADRA officers training session.

Seminar for flour mill workers, owners held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A one-day training workshop was organized by Nutrition International in Peshawar, bringing together flour mill owners, workers, and related stakeholders from across Peshawar, Khyber, Kohat, Mardan, Nowshera and Charsadda. The primary objective of the workshop was to learn the millers to register their mills in Millers for Nutrition website, explain about importance of fortified flour and their health benefits in order to promote good health practices as better business approach and to raise awareness about the importance of Food Fortification. The event featured key addresses from Nutrition International's Program Manager Mr. Imtiaz Ali Shah, Zonal Managers Mr.

Rashid Saleem and Mr. Sher Aman, Professor Dr. Iftikhar Alam from Bacha Khan University Charsadda, Professor Dr. Rehana Masood from Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University. In their sessions, the experts emphasized the importance of micronutrients addition in wheat flour. They Highlighted that a significant portion of Pakistan's population is suffering from malnutrition, where flour fortification can play a vital role in addressing these crises. They added that if flour mills adhere to national fortification standards, it could lead to significant improvements in public health. The workshop included practical sessions on Wheat Flour Fortification Processes, quality control, and the use of modern technologies in flour produc-

tion. Experts highlighted that adding essential micronutrients like iron, zinc, folic acid, and vitamin B12 to flour can greatly benefit the health of children, pregnant women, and other vulnerable groups in the society. Participants found the workshop to be highly informative and appreciated Nutrition International's efforts. They expressed that such training opportunities are Value additions for learning and practical improvement in their work. At the end of the session, certificates and Shields were distributed among the participants. Flour mill owners and affiliated individuals thanked the Nutrition International team for organizing the productive training and called for similar sessions to be held regularly in the future.

QWP condemns Bajaur blast

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) general Secretary Taj Muhammad Khan has strongly condemned the Bajaur bomb blast that resulted in the deaths of five individuals, including the Assistant Commissioner and Tehsildar. QWP leader Taj Muhammad Khan expressed deep sorrow and the loss of lives in the Bajaur bomb blast, describing the incident as a disturbing and tragic event. He highlighted the growing security concerns in the province, where civilians are increasingly becoming victims of targeted attacks and law enforcement personnel are being directly targeted. The QWP leader emphasized the need for the government to prioritize the establishment of peace and the protection of citizens. He stressed the importance of finding a sustainable solution to the security challenges facing the province, warning that without effective.

Kidney transplant OPD at KTH launched

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Teaching Hospital (KTH), a leading public sector teaching hospital in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, officially inaugurated its Kidney Transplant Outpatient Department (OPD) on Thursday. Advisor to the Chief Minister on Health, Mr. Ihtesham Ali, graced the occasion as the chief guest. He was warmly received by Hospital Director Dr. Zafar Afridi, Medical Director Dr. Sajjad Dawar, Prof. Dr. Amir Azhar, Transplant Surgeon Dr. Shahid Ahmad, and Finance Director Mr. Abdul Waheed. On this occasion, Dr. Sajjad Dawar gave a detailed briefing to the Health Advisor on the facilities and services pro-

vided through the Kidney Transplant OPD. Later, the distinguished guests visited the Dialysis Unit, where Director of the Transplant Project Dr. Shahid Ahmad elaborated on the project's objectives. He emphasized that public awareness through social media campaigns can help ensure timely diagnosis and preventive care, reducing the need for future transplants. During the visit, Chairman of Nephrology Department Prof. Dr. Amir Azhar remarked that kidney transplantation significantly enhances the quality of life for patients. Speaking to the media, Advisor Ihtesham Ali stated that the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is taking serious steps to improve public healthcare. He announced the establishment of a dedicated

Transplant Project Unit at KTH, adding that feedback from the public indicates the province is well-positioned for such advanced healthcare initiatives. He further shared that the government is working to establish additional dialysis units at the District Headquarters (DHQ) hospitals in Swat, Chitral, Dir, and Hazara. These initiatives will be part of the Sehat Card program, aimed at improving access to kidney care for the people of KP. In closing, Dr. Zafar Afridi highlighted the hospital's ongoing developmental efforts and commitment to enhancing patient care in line with the vision of the Board of Governors, ensuring the provision of high-quality medical services to the public.

Governor chairs Edwardes College Board meeting

PESHAWAR (APP): The 17th meeting of the Board of Governors of Edwardes College Peshawar was held on Thursday at the Governor's House, chaired by Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi. During the session, the proposed budget for the fiscal year 2025-26 was presented and discussed in detail. Various administrative and financial matters were also reviewed. The board was informed that full scholarships have been awarded to six students from the merged districts, while a total of 500 students have benefitted from scholarship programs. The meeting proposed the formation of a Human Resource Committee and the initiation of a financial performance audit to enhance transparency and efficiency. The board conditionally approved the 2025-26 budget while deciding to defer several key institutional decisions until a permanent principal is appointed. Addressing the meeting, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi expressed concern over the prolonged absence of a permanent principal, saying that it has adversely impacted the academic, financial, and administrative affairs of the college. He emphasized the importance of Edwardes College as a prestigious and historic institution not only in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but across Pakistan, and stressed the need to streamline its governance and financial systems. Prominent attendees included Imtiaz Hussain Gilani, Nasir Ali Khan, Dr. Qibla Ayaz, Bishop Humphrey Sarfraz Peter, Adnan Jalil, Professor Shujaat Ali, and other board members. Meanwhile, a delegation from Takht-e-Nasrati Karak led by PPP Women Wing's Information Secretary MPA Meher Sultana Advocate met Governor Faisal Karim Kundi at the Governor House regarding the relocation of the local court. The delegation included former law minister Malik Zafar Azam, senior PPP leaders Jehanzaib Khattak, Khurshed Alam, and others. The Governor was briefed in detail and assured full support, issuing immediate orders to relevant authorities for addressing the issue and other local concerns raised during the meeting. Similarly, Open Public Day was held at Governor House, drawing large crowds from across the province. Governor Faisal Karim Kundi remained present among the people, listening to their concerns and complaints regarding various government departments. Speaking on the occasion, the Governor said that the Open Public Day has been designated to directly hear citizens' issues and issue immediate directives to relevant departments for timely resolution. He emphasized that staying connected with the public and taking practical steps to address their problems is his top priority.

Briefing on strategic planning of UADA held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: An important meeting was held today (Thursday) under the chairmanship of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Local Government, Arshad Ayub Khan, regarding the strategic planning of the Urban Areas Development Authority (UADA). Managing Director of UADA, Mukhtiar Ahmad, along with other relevant officials, also attended the meeting. During the meeting, Managing Director Mukhtiar Ahmad gave a detailed briefing on the

challenges faced by the authority, its goals, and future projects. The authority highlighted seven strategic priorities during the session, including urban development, financial sustainability, community engagement, implementation of sustainability principles, and the use of modern technology. The Minister for Local Government was informed that the authority is working on an integrated master plan to develop urban areas, aligned with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Urban Policy 2022-30 and the targets of SDG 11. Minister Arshad Ayub

Khan appreciated the efforts of the Urban Areas Development Authority and emphasized that engineers, financial experts, and technical staff are urgently required to accelerate and enhance the urban development process. He further stated that digitization in UADA is essential to bring transparency and efficiency in service delivery. In conclusion, the Minister directed the authority to ensure prompt implementation of all strategic priorities, giving top priority to the welfare and development of citizens.

WAPDA concludes CDP component of EU grant

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR European Union (EU) through Agence Française de Développement (AFD) as Lead Partner, in collaboration with the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) concluded the second phase of its flagship Warsak Rehabilitation Project with a closing event at Gora Tajik Hospital, highlighting the project's commitment to both infrastructure advancement and community upliftment. The Warsak 2nd Rehabilitation Project was conceived as a holistic initiative-not only aimed at upgrading and modernizing the aging infrastructure of the Warsak Hydropower Station, but also at improving the quality of life in the surrounding communities. Alongside major works such as the installation of sediment management systems, modernization of mechanical workshops, and flood mitigation measures, the project incorporated a robust Community Development Program (CDP) that addressed the pressing needs of the local population. One of the key beneficiaries of the CDP was Gara Tajik Hospital,

where a series of impactful interventions significantly improved healthcare service delivery. These included Provision of modern medical equipment to enhance diagnostic and emergency care capabilities, construction of a medical warehouse to support efficient logistics and inventory management and solarization of the hospital, enabling uninterrupted services and energy efficiency and provision of Diesel Generator Set etc. These improvements have directly contributed to a surge in patient footfall and overall hospital performance, demonstrating WAPDA's commitment to building resilient, self-sufficient communities alongside hydropower infrastructure. Dr. Irum Qayum, Medical Superintendent (MS) of Govt. Gara Tajik Hospital told the audience during her speech that the facilities provided by EU

Grant are playing a vital role in providing improved medical facilities to the local community as the number of OPD patients have been increased many times as compared to the past. The event was organized by WAPDA Warsak team led by Mr. Hameed Ullah Khan (Chief Engineer / Project Director) along with Mr. Muhammad Idrees (Project Engineer) and Mr. Shahid Nazir (Executive Engineer Civil) of Warsak HEPS 2nd Rehab. Project, highlighting the extensive benefits provided by EU Grant in life of the local people. The event was also attended by healthcare professionals, working medical staff and local community members collectively acknowledging the far-reaching benefits of EU Grant for integrating infrastructure projects with social investment.

Grant led by PPP Women Wing's Information Secretary MPA Meher Sultana Advocate met Governor Faisal Karim Kundi at the Governor House regarding the relocation of the local court. The delegation included former law minister Malik Zafar Azam, senior PPP leaders Jehanzaib Khattak, Khurshed Alam, and others. The Governor was briefed in detail and assured full support, issuing immediate orders to relevant authorities for addressing the issue and other local concerns raised during the meeting. Similarly, Open Public Day was held at Governor House, drawing large crowds from across the province. Governor Faisal Karim Kundi remained present among the people, listening to their concerns and complaints regarding various government departments. Speaking on the occasion, the Governor said that the Open Public Day has been designated to directly hear citizens' issues and issue immediate directives to relevant departments for timely resolution. He emphasized that staying connected with the public and taking practical steps to address their problems is his top priority.

Ministers, MPAs visit LRH

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In line with the special directives of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a delegation of provincial ministers and members provincial assembly paid a visit to Lady Reading Hospital (LRH), Peshawar, to inquire after those injured in the recent Bajaur blast. The visiting delegation included Minister for Food Zahir Shah Toru, Minister for Agriculture Sajjad Barkawal, Advisor to the Chief Minister on Health

Ehtesham Ali Khan Advocate, MPA Naeem Khan, Dr. Israr, Dr. Hameed, and Ali Shah Khan. The officials visited various ward, inquired about the health and well-being of the injured, and conveyed their prayers and best wishes for their speedy recovery. During the visit, the ministers instructed the hospital administration to ensure provision of the best possible medical care and support to all victims without any delay or negligence.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister for Food Zahir Shah Toru condemned the cowardly act of terrorism, stating: "The terrorists will never succeed in their nefarious and inhumane objectives. We have made sacrifices for peace in the past and will continue to do so whenever required." The ministers reiterated the government's commitment to maintaining peace and security in the province and expressed solidarity with the affected families.

Fahm-e-Quran Course KMUorganizes orientation and training session

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Medical University (KMU), Peshawar, organized an orientation and training session in connection with the recently introduced "Fahm-e-Qur'an" course, approved by the Higher Education Commission (HEC), Islamabad, for undergraduate students. The primary objective of the session was to brief faculty members on the course's aims, instructional methodology, and its national significance. The keynote address was delivered by Mufti Siddiq Ahmad Roghani, Head of Academia Facilitation at the Character Education Foundation. He elaborated on the instructional approach and academic requirements of the course, emphasizing that the Holy Qur'an teaches supreme moral values such as justice, honesty, tolerance, modesty, trust, and responsibility. He stated that understanding these values will bring about positive ethical transformation in youth, fostering social harmony and tolerance. Mufti Roghani further remarked that the Qur'an course is not merely a religious subject but a comprehensive medium for intellectual, moral, and cultural training. He commended HEC's initiative as a timely and commendable step towards aligning the national education system with Islamic values, nurturing intellectual maturity in

youth, and establishing a balanced, peaceful, and morally upright society. He emphasized that understanding the Qur'an supports individual reform and harmonizes personal character with the Islamic and constitutional framework of the state, thereby strengthening national unity and cohesion. In her opening remarks, Prof. Dr. Rubina Nazli, Pro-Vice Chancellor and Dean of Basic Medical Sciences at KMU, stated that Pakistan is an Islamic state and the Holy Qur'an is the final divine revelation and a complete code of life for Muslims. Understanding the Qur'an not only imparts religious consciousness to students but also guides them in shaping their character and navigating various aspects of life. She added that the Qur'an's balanced and moderate approach helps protect youth from misinterpretation of religion and prevents tendencies toward extremism, sectarianism,

and intolerance. She highlighted that Qur'anic teachings provide inner peace, patience, gratitude, and reliance on Allah—values greatly needed in today's high-pressure academic environment. Addressing the participants, Prof. Dr. Zill-e-Huma, Director Academics at KMU, reiterated that HEC's approval of the Qur'an course for undergraduates is a milestone for the intellectual, moral, and spiritual development of the younger generation. She stressed that the integration of modern education with religious insight will produce a generation capable of meeting global academic standards while preserving their religious identity. Additional director Academics Muhammad Islam also spoke to the session and reiterated that KMU Academic section will provide all possible support to the faculty of Fahm-e-Quran course in constituent as well as affiliated institutes of KMU.



Governor visits CMH, LRH

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi visited the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) on Wednesday to inquire about the health of security personnel injured in the recent terrorist attack in North Waziristan, by militants. During the visit, the Governor met individually with each of the injured soldiers, expressed his heartfelt sympathies, and commended their courage and commitment. He also conveyed his best wishes for their swift and complete recovery, saying, "We salute the unwavering resolve of our security forces in the fight against terrorism. The entire nation stands firmly with them in this critical battle." Governor Kundi also visited Lady Reading Hospital, where he met victims injured in the recent Bajaur blast.



In brief

Coal miner killed in mishap F.P. Report

SHANGLA: A young coal miner, Hazrat Ali, son of Mian Gul Jan resident of Pirabad, Alpuri, tragically lost his life while working in a coal mine. The incident occurred at Mine No. 41 of Zahid Khan Lease, Old Bazikhel Coal Company, where an electric short circuit proved fatal. The deceased's body was transported to his native village, Pirabad Alpuri, where he was laid to rest in the presence of hundreds of mourners, many in tears. The tragedy has cast a pall of sorrow across the area. Locals have expressed serious concerns over the lack of proper safety measures in coal mines, calling for immediate attention from the authorities.

Imambargahs inspected Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Commissioner Kohat Syed Motasim Billah Shah along with the Regional Police Officer (RPO) Kohat Abbas Majeed Marwat, Deputy Commissioner Hangu Gohar Zaman Wazir and DPO Hangu Khalid Khan, paid a surprise visit to various Imambargahs and mourning processions routes and places in the Hangu city late on Wednesday night. Other concerned Officers of the District administration and police were also present on the occasion. During the visit, Commissioner Kohat and RPO reviewed the routes of the mourning processions, entry and exit routes, CCTV surveillance and other security matters. They also reviewed the foolproof security arrangements for the processions of the 6th Muharram-ul-Haram. Commissioner Kohat, on this occasion was informed, besides the police, personnel of the Pakistan Army, Frontier Corps and other law enforcement agencies are also engaged for the security of the processions. The processions are being monitored through modern CCTV cameras and a central control room, while rapid response forces are also on the alert at all times to deal with any possible emergency. Commissioner Kohat and the RPO expressed satisfaction over the arrangements and appreciated the performance of the district administration and security agencies. Meanwhile, Commissioner Kohat Division and RPO Kohat visited various Imambargahs of the Kohat city to review security, cleanliness and other local government affairs in connection with the Muharram-ul-Haram. On this occasion, District Police Officer Kohat Dr. Zahidullah, Additional Deputy Commissioner Hamid Iqbal, Assistant Commissioner and officers of other relevant agencies were also present.

FDA modernizes testing lab F.P. Report

FAISALABAD: The Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA) is modernizing its Material Testing Laboratory to meet contemporary standards. A range of technical and administrative reforms are now being implemented to achieve this goal. Following directives from FDA Director General Muhammad Asif Chaudhry, Additional Director Qaiser Abbas Rind visited the Material Testing Laboratory in Gulistan Colony. He inspected various sections and issued necessary instructions for further improving administrative procedures. Asim Mehmood, Director of Inspection/Planning & Development, briefed Mr. Rind on the laboratory's performance and departmental responsibilities.

KP govt team visits bereaved family of myrtred AC

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: A high-level delegation from the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa paid a condolence visit to the family of martyred Assistant Commissioner Faisal Ismail in Odegram, Swat, on the special directives of KP Chief Minister Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur.

The delegation included KP Advisor on Information and Public Relations Barrister Dr. Muhammad Ali Saif, Special Assistant to CM on Housing Dr. Amjad Ali, Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah, and

Inspector General of Police Zulfiqar Hameed.

Expressing profound grief over the tragic Bajaur blast, the delegation offered condolences and Fatihah with the martyr's father, Muhammad Ismail, and other family members. Malakand Commissioner Abid Wazir and Swat Deputy Commissioner Salim Jan were also present.

Barrister Dr. Saif stated: AC Faisal Ismail set the highest example of bravery and dedication by sacrificing his life for peace and public service. His sacrifice will never be forgotten. He hailed the martyr as among

the nation's bravest officers and emphasized that martyrs are our national heroes whose sacrifices will forever live in the nation's heart.

The delegation assured the family, KP government's unwavering support, vowing that those involved in the Bajaur attack will be brought to justice. Prayers were offered for martyr's status and the family's patience. Dr. Saif further confirmed that Chief Minister Gandapur has taken serious notice of the Bajaur incident, underscoring that the nefarious designs of terrorists will be foiled at all costs.

Jirga ends dispute between MS & nurses

F.P. Report

BUNER: The long-standing differences between the MS and the nursing staff of the Headquarters Hospital Daggar finally ended by a grand Jirga on Wednesday. The protest movement of the nursing staff have ended peacefully with the conciliatory efforts of Barrister Gohar Ali Khan's brother Advocate Jowhar Ali Khan, Provincial chairman of the Doctors Association Dr. Amir Taj, District President Dr. Qadir Khan, General Secretary Dr. Javed Khan, and AGEGA Provincial President Wazir Zada, Provincial President of the Nursing Association Fazal Mola.

During the grand gathering at Daggar hospital the MS Dr. Iqbal Hussain and Nursing Association President Zamer Khan, Vice President Sahib Zaman have embraced and have taken a step forward with a new determination to play their full role in providing health facilities to

the patients. The administrative staff, doctors, paramedics, nursing staff have applauded and expressed happiness over the reconciliation between the MS and the nursing staff.

Fazal Mola, the provincial president of the Nursing Association, has specially participated in the reconciliation ceremony and in a short speech, he said that the nursing staff is the backbone in providing health facilities to the patients and the MS and other administrative staff should not hurt their self-respect, rather should treat the male and female nursing staff with compassion like family members and if there is any mistake, then act with forgiveness like the elders of the family so that the health facilities are not affected and there is no need for gatherings and protests and during this, no one's honor is damaged and no spectacle is made.

Speaking at the ceremony, Advocate Jowhar Ali Khan, elder brother of

MNA Barrister Gohar Khan, said that the posts of DHO and MS in Buner had been lying vacant for a long time and they have put the highly purified DHO and MS for system on track and have adopted the approach of fulfilling their responsibility for better treatment of patients coming from Buner and neighboring districts of Torghar and Shangla. He expressed the hope that no one will object to this. He thanked everyone for making the reconciliation, describing it as a favored act from Allah, with the hope of moving forward together and giving priority to the patients.

Addressing the ceremony, AGEGA President Wazir Zada appreciated the positive role of the MS and administrative staff and nursing staff, especially the leadership of doctors and the positive role of the MNA brother and advised the administrative staff and nursing staff to respect each other for the success of the reconciliation.

Free tractors distributed among farmers

F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: Under the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's "Sona Uglata Punjab" and her farmer-friendly policies, the Agriculture Department held a prestigious ceremony to distribute free green tractors to 12 outstanding farmers who excelled in the "Grow More Wheat" competition. The event took place at the District Council Hall Toba Tek Singh.

The event witnessed the participation of a large number of farmers from across the district, along with MPA Amjad Ali Javid, MPA (R) Colonel Ayub Khan Gadhi, Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Naeem Sandhu, PML-N leaders Qadeer Awan, Mian Rafiq, Chaudhry Maqsood Ahmad, Mian Arif Saeed and Farukh Abbas. Director Agriculture Faisalabad Khalid Mehmood, Deputy Director Agriculture Dr. Noshier Ali Khan, Assistant Directors Agriculture

and agricultural experts were also in attendance.

Addressing the gathering, the dignitaries emphasized the Punjab government's commitment to strengthening the agricultural sector by providing modern tools and practical support to farmers. The distribution of free tractors, they noted, reflects the government's resolve to make farmers economically self-reliant. DC Muhammad Naeem Sandhu called the initiative a key milestone in agricultural progress and a direct manifestation of the Chief Minister's pro-farmer vision.

MPA Amjad Ali Javid stated that the positive impact of CM Maryam Nawaz's agricultural policies is now becoming visible in the field. He added that the introduction of the Kissan Card and provision of free tractors are solid proof of the government's intent to empower farmers and enhance per-acre yield through modern agricultural technology. MPA (R) Colonel Ayub Khan Gadhi

said that a comprehensive and sustainable policy has been developed under the special directions of CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif, aimed at making farmers empowered, independent and prosperous. He termed the wheat yield competition and its associated rewards as a practical example of governance that delivers.

Later, MPA Amjad Ali Javid, MPA (R) Ayub Khan Gadhi, Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Naeem Sandhu and senior PML-N leaders handed over tractor keys to the winning farmers. The successful recipients thanked Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, describing the free tractor scheme and agricultural-focused relief as a historic step. They expressed hope that this support would reduce input costs, make cultivation easier, and significantly increase productivity—ultimately strengthening Punjab's agricultural economy and uplifting farming communities.



MINGORA: Adviser to KP CM on Information and Broadcasting, Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif talking to media persons.

D&SJ convicts killer for lifetime imprisonment F.P. Report

BUNER: District & Sessions Judge Buner Sumeera Wali has sentenced one Suleman Khan for life imprisonment and imposed fine rupees one million for killing his friend Wali Dad Shah alias Malangy with an axe in 2023.

The court has sentenced the criminal to an additional six months of imprisonment in case he fails to pay the fine. The court has sentenced the criminal to an additional six months of imprisonment and a fine of five thousand rupees under Section 404 and has ordered an additional five days of imprisonment for non-payment of the fine.

A case was registered against the murderer in Police Station Jowar under Sections 302/404/34 on May 12, 2023, after the body of the victim was found murdered with an axe from the nearby hill. According to DPP, cold blooded murder reason was stated in the police investigation, the victim's refusal to establish physical contact with the killer.

Meanwhile, Additional District Judge II Madam Javeria Sartaj Khan has sentenced Sardar Hussain, a resident of Mughdara, Police Station, Totalai, and his accomplice, Samia, to seven years rigorous imprisonment and a fine of fifty thousand rupees each under Section 494 PPC, for the crime of taking his married sister-in-law with him just before the wedding and arranging the marriage.

The court has ordered both the concted to undergo an additional one month simple imprisonment each in case of non-payment of the fine. The court has sentenced the convict Sardar Hussain to an additional five years simple imprisonment under Section 497. The court has ordered the convict to serve both the sentences concurrently under Section 382.B Cr.PC. However, the court has acquitted Sardar Hussain with honor as the prosecution failed to prove Section B 365 PPC against him. The Deputy PP has said that the police station Totalai has registered a case against the convicted under case number 473 dated September 15, 2023 and the accused were arrested.

Islamia Varsity to train faculty in int'l institutions

Saqib Mushtaq

BAHAWALPUR: A high-level online meeting held between the Islamia University of Bahawalpur and the British international training organization The Training Marketplace. On this occasion, training opportunities for the faculty and administrative staff of the Islamia University of Bahawalpur in international institutions were discussed.

Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Muhammad Kamran said that the platform of The Training Marketplace will be of immense benefit to the students and faculty of the Islamia University of Bahawalpur in enhancing their training and access capabilities globally. Peter Evans said that the partnership with the Islamia University of Bahawalpur is in line with our mission to provide meaningful, validated training opportunities across borders. Their educational strength and regional influence can help us reach new communities with real impact.

The two sides agreed to draft a formal Memorandum of Understanding to structure joint activities and pilot programs, emphasizing mutual value creation and sustainable connectivity. Meanwhile, Islamia University of Bahawalpur and MNS University of Engineering and Technology Multan have signed a Memorandum of



Understanding (MoU) to promote academic, research and technical cooperation. The MoU was signed by Vice Chancellor the Islamia University of Bahawalpur Prof. Dr. Eng. Muhammad Kamran and Prof. Dr. Eng. Tahir Sultan, Vice Chancellor MNS University of Engineering and Technology Multan. The aim of this partnership is to strengthen joint research, faculty and student exchanges, common access to labs and educational resources, and facilitate the organization of conferences and seminars.

The agreement also supports scholarship, joint supervision of theses and technology transfer between the two institutions. It expressed its commitment to promote innovation, academic excellence and regional development. The Islamia University of Bahawalpur is the largest university in South Punjab. This agreement will prove to be a great experience. Students and teachers of both universities will work together from which they will learn a lot.

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Federal Ombudsman decides 51 cases

F.P. Report

LARKANA: Regional Head of the Federal Ombudsman Secretariat Sukkur, Syed Mahmood Ali Shah, organized a hearing program at the city's Circuit House under the CR project for the resolution of out-of-range complaints, where 55 complaints were scheduled for hearing, which were mainly related to SEPCO and Sui Southern Gas Company. In which, decisions were successfully issued in 51 cases, while one case was sent to NEPRA for action, while the remaining 3

cases were postponed.

On this occasion, Executive Engineer of SEPCO Operation Division Rural Asghar Sangi, Revenue Officer of SEPCO Larkana City and Qambar Shahdadkot Sohail Khawar, and Deputy Manager of Sui Southern Gas Company Larkana Saeed Korejo participated in the hearing. It is clear that the initiative reflects the commitment of the Federal Ombudsman to provide fast and accessible justice to the public through the RCR mechanism.

Meanwhile, Amber

Soomro, a resident of Bاده city, who passed the IBA test, protested in front of the media against not getting a job in the education department.

On this occasion, she lamented that in the year 2021, the BPS-14 test was conducted by IBA, which I passed with 42 marks, while the Sindh government also gave orders to many candidates, but I was ignored. At present, I have been going around a lot with the officers and clerks of Larkana district, but instead of giving me offer order, they all mistreat me.

JUI-F declares Sheikh Waqas of PTI a 'political nomad'

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Deputy General Secretary, Maulana Muhammad Rahim Haqqani, has lashed out at Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Sheikh Waqas Akram, calling him a "political nomad" and criticizing his recent remarks against Maulana Fazlur Rahman.

Speaking to local media, Haqqani said it was inappropriate for someone whose party had frequently sought meetings at Maulana Fazlur Rahman's residence just months ago to now use indecent language against him.

He accused the PTI government of breaking all records of corruption and mismanagement during its 12-year rule in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, failing to complete even a single major development project.

Haqqani also criticized former chief ministers Mahmood Khan and Pervez Khattak, as well as the current provincial leadership, saying they were mere proxies with no real political standing. He claimed PTI is once again seeking JUI-F's support to save its government in

the province. However, he warned that if the party wishes to engage in any dialogue with JUI-F in the future, it must rein in figures like Sheikh Waqas Akram, or else face strong resistance from JUI-F workers.

AKSSA delegation: A delegation of the All Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Senior Staff Association (AKSSA), Lower Dir chapter, met with the newly elected cabinet of the BISE Malakand Employees Coordination Council on Wednesday to congratulate them and discuss key administrative matters.

The AKSSA delegation, led by Vice President Muhammad Rasheed Khan and General Secretary Haroon Khan, extended their congratulations to President Mukhtiar Khan and General Secretary Yasir Arafat on being elected for a third consecutive term with a large majority. Deputy Controller of Examinations Naemullah and Assistant Muhammad Fayaz were also present during the meeting.

The AKSSA representatives emphasized the need for transparency and adherence to merit in board-conducted exams, paper marking, and related

affairs. They urged the council to play an active role in upholding fair practices.

In response, the newly elected cabinet assured the delegation of their commitment to merit and transparency. They acknowledged that board employees and teachers are key stakeholders and vowed to work jointly for improvements in examination and marking systems. AKSSA assured full support to the council in all positive and constructive efforts.

Anti-encroachment drive on river banks in Dir sparks backlash from rights groups, political parties: Following the tragic Swat River incident, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has intensified its anti-encroachment operations across the province, including a large-scale crackdown in Lower Dir along the banks of the Panjkora River. At least nine buildings, including hotels and restaurants, have been sealed or demolished in the ongoing drive.

Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Arif said the district administration would not tolerate any illegal, permanent, or temporary structures along the riverbanks. He added that the

operation is being carried out jointly by the local police, Tehsil Municipal Administration (TMA), Levies, and the Irrigation Department.

According to Irrigation Department sources, 38 illegal structures have been identified along a 30-kilometre stretch between Akhgram and Shago Kas. However, officials admitted that the department has yet to formally demarcate the river boundaries, raising legal and procedural concerns over the demolitions.

Authorities confirmed that the operation followed due process, as prior notices were served to the concerned individuals and entities in accordance with legal provisions. The removal of these structures is aimed at restoring the natural course of the river and preventing environmental and administrative challenges arising from unauthorized occupation.

The anti-encroachment campaign is set to continue throughout the month and will extend up to Khall Bazar. Officials reiterated their commitment to ensuring the protection of public property and safety of the public.

The district administration

has urged the general public to cooperate with the team and refrain from any unlawful occupation of state property, warning that strict action will be taken against violators. They are further requested to stay away from the river.

The campaign has drawn strong criticism from civil society and political quarters, with locals questioning the timing and motives behind the operation. Many argued that the administration remained silent when these constructions were being built and is now targeting the poor under the pretext of flood prevention.

Abdul Ghaffar Khan Yousafzai, President of the Human Rights and Justice Organization Malakand Division, condemned the demolitions as unjust and harmful to local livelihoods. In a statement issued, he called for an immediate halt to the operation and urged the government to follow due legal procedures.

"These buildings were constructed with the hard-earned money of overseas Pakistanis and were providing jobs to local youth while serving residents and tourists," Yousafzai noted.

"The government has failed to create jobs and is now making people jobless—this is sheer injustice." He further criticized the district administration for failing to act during the construction phase and accused it of using the Swat tragedy as a cover for administrative shortcomings.

Echoing these concerns, Sirajuddin, Emir of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) Lower Dir, warned the administration against targeting the poor under the guise of anti-encroachment. Speaking to local media, he said any discriminatory action in the name of flood prevention would not be tolerated.

He urged the government to provide compensation and alternate employment opportunities to the affected people and criticized the Irrigation Department's continued failure to clearly define the river boundaries. Sirajuddin emphasized the need for a transparent and well-coordinated strategy to avoid further injustices. He was accompanied by JUI-F General Secretary Maulana Muhammad Huzaifa and party spokesperson Bakht Naseem Momand during his media briefing.



4 dead, 38 missing after ferry sinks on way to Bali

BALI (AFP): At least four people were dead and dozens unaccounted after a ferry sank on its way to the resort island of Bali, according to local authorities who said 23 survivors had been plucked from the water so far. Rescuers were racing to find 38 missing people in rough seas after the vessel carrying 65 passengers sank as it sailed to the popular holiday destination from Indonesia's main island Java.

"23 rescued, 4 dead," Rama Samtama Putra, police chief of Banyuwangi in East Java, where the boat departed, told AFP. President Prabowo Subianto, who was on a trip to Saudi Arabia, ordered an immediate emergency response, cabinet secretary Teddy Indra Wijaya said in a statement, adding the cause of the accident was "bad weather". Java-based Surabaya search and rescue agency head Nanang Sigit confirmed the same figures in a statement, and said efforts to reach the boat were initially hampered by adverse weather conditions that have since cleared up.

Waves as high as 2.5

metres (8 feet) with "strong winds and strong currents" had affected the rescue operation, he said. The agency had earlier said 61 people were missing and four rescued, without giving a cause for the boat's sinking. "KMP Tunu Pratama Jaya... sank about 25 minutes after weighing anchor," it said. "The ferry's manifest data totalled 53 passengers and 12 passenger crews."

A rescue team of at least 54 personnel including from the navy and police were dispatched along with inflatable rescue boats, while a bigger vessel was later sent from Surabaya city to assist the search efforts. The ferry crossing from Ketapang port in Java's Banyuwangi regency to Bali's Gilimanuk port -- one of the busiest in Indonesia -- is around 5 kilometres (3 miles) as the crow flies and takes around one hour. It is often used by people crossing between the islands by car. Four of the known survivors saved themselves by using the ferry's lifeboat and were found in the water, the rescue agency said.

It said the ferry was also transporting 22 vehicles, including 14 trucks. It was unclear if any foreigners were onboard when the ferry sank. Rescuers said they were still assessing if there were more people onboard than the ferry's manifest showed. It is common in Indonesia for the actual number of passengers on a boat to differ from the manifest. Marine accidents are a regular occurrence in Indonesia, a Southeast Asian archipelago of around 17,000 islands, in part due to lax safety standards and sometimes due to bad weather.

In March, a boat carrying 16 people capsized in rough waters off Bali, killing an Australian woman and injuring at least one other person. A ferry carrying more than 800 people ran aground in shallow waters off East Nusa Tenggara province in 2022 and remained stuck for two days before being dislodged with no one hurt. And in 2018, more than 150 people drowned when a ferry sank in one of the world's deepest lakes on Sumatra island.

Thailand set for another acting PM after cabinet reshuffle

BANGKOK (AFP): Thailand's king is scheduled to swear in a new cabinet in a reshuffle that will see a third person in a week take on the role as the country's prime minister. The Southeast Asian nation's top office was plunged into turmoil when the Constitutional Court suspended Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra pending an ethics probe which could take months.

Power passed to transport minister and deputy prime minister Suriya Jungtrungreangkit who took office for only one full day, as the bombshell was dropped in an awkward interim ahead of the reshuffle. When former defence minister Phumtham Wechayachai is sworn into his new position as interior minister he will also take on a deputy prime minister role outranking Suriya's -- thus becoming the acting premier.

Before Paetongtarn was ousted she assigned herself the role of culture minister in the new cabinet, meaning she is set to keep a perch in the upper echelons of power. The revolving door of leadership comes as the kingdom is battling to revive a spluttering economy and secure a US trade deal averting Donald Trump's looming threat of a 36 percent tariff. Phumtham is considered a loyal lieutenant to the suspended Paetongtarn and her father Thaksin Shinawatra, the powerful patriarch of a dynasty which has dominated Thai 21st-century politics. Thaksin-linked parties have been jousting with the pro-military, pro-conservative establishment since the early 2000s, but analysts say the family's political brand has now entered decline.

The 71-year-old Phumtham earned the nickname "Big Comrade" for his association to a left-wing youth movement of the 1970s, but transitioned to politics through a role in Thaksin's telecoms empire. In previous cabinets he held the defence and commerce portfolios, and spent a spell as acting prime minister after a crisis engulfed the top office last year. Paetongtarn has been hobbled over a longstanding territorial dispute between Thailand and Cambodia, which boiled over into cross-border clashes in May, killing one Cambodian soldier. When she made a diplomatic call to Cambodian ex-leader Hun Sen, she called him "uncle" and referred to a Thai military commander as her "opponent", according to a leaked recording causing widespread backlash. A conservative party abandoned her ruling coalition -- sparking the cabinet reshuffle -- accusing her of kowtowing to Cambodia and undermining the military. The Constitutional Court said there was "sufficient cause to suspect" Paetongtarn breached ministerial ethics in the diplomatic spat.

China, EU should not seek confrontation

BEIJING (AFP): China's top diplomat warned his EU counterpart against "confrontation", his foreign ministry said, after she urged Beijing to stop undermining Europe's security. Meeting Kaja Kallas in Brussels, Wang Yi said China and the European Union "should not be regarded as opposites because of differences, nor should they seek confrontation because of disagreements", according to a Chinese foreign ministry statement.

Europe is "facing various challenges", Wang said, but stressed that none were caused by China "in the past, present or future". Ahead of their meeting, Kallas, the EU's foreign affairs chief, said China was "not our adversary, but on security our relationship is under increasing strain". She said Chinese firms were "Moscow's lifeline to sustain its war against Ukraine" and accused Beijing of carrying out cyberattacks, democratic interference and unfair trade practices that "harm European security and jobs".



BALI: Family members waiting at Ketapang Port in East Java for updates on the search for missing people after a ferry sank on its way to the popular Indonesian resort island.

Drought-hit Morocco turns to desalination to save vegetable bounty

RABAT (AFP): On the drought-stricken plains of Morocco's Chtouka region, cherry tomato farms stretch as far as the eye can see, clinging to life through a single, environmentally contentious lifeline: desalination. "We wouldn't be here without it," said Abir Lemseffer, who manages production for the tomato giant Azura.

Severe drought driven by climate change has gripped the North African country since 2018, leaving Azura's 800 hectares (2,000 acres) of farms entirely dependent on desalinated water. But the technology comes at a high cost -- both financially and environmentally. It is energy-intensive, and in a country where more than half of the electricity still comes from coal, it carries a heavy carbon footprint. Since 2022, Morocco's largest desalination plant, located nearby, has been producing 125,000 cubic metres (4.4 million cubic feet) of water a day.

The supply irrigates 12,000 hectares of farmland and provides drinking water for 1.6 million people in Agadir and surrounding areas, said Ayoub Ramdi of the regional agricultural development office. By the end of 2026, officials hope to boost production to 400,000 cubic metres of water, half of which would be designated for agriculture. Without that water, "a catastrophic scenario would loom over Morocco", said Rqia Bourziza, an agronomist.

Agriculture, which contributes

about 12 percent to Morocco's overall economy, has been badly hit by six consecutive years of drought -- prompting the country to go all-in on desalination. Across Morocco, there are 16 plants capable of producing 270 million cubic metres of water per year, with a target of reaching 1.7 billion cubic metres by 2030. While around 1,500 farmers in the Agadir region make use of the water provided by the plant, others don't because it's simply too expensive.

Among them is Hassan, who grows courgettes and peppers on half a hectare of land and uses water from a well shared with 60 other farmers. "I can't afford to use that water," he said, declining to give his full name. Desalinated water is sold at \$0.56 per cubic metre, excluding taxes, compared with \$0.11 per cubic metre for conventional water. That hefty price tag comes despite a 40 percent subsidy from public coffers. Ali Hatimy, another agronomist, said "the cost of desalinated water significantly reduces the range of potential crops because only very high-value-added crops can offset it".

Bourziza insisted that desalination was "a very good alternative" but only for high-value crops such as tomatoes and orchard fruits. Beyond the financial cost, desalination also exerts an environmental cost, said Hatimy. "The production of desalinated water requires tremendous amounts of electrical energy and

brine discharges impact marine ecosystems," he said. Highly concentrated brine is a byproduct of the desalination process. Ramdi, from the agricultural development office, said that "no impact" had been observed in the waters around Agadir, adding that the brine was diluted before its release. While Morocco has a growing share of renewable energy, 62 percent of its electricity came from coal in 2023 and 14 percent from oil and gas, according to the International Energy Agency.

The stakes in the wider region of Souss-Massa, which accounts for 85 percent of Morocco's fruit and vegetable exports, are high. Nearly two million tonnes are produced each year, with a turnover of \$1.1 billion. Ramdi said the desalination plant had thus helped to protect \$1 billion of revenue a year and more than a million jobs. "Desalination has saved agriculture in Chtouka," said Mohamed Boumarg, walking through one of his tomato greenhouses. "Before, I only cultivated five hectares because I was constrained by the amount of water I had. Groundwater was not sufficient," said the 38-year-old farmer who now grows 20 hectares of tomatoes, with 60 percent of his crop marked for export. "Our survival depends on it," said Lemseffer of Azura. "Either we accept sacrificing some of our margin by using desalinated water, or we close up shop."

South Korea's Lee pledges 'bold' economic policy after martial law crisis

SEOUL (Reuters): South Korean President Lee Jae Myung vowed to implement a "bold" fiscal policy to boost a flagging economy after the country's martial law crisis and to tackle challenges posed by looming US tariffs and North Korea. Lee, who was elected on June 3 in a snap election, said it was his top priority to improve the lives of the people, whose faith in government had been greatly shaken by "a national crisis" that hammered Asia's fourth-largest economy.

"It is a time when the proactive and bold role of national finance is more important than ever," Lee, who has pledged to implement expansionary fiscal policy, said in his opening remarks at a news conference to mark 30 days in office. Lee's predecessor, Yoon Suk Yeol, declared martial law in December, shocking a nation that had come to pride itself as a thriving democracy having overcome military dictator-

ship in the 1980s and triggering an unprecedented constitutional crisis. Lee's administration has proposed \$14.7 billion of extra government spending to support sluggish domestic demand. Parliament, controlled by his Democratic Party, is expected to vote on the budget bill soon.

The president also said in his opening remarks that he was doing his best to achieve a "mutually beneficial and sustainable" outcome from trade negotiations with the United States. South Korea is hoping to contain the impact of US President Donald Trump's threatened punishing tariffs that could weigh on an export-reliant economy with major semiconductor, auto and steel industries. Lee said tariff negotiations with the United States had "not been easy," and he could not say if an agreement was possible in time for Washington's July 8 deadline when tough reciprocal

import duties are set to kick in. During high-level trade talks last month, Washington raised issues related to South Korea's non-tariff barriers, as Seoul already imposes nearly zero tariffs on US imports under a free trade agreement, a senior South Korean trade official has said. South Korea's top trade envoy Yeo Han-koo said that Seoul wanted to ensure that it was not put at a comparative disadvantage as other major countries conduct last-minute trade negotiations with the United States. Lee, a liberal former human rights lawyer, said the alliance with the United States was the cornerstone of his foreign policy, but pledged a pragmatic approach as the basis of a speedy effort to improve ties with China and Russia. Peace with North Korea was not only a national security priority, but a crucial part of a "virtuous cycle of peace and economic

growth," he said. Lee said tension with Pyongyang has had a real negative economic impact despite South Korea's strong military capabilities, funded by a defence budget larger than the North's total economic output. "Even if you're at war, you have to have diplomacy and dialogue. To completely cut off dialogue is truly foolish," Lee said when asked about his plans on relations with Pyongyang. The two Koreas remain technically in a state of war under a truce that ended fighting in 1953.

He said he had been surprised by the swift response from North Korea after he suspended loudspeaker propaganda broadcasts directed across the border and said he would take additional steps to ease tensions. Under Yoon, who took a hard line against Pyongyang, the two sides scrapped a 2018 military agreement that sharply escalated hostility.

'Summer heat amplifies daily struggle to survive'

GAZA STRIP (AP): For Rida Abu Hadayed, summer adds a new layer of misery to a daily struggle to survive in the war-ravaged Gaza Strip. With temperatures exceeding 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees Fahrenheit), daybreak begins with the cries of Hadayed's seven children sweltering inside the displaced family's cramped nylon tent. Outside, the humidity is unbearable.

The only way the 32-year-old mother can offer her children relief is by fanning them with a tray or bits of paper - whatever she can find. If she has water, she pours it over them, but that is an increasingly scarce resource. "There is no electricity. There is nothing," she said, her face beaded with sweat. "They cannot sleep. They keep crying all day until the sun sets." The heat in Gaza has intensified hardships for its 2 million residents. Reduced water availability, crippled sanitation networks, and shrinking living spaces threaten to cause illnesses to cascade through communities, aid groups have long warned.

The scorching summer coincides with a lack of clean water for the majority of Gaza's population, most of whom are displaced in tented communities. Many Palestinians in the enclave must walk long distances to fetch water and ration each drop, limiting their ability to wash and keep cool. "We are only at the beginning of summer," Hadayed's husband, Yousef, said. "And our situation is dire." Israel had blocked food, fuel, medicine and all other supplies from entering Gaza for nearly three months. It began allowing limited aid in May, but fuel needed to pump water from wells or operate desalination plants is still not getting into the territory. With fuel supplies short, only 40% of drinking water production facilities are functioning in the Gaza Strip, according to a recent report by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. All face imminent collapse. Up to 93% of households face water shortages, the June report said.

The Hadayeds were displaced after evacuation orders forced them to leave

eastern Khan Younis. "Our lives in the tent are miserable. We spend our days pouring water over their heads and their skin," Yousef Hadayed said. "Water itself is scarce. It is very difficult to get that water." UNICEF's spokesperson recently said that if fuel supplies are not allowed to enter the enclave, children will die of thirst. "Me and my children spend our days sweating," said Reham Abu Hadayed, a 30-year-old relative of Rida Abu Hadayed who was also displaced from eastern Khan Younis. She worries about the health of her four children.

"I don't have enough money to buy them medicine," she said. For Mohammed al-Awini, 23, the heat is not the worst part. It's the flies and mosquitoes that bombard his tent, especially at night. Without adequate sewage networks, garbage piles up on streets, attracting insects and illness. The stench of decomposing trash wafts in the air. "We are awake all night, dying from mosquito bites," he said. "We are the most tired people in the world."

Seven people missing from massive explosion

CALIFORNIA (Reuters): Seven people were missing after a fire and powerful explosion leveled a commercial fireworks facility in rural northern California, authorities said. Aerial footage from local news media showed the large warehouse-like building blown to pieces in an enormous, thundering fireball that rocked a wide area around the Yolo County community of Esparto, about 40 miles (64 km) west of Sacramento, the state capital.

The blast, belching out a pall of thick black smoke, was followed by a flurry of dozens of smaller explosions flashing in the sky over the site, apparently ignited by the inventory of pyrotechnics stored at the location. Flames spread from the explosion charred about 78 acres (32 hectares) of surrounding vegetation, according to Jason Clay, a spokesperson for the California Department of

Forestry and Fire Protection. Two people injured in the "initial event" received medical treatment, and seven other individuals were missing, Curtis Lawrence, fire chief for the Esparto Fire Protection District, told reporters at a briefing, about 24 hours later.

The cause of the incident, which occurred three days before the July Fourth US Independence Day celebrations that typically involve fireworks displays, was under investigation by the state fire marshal's office, Lawrence said. Authorities said firefighters and other emergency response personnel were keeping a safe distance from the site as teams continued to make assessments of ongoing risks posed by live fireworks, which continued to go off at random. Teams were flying drones and aircraft over the area seeking to determine the fate of the missing and to

monitor lingering hazards, Lawrence said. Authorities declined to say whether the missing were workers from the facility or bystanders, but he said there were no casualties among firefighters or other emergency personnel. "I can say I have not seen anything like this," Lawrence said. Asked how authorities would know when it was safe enough to venture further into the site, he said, "It's tough to get a definitive answer of when that's going to be and what that actually looks like." An evacuation zone was established around the site, and about 150 homes and farms were without power as a result of the incident, Lawrence said.

He described the demolished facility as a licensed pyrotechnics business involving commercial fireworks sold for public display. But it was unclear whether fireworks were merely stored there or also produced on site.

Fire that closed Heathrow traced to unrepaired transformer

LONDON (AFP): A fire at an electrical substation that forced a shutdown at London's Heathrow Airport in March was likely caused by moisture entering electrical components, a problem first flagged in 2018, a report said. Water entering a transformer and causing a short circuit "most likely" started the fire, according

to the National Energy System Operator (NESO) report, adding that elevated moisture readings were detected in July 2018 but "mitigating actions appropriate to its severity were not implemented".

The fire broke out at the North Hyde substation in West London, around two miles (3.2 km) north of Heathrow, at 11:21 pm on

March 20, resulting in a complete loss of power supply to part of the airport's private internal electrical distribution network. The airport was closed for most of March 21, affecting around 270,000 journeys and raising serious questions about the reliability of one of the UK's most critical pieces of infrastructure.

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Difficult passage for budget in US Senate: 51-50

THE US Senate passed President Donald Trump's controversial "One Big Beautiful Bill", with cuts for social programmes like Medicaid, which will leave 11.8 million people with medical cover by 2030, and tax breaks for the rich.

There was a long drawn-out 27-hour long to-and-fro with opposition coming from Republican senators. But Senate Majority leader John Thune had to run a tight ship as it were in support of a bill which went through the laborious process of umpteen amendments, which were rejected through a cumbersome legislative procedure. Three of the Republican senators refused to fall in line.

Senators Thom Tillis of North Carolina, Rand Paul of Kentucky and Susan Collins of Maine held out. So the final voting score was 50-51, with Vice President J.D.Vance casting his tie-breaker vote. The Vice President is also the head of the Senate. The bill now goes back to the House of Representatives for the final vote.

Republican Senator from Alaska, Lisa Murkowski voted for the bill but she did not hold back from expressing her dissent to and, opposition to, the bill. She said, "Let's not kid ourselves. This has been an awful process, a frantic rush to meet an artificial deadline, that has tested every limit of this institution." She told American television news network NBC, "Do I like this bill? No. I know that in many parts of the country, there are Americans who are not going to be advantaged by this bill. I don't like that."

Majority leader Thune claimed after the passing of the bill, "It's been a long road to get to today. Now we're here, permanently extending tax relief for hard-working Americans." Senate Minority leader and Democrat Chuck Schumer nailed his point. He said, "In one fell swoop, Republicans passed the biggest tax break for billionaires ever seen, paid for by ripping away healthcare from millions of people."

There were many contentious provisions in the bill. One of them was the removal of subsidy to electric cars – a blow to his former confidante Elon Musk and his Tesla – and subsidy for solar and wind energy projects.

This is going to hurt many entrepreneurs who had invested in the sunrise sector. Trump is firmly opposed to the climate change thesis, and he does not want to help in any way any measure to help the emergence of a green economy even as most other countries are adopting the mitigatory measures.

Despite Republican majorities in the two Houses of the Congress, it has not been easy for President Trump to push through his legislative agenda. And as has been witnessed in the Senate, the opposition to his measures was not coming from the Democrats alone, but from Republicans as well.

It is indeed the case that the Republican majorities are narrow, and it is not easy to push through legislation without a second thought as it were.

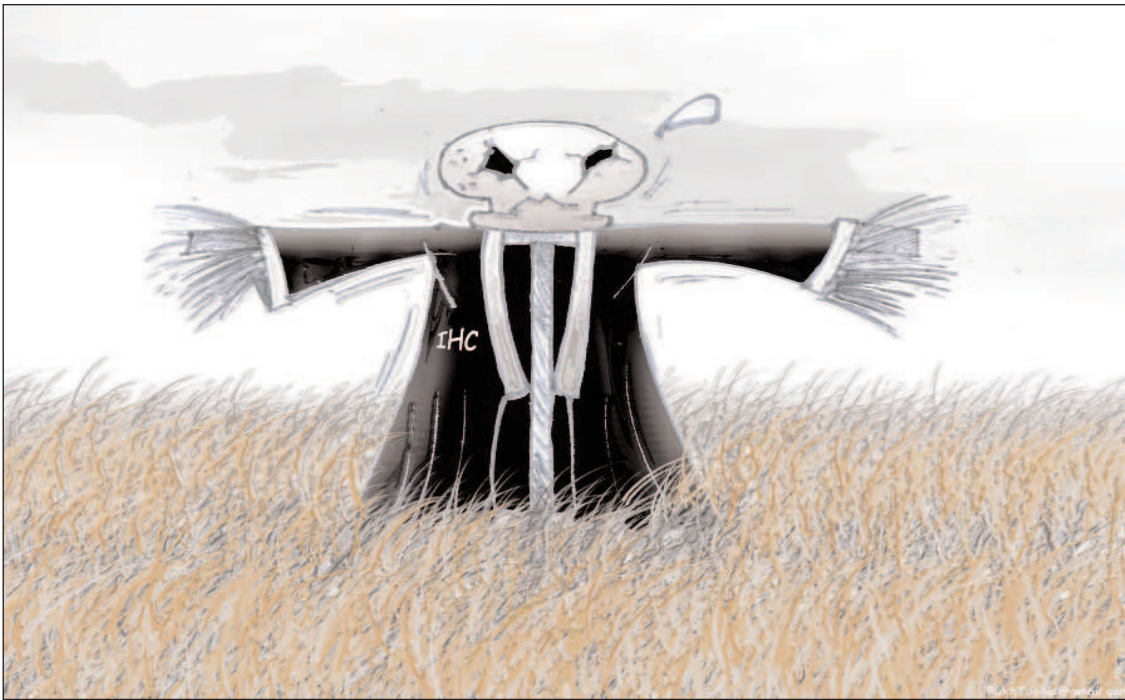
Trump does not have the political sagacity to negotiate with people who do not agree with his point-of-view, and make the necessary compromises to get the legislation through. Trump does not like any opposition.

Second, he does not believe in talking over things, and stepping back a step or two to get his policies accepted. It is this that poses difficulties for him. His supporters have a tough task. They have to mow down the opposition.

It is not always an easy thing to do. Senate Majority leader Thune had a tough time in getting the Budget passed in the Senate, and he is a relieved man more than a victorious leader. Trump did not seem to learn much from his experience in the first term as president.

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Sudanese refugees' plight must not be forgotten

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

WHILE the world reels from a series of concurrent global emergencies — wars in Ukraine and Gaza, rising geopolitical tensions in Asia and record-breaking climate catastrophes — the devastating humanitarian crisis emanating from Sudan risks slipping through the cracks of international attention. This brutal internal conflict has already cost more than 20,000 lives and displaced some 13 million people. Of these, more than 3 million have fled the country, seeking refuge in already-vulnerable neighboring nations like Chad, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Libya and Uganda.

Chad alone, one of the poorest and least-resourced countries in the world, has absorbed more than 1.2 million Sudanese civilians and returning Chadians since the onset of the conflict. The scope of the suffering is staggering, yet the silence from global powers and international organizations is deafening.

The pressure on host countries has reached intolerable levels. Chad, which has historically struggled with internal displacement, food insecurity and weak public infrastructure, now finds its overstretched systems buckling under the weight of more than a million new arrivals.

Entire towns have been overwhelmed. Local hospitals are at capacity and lack critical medicine and equipment. Water sources — already scarce due to desertification and poor infrastructure — are drying up or becoming polluted. Schools that once served a few hundred children now have to accommodate thousands, often without adequate classrooms, teachers or supplies.

The result is a mounting crisis in health, education and basic public services that not only threatens the well-being of the refugees

but also risks sparking instability in host communities already suffering from chronic poverty and underdevelopment.

Egypt, which has long been a destination for Sudanese fleeing earlier waves of conflict, is now experiencing the most intense pressure in recent history. More than 1.5 million Sudanese refugees are currently in Egypt, many of them having arrived in recent months. The country's schools and hospitals — especially in border areas and poorer regions — are incapable of absorbing such numbers.

More than half of Sudanese refugee children are out of school and many face discrimination and legal ambiguity that bars them from enrolling in public education. Access to healthcare is likewise limited: refugees often rely on expensive private clinics or overstretched non-governmental organizations for care.

Though the Egyptian government has kept its borders open, its economic situation, rising inflation and political constraints limit its capacity to absorb and care for so many vulnerable people. Meanwhile, Ethiopia, which is grappling with its own internal conflicts and political instability, has taken in more than 70,000 Sudanese refugees.

The situation for the refugees themselves is increasingly desperate. In every host country, they are experiencing unbearable conditions. Most arrived with nothing but the clothes they were wearing. Shelter is often little more than plastic sheets stretched over sticks. Clean water is in short supply and cholera, typhoid and malaria outbreaks are common. Food rations are insufficient and many go entire days without eating. In Chad, some families have been forced to eat leaves or wild roots just to survive.

Malnutrition rates among children are spiking.

Women and girls face an additional burden. Sexual and gender-based violence is rampant, both during flight and in camps. In some areas, women report being forced to exchange sex for food, water or protection. Girls are being pulled from school to help their families survive or to avoid the risk of assault while walking long distances to crowded and under-resourced schools.

The psychological toll is immense. Most refugees have witnessed killings, torture or the destruction of their homes. They now face the daily trauma of insecurity, hunger and hopelessness in exile. Mental health support is practically nonexistent in most camps, even though the need is overwhelming.

This crisis demands an immediate and scaled-up response from the international community. Global agencies and governments cannot afford to turn their backs. The priority must be delivering emergency humanitarian aid — shelter, food, clean water, medical care and mental health services. These are not luxuries, they are the bare minimum for survival and dignity. Refugees must be granted full legal status under the UN Refugee Convention, ensuring their protection and their right to access services. Without legal status, they live in limbo, unable to work, study or move freely.

Beyond immediate relief, the world must implement longer-term solutions. Resettlement corridors must be expanded, offering safe pathways to countries outside the region that can provide permanent sanctuary. Wealthier nations, especially those in the West, have a moral obligation to share responsibility for resettlement and not simply outsource the crisis to Africa's poorest states.

Integrated refugee-host community programs must be funded and supported — programs that allow for shared schools, joint agricultural projects and mutual economic development. These not only reduce tensions between refugees and host communities but also foster social cohesion and resilience.

Mental health and psychosocial support must be elevated in humanitarian planning. Trauma is not invisible — it cripples individuals and communities. Investments in community-based counseling, support groups and trauma-informed education can help rebuild lives shattered by war.

The cost of inaction is too high. Ignoring the Sudanese refugee crisis will fuel greater instability in an already volatile region. Host countries may face unrest or economic collapse under the weight of population pressures.

Refugees, denied dignity and opportunity, may be pushed onto dangerous migration routes, fall prey to traffickers or be recruited by armed groups. Public health emergencies — from cholera outbreaks to mental health epidemics — may spread across borders. And an entire generation of Sudanese children may grow up without education, nutrition or hope, sowing the seeds for long-term regional instability and global security risks.

In conclusion, we must not allow the suffering of Sudanese refugees to be forgotten. This crisis is not just a regional concern — it is a global test of conscience, solidarity and responsibility. As we confront multiple global challenges, we must not abandon the millions of men, women and children from Sudan who, through no fault of their own, have lost everything.

The international community still has the power to change the trajectory of this crisis. But that power means nothing if it is not used.

Like Palestine Action, the UK called me a 'terrorist' once too

Tariq Mehmood

IN the coming days, the United Kingdom government is moving full steam ahead to proscribe Palestine Action — a movement of young people with a conscience — as a terrorist group. Some of its members are already behind bars; others face trials or await sentencing. Yet, despite the "terrorist" label and the threat of imprisonment, tens of thousands across the country have taken to the streets chanting, "We are all Palestine Action".

If the government's goal was to intimidate people into silence — to ensure British complicity in genocide continues unchecked — it has badly miscalculated. A recent poll found that 55 percent of Britons are against Israel's war on Gaza. A significant number of those opponents — 82 percent — said Israel's actions amount to genocide. Something fundamental is shifting. There is a gaping disconnect between the media's narrative and the views of common people, who reject ministerial spin and the framing of resistance to tyranny and fascism as terrorism.

Like the defiant youth of Palestine Action, I too was once branded a terrorist. In 1981, I was a member of the United Black Youth League. We knew building petrol bombs was

legally "wrong", but we believed in our right to defend our community — even by armed means — against fascist threats in Bradford. Arrested alongside 11 others, I faced terrorism charges carrying life sentences in what became known as the Bradford 12 case.

While our struggle was against local fascists, Palestine Action's fight is nobler: exposing and halting a genocide in Palestine, carried out by Israel's neo-fascist regime with British support. And unlike us, they have not taken up arms. Where we built crude weapons in self-defence against immediate violence, Palestine Action has used only non-violent direct action — spray-painting warplanes, occupying factories, and disrupting business as usual — to confront British complicity in genocide. I recognise their rage — I have gone hoarse screaming about genocide myself. How many burning children must we see to know it is wrong? How many starving families must be slaughtered to sustain an apartheid state?

The pain is sharper knowing the weapons murdering Palestinians are made in Britain. It is worse watching hypocritical politicians twist words —

from Keir Starmer justifying genocide early on, to now hiding behind hollow phrases like "Israel's right to defend itself". But as United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories Francesca Albanese and many others have repeatedly clarified: "Israel has no right to defend itself against those it occupies."

If the UK government succeeds, anyone associated with Palestine Action will be branded a "terrorist". During the Bradford 12 trial, we were painted the same way. Like Palestine Action activists, we had, in our own time, fought for a more just and fairer world.

Palestine Action emerged from the failure of endless protests demanding an end to never-ending wars and justice for Palestine. As they state: "Palestine Action is a direct action movement committed to ending global participation in Israel's genocidal and apartheid regime. Using disruptive tactics, we target enablers of the Israeli military-industrial complex, making it impossible for them to profit from Palestinian oppression."

We, the Bradford 12, were born from the police's failure to protect

us from fascist violence. We took armed self-defence into our own hands in an organised community defence. To do nothing would have been the greater crime. Similarly, UK complicity in genocide demands action. Disrupting the war machine is not criminal; it is a moral necessity.

At our 1982 trial in Leeds Crown Court, tens of thousands mobilised to demand our acquittal. They saw through the state's lies — they knew convicting us would unleash repression against youth movements, trade unions, and anyone fighting for justice. The jury faced a pivotal question: What kind of world do you want to live in if you acquit these men? I testified that, faced with the same threats, we would do it all again. That question echoes today: if Palestine Action is criminalised, we risk slipping into a lawless world where genocide becomes the norm, not the exception.

We were acquitted, establishing a legal precedent for armed community self-defence. Palestine Action needs no precedent to justify its cause, because its actions are already grounded in legality, morality, and nonviolence. It is not a threat — it is a moral compass. The UK must follow it, not ban it.

The great power rivalry has gone digital: And no one told you

Malik Shahzad Ali Khan

IN today's rapidly shifting world order, power is no longer about who possesses the most tanks or the largest army. The modern contest for global influence is being fought silently across data centers, digital networks, sea lanes, and the battlefields of narrative. In this new era, whoever controls the code, the mind, and the information controls the future.

The 20th century was defined by territorial wars and ideological blocs. But the 21st century is different. We are now witnessing a global contest not over land, but over perception, minerals, algorithms, AI, quantum computing, and narratives. And yet, many fail to see that the great power rivalry has simply changed form, it has gone digital..

Shaping Truths, Every great power today frames its actions with a self-serving narrative. The United States continues to present itself as the global guardian of democracy. China offers an alternative vision of economic cooperation without political interference, portraying itself as a peaceful powerbroker. Russia claims to resist Western hegemony and defend multipolarity.Each is building its own Truth to gain legitimacy, loyalty, and leverage.

"He who controls the narrative, controls the world," wrote Joseph Nye, who introduced the concept of soft power. In the current environment, shaping perception is as critical as shaping policy. This is no longer diplomacy. This is perception warfare.

Meanwhile, countries that fail to protect their digital ecosystems risk losing control over their own information, politics, and future.

Unlike the Cold War era of rigid blocs, today's alliances are dynamic and interest-driven. India promotes peace in BRICS, while strengthening its position in the anti-China QUAD. Turkey, a NATO ally, procures defense systems from Russia. Saudi Arabia courts both Washington and Beijing. The old saying rings louder than ever: There are no permanent friends, only permanent interests. And those interests now span far beyond military concerns, they include access to microchips, rare earth minerals, AI capability, and global media ecosystems. This new form of rivalry does not involve weapons. It plays out on cloud servers, in mining contracts, on social media timelines, and through 5G cables. Control over semiconductors, digital infrastructure, satellite technology, and rare earths has become central to national security. China now dominates over 60% of the world's rare earth production; key to manufacturing phones, electric vehicles, and precision weapons. Taiwan, an island of just 23 million people, manufactures 90% of the world's advanced semiconductors. Russia and the U.S. battle over influence not only in Ukraine but in cyberspace and energy markets. "The next war will be fought with code, not bullets," observes Yuval Noah Harari, author of Homo Deus. Africa and South Asia are now vital strategic theaters. From building digital networks to controlling lithium and cobalt reserves, global powers are racing to secure their interests in regions long considered peripheral. Pakistan, situated at the intersection of China's Belt and Road Initiative and regional instability, is a frontline state in this emerging digital great game.

Alliances Without Anchors

Unlike the Cold War era of rigid blocs, today's alliances are dynamic and interest-driven. India promotes peace in BRICS, while strengthening its position in the anti-China QUAD. Turkey, a NATO ally, procures defense systems from Russia. Saudi Arabia courts both Washington and Beijing. The old saying rings louder than ever: There are no permanent friends, only permanent interests.

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Warfare Without Bombs

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Africa, Asia, and the New Chessboard

Africa and South Asia are now vital strategic theaters. From building digital networks to controlling lithium and cobalt reserves, global powers are racing to secure their interests in regions long considered peripheral.

Pakistan, situated at the intersection of China's Belt and Road Initiative and regional instability, is a frontline state in this emerging digital great game. But being central comes with a cost. If it does not develop a clear strategic vision, Pakistan risks being pulled into a rivalry it cannot afford to fight, especially without economic resilience or digital sovereignty.

Narratives Are the New Nukes

In the age of hybrid warfare, narratives are weapons, data is oil, and AI is the new nuclear. Global influence is now projected through tech giants, media platforms, and algorithmic control. The U.S. and China have built firewalls, not just physical or digital, but ideological. Europe is pushing for digital sovereignty. Russia has turned to cyber offensives.

Meanwhile, countries that fail to protect their digital ecosystems risk losing control over their own information, politics, and future.

Who will be the next superpower?"-but that question belongs to the past. The real question now is: Who shapes the minds, commands the markets, controls the minerals, and owns the narrative? In today's world, true power lies with those who control the flow of information, the tools of influence, and the architecture of belief. They are the ones who will shape the future.

We are not entering a Cold War. We are already living through something far more complex, a multi-front, hybrid, perception-driven struggle for global influence. The great game never ended. It just evolved. And this time, it's being fought in silence, behind screens, and deep in the code.

Pakistan and much of the Global South, must not walk blindly into this new digital reality. The real race is not about building more weapons, but about becoming more aware, making independent choices, and gaining control over their own future. Because whoever controls the narrative, controls the next chapter of history.

Writer holds an MPhil in International Relations focusing on emerging technologies, global politics and security affairs.

I lost my niece and nephew in Gaza. Until the world calls this a genocide, we have no hope of peace

IT has been less than two months since my niece Juri – a bright, giggling six-year-old – was killed in Gaza. We buried her while her sister recovered from her injuries and her father tried to walk again on shattered legs. Just a week ago, I was struck by another unbearable loss. My 16-year-old nephew Ali was killed: a drone-fired rocket tore through him and six members of our extended family while they were sitting outside the last house we had left – the only one that hadn't yet been reduced to dust.

Ali was split in two. That's not a metaphor: it's literally what the rocket did to his body. A child trying to escape the stifling heat inside a home without electricity, without water, without safety. A child whose only crime was sitting on a plastic chair in a corridor with his uncles – men in their 60s – trying to breathe, trying to live, trying to find a sliver of comfort in a place where even comfort has become a threat.

Why were they killed? They were not fighters. They had no weapons. They were not hiding. They were not "human shields". They were not even moving. Just sitting quietly, maybe sipping tea, maybe just sweating and waiting for the night breeze. And then – a drone. A rocket. A flash. A crater. A silence that never ends. There is no "mistake" here.

No misfire. The drone did not guess. It hovered. It watched. It picked its target. It aimed. And it hit. Directly.

And still there will be no headlines. No outrage, no press conferences, no candlelit vigils in western capitals, no hashtags, no questions asked. But I want to tell you something else. Even after all the horror inflicted on my family by Israel – the killings, the starvation, the loss – I said yes to an invitation to attend a peace conference in Paris. It was part of a series of gatherings leading up to a major summit that was meant to take place in New York, where President Emmanuel Macron had promised to push for the recognition of a Palestinian state. Not long after the Paris meeting, the New York conference was quietly postponed. No explanation. No urgency. As if peace – like everything else in our lives – could be delayed indefinitely. Still, I went to Paris. I went even though I was warned there would be supporters of the Israeli government in the room. I didn't flinch. I will go anywhere and speak to anyone if it means stopping the mass killing of my people. I went not for revenge but for hope. I sat in a room with Israeli participants who said they wanted peace, just like I did. But something was off. While we all spoke of peace, only I seemed willing to speak of death. None of the Israelis I spoke to would

Ahmed Najar

acknowledge the genocide in Gaza. At best, a few admitted that Israel was committing war crimes – but not genocide. This, in spite of the overwhelming consensus among international organisations, Israeli academics and genocide scholars that what is happening in Gaza amounts to a genocide. A couple approached me quietly and, in whispers, confessed that, yes, what was happening was indeed a genocide. But they said it like a secret. A thing too dangerous to say aloud. As if the truth was a weapon that might ruin the prospect of peace.

We spoke of peace in abstract terms. Big, sweeping, beautiful ideas about coexistence and shared futures. But no one wanted to confront the blood-soaked ground beneath us. No one wanted to talk about starving children. Or the drone that tore through my nephew's body. Or the silence that follows the screams. Even some fellow Palestinians – from other parts of Palestine – didn't want to acknowledge the ongoing massacre in Gaza. I felt extremely alone. I felt like an obstacle. Like I was too raw, too inconvenient, too real. Everyone else was busy building bridges while I was still trying to keep my family alive.

In the Jabalia refugee camp, my sister has reached breaking point. What will it take to stop this nightmare?

At one point, an Israeli woman asked me: "Wouldn't it be better if Gazans left for a while, until Gaza is rebuilt?" She said it as if exile was neutral. As if 1948 hadn't happened. As if we hadn't learned that when Palestinians leave, they're not allowed to return. I told her: perhaps in theory, if people could leave temporarily and come back, then maybe. I even said: "Perhaps they could stay in the Negev desert [in southern Israel] and return when Gaza is rebuilt." She stormed out. "You don't want peace," she told me.

But amid all of this, I also spoke with another Israeli woman – kind, thoughtful and honest – who told me that she had been directly impacted by the 7 October attack. She didn't hide her pain. "We are the minority in Israel," she said to me. "Most people are much more anti-Palestinian." I believed her. And I appreciated her willingness to talk. But even she – someone who truly seemed to want peace – couldn't bring herself to call what's happening in Gaza a genocide.

And that left me wondering: if this is the small minority of Israelis who believe in coexistence, and even they cannot confront what is happening in Gaza, what hope do we really have? If those who say they want peace cannot even recognise our suffering, what kind of peace are we talking about?

I don't know whether that conference left me hopeless about peace or whether it taught me something essential: that peace between Palestinians and Israelis will require unimaginable courage. The kind that doesn't flinch from reality or hide behind lofty words while people are being buried under concrete and fire.

Peace will require Palestinians to be willing to speak about their pain and still see the humanity of those who inflicted it. And it will require Israelis who are brave enough to confront what their government has done, and continues to do, in their name. There will be no real peace until both sides can stand face to face and say: "We were wrong. We were complicit. And we choose something better." Ali was killed after I returned from Paris, where I'd sat in the room and tried to build bridges. I'd told people about my niece Juri and begged them to see our pain – and now Ali too is gone. But something inside me has shifted. Not into rage but into resolve. Peace cannot be built on silence or denial. It cannot be built while Palestinians are treated as disposable. It begins with justice, truth and a political solution that guarantees the rights of Palestinians to live in freedom, in dignity and with self-determination. And at the very least, it must begin with the most basic right of all: the right to stay alive.

Can BRICS reshape the global financial order?

Dr. John Sfakianakis

IN August 2023, the leaders of the BRICS nations — Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — gathered in Johannesburg to declare their ambition to rewire the international system. A centerpiece of that ambition was a call to reduce dependence on the US dollar. For some, the idea sounded like déjà vu; de-dollarization has been a recurring theme in emerging markets since the early 2000s. But this time, the stakes feel different. Global polarization is intensifying, financial weaponization has become normalized and the credibility of existing multilateral institutions is eroding. Yet, for all the hype, the BRICS project remains deeply flawed and uneven.

The notion that BRICS could reshape the global financial order rests more on aspiration than reality. While dollar dominance is indeed being reassessed — not just by geopolitical rivals but also by pragmatic middle powers — building a credible alternative requires more than shared discontent. It demands deep capital markets, interoperable infrastructure, credible institutions and — above all — mutual trust. On all these counts, BRICS is still struggling.

The desire to reduce dollar reliance is not simply ideological but a reaction to a financial architecture long shaped by US interests. The 2008 financial crisis exposed the dangers of global dependency on Wall Street. The 2022 sanctions on Russia, which froze hundreds of billions in central bank reserves and cut Moscow off from SWIFT, sent a clear signal to other BRICS members: your assets can be turned into weapons overnight.

But does fear translate into capability? Not necessarily. Incremental moves are already underway. China has expanded its Cross-Border Interbank Payment System and accelerated digital yuan pilots across Asia and Africa. India has begun settling some trade in rupees, particularly with Russia and the UAE. Russia is developing Mir and the System for Transfer of Financial Messages to bypass Western financial rails. Brazil and South Africa are exploring fintech-led payment corridors. Yet, taken together, these initiatives remain fragmented, politically fragile and institutionally weak.

The internal contradictions of BRICS are glaring. China's outsized role in the bloc breeds discomfort among its partners. The yuan remains nonconvertible. India and China are strategic competitors. Russia is economically isolated. Brazil and South Africa are preoccupied with their own fiscal instability. What unites them is not a shared monetary strategy but a defensive impulse — a desire to insulate themselves from the coercive tools of the current system without agreeing on a viable alternative to replace it.

In this respect, the BRICS bloc echoes the spirit of the Non-Aligned Movement of the 1960s — born from frustration with superpower domination, yet too ideologically and strategically diverse to forge a coherent economic alternative. These aspira-

tions are further undercut by a chronic lack of fiscal and data transparency across the bloc, which undermines investor confidence and complicates efforts to build trust in any shared monetary or institutional arrangement.

Moreover, the dollar is not just a medium of exchange — it is an ecosystem. From commodity pricing and bond issuance to foreign exchange markets and central bank reserves, it is woven into the plumbing of global capitalism. Displacing it would require an alternative that is not only politically palatable but technically superior. BRICS is nowhere near delivering that.

The New Development Bank and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement

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Reserve Arrangement — touted as BRICS' answer to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank — have underperformed. Lending volumes are limited. Governance structures are opaque. And the credibility of any shared macroeconomic framework remains questionable in the absence of institutional convergence.

Even digital currencies, often billed as a leapfrog solution, are no silver bullet. China's e-CNY remains tightly controlled and untested at scale. Interoperability with other BRICS central bank digital currencies remains aspirational. Moreover, few of these economies inspire enough investor confidence to turn their currencies into regional, let alone global, anchors.

One point bears repeating: the US may well benefit from a credible external challenge. A push from BRICS could serve as a cold slap in the face — forcing America to reckon with the fragility of its own advantages.

For too long, dollar dominance has bred complacency. If confronted with a viable challenge, the US could rediscover its competitive edge — leveraging innovation, capital markets and entrepreneurial dynamism to future-proof its leadership.

But let's be clear: BRICS is not that challenge yet. It is a concept in search of coherence — a geopolitical brand lacking operational capacity. Its declarations are bold but its execution remains under-

whelming. The underutilization of the New Development Bank, for example, is telling: with lending volumes far below expectations and project delivery uneven, the institution reflects the broader gap between BRICS' ambitions and its administrative muscle.

As for the Gulf states and other middle powers watching this evolution, caution — not commitment — is the prudent course. Strategic hedging makes sense. Deepening financial links with BRICS, especially through trade settlement, infrastructure finance and digital innovation, is worth exploring. But abandoning the Western-led system is neither practical nor desirable.

The future is hybrid. Gulf countries will continue to invest the bulk of

The entangled power of BRICS

Li Xing, Italo Poty and Li Qin

THROUGHOUT history, shifts in the world order — whether marked by instability, chaos or realignment — have typically been driven by the dynamics shaped by the rise of emerging powers and the resistance from established ones. Today, we are witnessing a dynamic process marked by mutual challenges, constraints, dependencies and accommodations between dominant and emerging powers. BRICS, a representative of the Global South, is increasingly asserting itself economically, politically and diplomatically in this changing landscape.

Since it was formed, BRICS has advocated multilateralism and international cooperation grounded in the principles of fairness and inclusion. The existing Western-led institutions, along with their governing norms, increasingly reflect an outdated order at a time when industrial production, financial dominance and military superiority are concentrated in the hands of the G7 countries.

The recent landscape of global governance has been characterized by the declining effectiveness of the traditional Western-led multilateral institutions in addressing the major global challenges. The erratic and unstable policy of the United States under Donald Trump's second term as president has further weakened the prospects for global governance and meaningful international cooperation. In this context, the 2025 BRICS summit in Brazil in July will confront the urgent need to offer

responses and alternatives to the deepening crisis of the global order.

Worldwide consensus exists today that these great transformations have reshaped the terrain and parameters of social, economic and political relations at both national and global levels. However, there is ongoing debate over whether these changes merely reflect a functional redistribution of comparative advantages within the current world order, or if they signal deeper structural shifts — a "paradigm shift" — requiring a redefinition of the institutions, systems, norms and values that underpin the existing global structure.

As these structural changes are unfolding in the global distribution of economic weight, Global South countries are demanding reform in global governance, calling for fairer representation in a new balance of power. They seek greater participation not only in international institutions but also in shaping the norms and rules that govern them. This movement is consolidated with the emergence of BRICS, formed by the largest economies of the Global South, which began to coordinate their efforts within international institutions to demand reform in global governance.

This evolving global landscape presents both opportunities and challenges for various countries and regions, particularly those of the Global South, but also traditional alliances and certain Global North nations, which are now compelled to recalibrate

their geopolitical and economic strategies. The growing prominence of BRICS is becoming increasingly vital for countries across the Global South. As patterns of economic interdependence shift and the global balance of economic power realigns, nations across Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East, are being prompted to rethink and reposition their economic and political strategies in response to new possibilities and alternatives.

Being frustrated by the lack of opportunities and the uneven development promoted by the current Western-led world order, many Global South countries have expressed their interest in joining the group. As a result, several countries have applied to join "BRICS+." Over 40 nations are reportedly showing interest in applying for BRICS membership.

Although this expansion highlights the potential of BRICS, it also brings challenges, requiring the group to move beyond a "marriage of convenience" driven by short-term cost-benefit analysis and issue-specific alignments. It is a heterogeneous group that must find consensus on a wide range of global issues, which can be difficult depending on the topic.

Many of these issues are deeply connected to domestic realities. That is why it is important to uphold the principle of non-interference in internal affairs while simultaneously seeking consensus on key international matters.

During Brazil's BRICS presidency this year, two key challenges stand out: promoting political and economic stability amid US hegemonic decline, and advancing sustainable development among the members. Efforts include reforming global financial systems and increasing the use of local currencies to reduce dependence on the US dollar. A notable step was the May 13 currency swap agreement worth 190 billion yuan (\$26.47 billion) between China and Brazil, which sets a precedent for other BRICS nations to strengthen financial resilience and trade through similar initiatives.

The second major challenge for BRICS lies in the diverse development stages of its members. If they progress successfully with BRICS' support, the group will gain strength, cohesion and broader appeal. Programs such as the Partnership on New Industrial Revolution must yield tangible results, helping members build industrial capacity and adapt to Industry 4.0. BRICS must also present an alternative model to Western institutions, with more advanced members, such as China, sharing technology and investing in infrastructure. The New Development Bank supports this by providing accessible financing. However, true development also depends on domestic strategies to the extent that while BRICS can offer support and flexibility, it is ultimately up to each country to seize the opportunities and drive its own upward mobility.

Did God want Trump to bomb Iran?

AFTER ordering the United States military to bomb Iran last month, US President Donald Trump made a brief address at the White House to laud the "massive precision strike" that had allegedly put a "stop to the nuclear threat posed by the world's number one state sponsor of terror".

The speech, which lasted less than four minutes, ended with the invocation of God's name no fewer than five times in a span of seven seconds: "And I wanna just thank everybody and in particular, God. I wanna just say, 'We love you God, and we love our great military – protect them.' God bless the Middle East, God bless Israel, and God bless America."

Of course, the terminology deployed in the speech was problematic before we even got to the rapid-fire mention of the Almighty by a man who

has never been particularly religious. For one thing, Iran simply lacks the credentials to qualify as the world's "number one state sponsor of terror"; that position is already occupied by the US itself, which, unlike Iran, has spent the entirety of its contemporary history bombing and otherwise antagonising folks in every last corner of the Earth.

The US has also continued to serve as the number one state sponsor of Israel, whose longstanding policy of terrorising Palestinians and other Arabs has now culminated in an all-out genocide in the Gaza Strip, as Israel seeks to annihilate the territory and its inhabitants along with it.

But anyway, "God bless Israel."

This, to be sure, was not the first time that Trump relied on God to sign off on worldly events. Back in 2017, during the man's first stint as president, the

deity made various appearances in Trump's official statement following a US military strike on Syria. God, it seems, just can't get enough of war.

God made a prominent return in January 2025, taking centre stage in Trump's inauguration speech – yet another reminder that the separation of church and state remains one of the more transparently disingenuous pillars of American "democracy." In his address, the president revealed the true reason he had survived the widely publicised assassination attempt in Pennsylvania in July 2024: "I was saved by God to make America great again."

Part of making America great again was supposed to be focusing on ourselves instead of, you know, getting wrapped up in other people's wars abroad. But the beauty of having God on your side means you really don't

Belén Fernández

have to explain too much in the end; after all, it's all divine will.

Indeed, Trump's increasing reliance on the Almighty can hardly be

• • • • • The US has also continued to serve as the number one state sponsor of Israel, whose longstanding policy of terrorising Palestinians and other Arabs has now culminated in an all-out genocide in the Gaza Strip, as Israel seeks to annihilate the territory and its inhabitants along with it. But anyway, "God bless Israel." This, to be sure, was not the first time that Trump relied on God to sign off on worldly events. Back in 2017, during the man's first stint as president, the deity made various appearances in Trump's official statement following a US military strike on Syria. God, it seems, just can't get enough of war. God made a prominent return in January 2025, taking centre stage in Trump's inauguration speech – yet another reminder that the separation of church and state remains one of the more transparently disingenuous pillars of American "democracy." • • • • •

interpreted as a come-to-Jesus moment or a sudden embrace of the faith. Rather, God-talk comes in handy in the business of courting white evangelical

Christians, many of whom already see Trump himself as a saviour in his own right based on his valiant worldwide war on abortion, among other cam-

• • • • • paigned to inflict earthly suffering on poor and vulnerable people. The evangelical obsession with Israel means Trump has earned big sav-

iour points in that realm, as well.

In 2019, for example, the president took to Twitter to thank Wayne Allyn Root – an American Jewish-turned-evangelical conservative radio host and established conspiracy theorist – for his "very nice words," including that Trump was the "best President for Israel in the history of the world" and that Israeli Jews "love him like he's the King of Israel".

And not only that: Israelis also "love him like he is the second coming of God".

Obviously, anyone with an ego as big as Trump's has no problem playing God – especially when he already believes that his every proclamation should spontaneously be made reality, biblical creation story-style.

Former Arkansas governor and zealous evangelical Mike Huckabee, who once declared that "there

is no such thing as a Palestinian" and who is now serving as Trump's ambassador to Israel, has done his own part to encourage the president's messiah complex, writing in a text message to Trump that "I believe you hear from heaven ... You did not seek this moment. This moment sought YOU!"

So it was only fitting that Trump should thank and profess love for God after bombing Iran in accordance with Israel's wishes – not that US and Israeli interests don't align when it comes to sowing regional havoc and ensuring the flow of capital into arms industry coffers.

And yet, Trump is not the only US head of state to have enjoyed wartime communications with God. Recall the time in 2003 that then-President and "war on terror" chief George W Bush informed Palestinian ministers of his "mission from God".

Palestinian Foreign

Minister Nabil Shaath would go on to quote snippets from Bush's side of the conversation: "God would tell me, 'George, go and fight those terrorists in Afghanistan.' And I did, and then God would tell me, 'George, go and end the tyranny in Iraq.' And I did."

Now, Trump doesn't like to take orders from anyone, even if they're from on high. However, he's made it clear that he's not opposed to ingratiating himself with God in the interest of political expediency.

Some evangelical adherents see the current upheaval in the Middle East as potentially expediting the so-called "end times" and the second coming of Jesus – which means the more war, the better. And the more that God can be portrayed as an ally in US and Israeli-inflicted devastation, the better for Trump's delusions of deification.



SCCI expresses disappointment over ignoring proposals

— committee to be formed to decide future line of action

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Executive Committee of the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) expressed high disappointment and dismay over ignoring proposals in federal and provincial budgets of the chamber.

The forum decided to chalk out a holistic plan to highlight traders' reservations on anti-business budgetary initiatives in a modest and appropriate manner.

The forum thoroughly held discussion on anomalies in federal and provincial budget FY2025-26 and expressed anguish over non-incorporating the chamber's proposals.

The executive committee meeting chaired by SCCI president Fazal Moqem Khan. Senior vice president Abdul Jalil Jan,

vice president Shehryar Khan of the chamber, members of the committee Adnan Nasir, Aftab Iqbal, Abdul Nasir, Hassan Zahiddin, Ishfaq Ahmad, Junaid Altaf, Muhammad Nadeem Rauf, Mujeebur Rehman, Sabir Ahmad Bangash, Sajjad Zaheer, Saifullah Khan, Saddam Hussain, Sultan Muhammad, Shams ur Rahim and Ms Afia Walayat Shah, SCCI Secretary General Muqtasid Ahsan were present on the occasion.

Former FPCCI president and group leader Ghazanfar Bilour, former presidents Malik Niaz Ahmad, Riaz Arshad, Hasnain Khurshid, Zulfiqar Ali Khan, Faiz Muhammad Faizi, Zahidullah Shinwari, former senior vice presidents Imran Khan Mohamad, Sanaullah Khan, former vice presidents Ejaz Khan Afridi, Javed Akhtar, Haris

Mufti, former executive members Pervaz Khan Khattak, Monawar Khurshid, and Sohail Javed, Haji Ihsanullah, Saddam Gul, Faiz Rasool, Rashid Iqbal Siddiqui, Ghazanfar Savul, Ishtiaq Muhammad Paracha, Fazl I Wahid were participated in the meeting as observer in the meeting.

Participants and experts on the occasion highlighted the clauses and sections implemented through financial bill 2026, especially related to granting extraordinary powers to tax officials in 37AA, digital invoicing system, E-bilty and other sections which would bring negative impacts on cost of doing business, export, growth, investment, competitiveness, besides the forum also concerned over central faceless assessment system along with imposition of Petroleum Green Climate

Levy 2.50 per litre, described that these budgetary measures are counter-productive in the government's efforts of ease of doing business and revival of the national economy.

The meeting expressed unanimity and strongly opposed the clauses and sections that were made part of the financial bill 2025-26 and decided to chalk out a holistic strategy and line of action and adopt any means, but in a modest and proactive manner to convey the traders' community apprehension on the federal and provincial budgets.

It was decided to form a high-powered committee, consisting of experts, senior members and traders regarding anomalies and drawbacks in federal and provincial budgets and prepare proposals for the future line of action.



PESHAWAR: President Sharhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Fazal Moqem Khan presiding over a meeting of SCCI's Executive Committee.

Gold rates up by Rs800 to Rs357,000

ISLAMABAD (APP): The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs.800 and was traded at Rs.357,000 on Thursday as compared to its sale at Rs.356,200 on the last trading day, All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported.

The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also increased by Rs685 to Rs.306,069 from Rs. 305,384 and for 10 grams of 22 Karat it went up by Rs.628 to Rs.280,573 from Rs.279,945

The rates of per tola and ten gram silver increased by Rs.55 and 47 and were sold at Rs.3,871 and Rs.3,318 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$8 to \$3,350 from \$3,342, whereas that of silver increased by \$0.55 to at \$36.87, the Association reported.

US debt worrying markets

PARIS (AFP/APP): Since the return of Donald Trump to the White House uncertainty about US financial policy has caused concern as US debt continues to rise.

Those concerns have been visible on financial markets as US bond yields have climbed, an indication that investors are worried about the sustainability of the debt of the world's top economy.

Those concerns have also affected the dollar, which as the global reserve currency has usually been seen as a safe haven currency.

Foreigners have to purchase dollars if they want to buy US bonds, which have also been seen as one of the safest assets in times of volatility.

The US dollar lost more than 10 percent during the first half of the year, its worst performance since 1973.

The US Treasury raises funds by issuing three types of debt instruments: short-term bills, medium-term notes and long-term bonds. They carry a face value but are sold at a discount, with that price helping determine the yield, or rate of return for investors.

Higher yields indicate investors are demanding a higher rate of return to hold US debt, which can be an indication about concern over whether they will eventually be repaid.

The yields on 30-year US bonds rose above the symbolic level of 5.0 percent in May, but have since retreated to around 4.8 percent.

"Most of the concerns stem from the 'One Big Beautiful Bill', the law supported by the White House that includes measures to prolong tax cuts brought in by Donald Trump during his first term," said Gregoire Kounowski, an investment advisor at asset manager Norman K.

"If the text remains unchanged it would add three to four trillion dollars to the US debt," he added.

The bill faces a final vote in the US House of Representatives Thursday after squeaking through the Senate on Tuesday.

When Moody's cut the United States's top triple-A credit rating in May it cited rising levels of government debt and the impact of the interest costs on the US budget.

PSX stays bullish, gains 342 more points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 Index continued with bullish trend on Thursday, gaining 342.63 points, a positive change of 0.26 percent, closing at 130,686.66 points against 130,344.03 points last trading day.

A total of 899,849,566 shares were traded during the day as compared to 1,026,117,776 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 43.252 billion against Rs 49.294 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 468 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 216 of them recorded gains and 236 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 16 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 49,454,250 shares at Rs 1.59 per share,

Image Pakistan with 36,653,993 shares at Rs 32.47 per share and Bank of Punjab with 35,061,211 shares at Rs 11.52 per share.

PIA Holding Company LimitedB witnessed a maximum increase of Rs1,956.21 per share closing at Rs 21,518.31 whereas runner-up was Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited with Rs197.50 rise in its share price to close at Rs23,600.00.

Bhanero Textile Mills Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 56.55 per share price, closing at Rs 920.51, whereas the runner-up was SS Oil Mills Limited with Rs 54.38 decline in its per share price to Rs 867.82.

Rupee gains 9 paise against US Dollar

The Rupee on Thursday appreciated by 09 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and

closed at Rs 283.86 against the previous day's closing of Rs 283.95.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 285.50 and Rs 286.40 respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by 69 paise to close at Rs 335.15 against the last day's closing of Rs 334.49, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese yen remained constant at Rs1.97, whereas a decrease of Rs1.1 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 388.08 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs 389.18.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal went down by 02 paise each to close at Rs 77.28 and Rs 75.69 respectively.

'Electric Vehicle Financing Scheme' SAPM chairs meeting on insurance rates

ISLAMABAD (APP): A high-level meeting on the Electric Vehicle (EV) Financing Scheme was held on Thursday under the chairmanship of the Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production, Haroon Akhtar Khan.

The meeting focused on key issues such as insurance costs, risks related to battery theft, and anti-theft security measures for electric vehicles.

Representatives from insurance and manufacturing companies participated in the meeting, said a press release issued here.

EV manufacturers

briefed the forum about the latest safety enhancements introduced in electric vehicles, including advanced tracking systems, upgraded locking mechanisms, and secure battery systems.

Manufacturers emphasized that lithium-ion batteries are considered the safest for Pakistani weather conditions and are also environmentally beneficial. It was highlighted that new technological interventions have significantly reduced the risk of battery theft in electric vehicles.

Haroon Akhtar Khan directed insurance companies to submit separate insurance rate quotations

for motorcycles, rickshaws, and cars by Tuesday.

He urged the companies to propose affordable insurance rates in the public interest, assuring that the most competitive and beneficial rates would be selected.

He reiterated that under the vision of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the government is committed to promoting eco-friendly transportation through the National Electric Vehicle Policy.

"Electric vehicles will play a significant role in reducing environmental pollution in Pakistan," SAPM stated.

Services' exports up by 8.58% in 11 months

ISLAMABAD (APP): The export of various services witnessed 8.58 percent increase during the first eleven months (July-May) of the fiscal year 2024-25 as compared to the corresponding months of last year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

According to the latest PBS data, Pakistan earned \$ 7,648.29 million from the export of services during July-May 2024-25 as compared to services' export of \$ 7,043.66 billion in July-May 2023-14.

The services' imports

also witnessed growth of 6.62 and were recorded at \$ 10,317.37 billion against \$9,676.87 the previous year.

Based on the figures, the services' trade deficit witnessed an increase of 1.36 percent during the months under review by growing from the deficit of \$2,633.21 in FY2023-24 to \$2,669.08 during FY2024-25.

Meanwhile, on year-on-year basis, the exports of services in May 2025 increased by 1.57 percent to \$704.39 million from \$715.45 million in May 2025.

On the other hand, the imports however decreased by 5.07 percent by going down from \$935.45 million to \$888.00 million, according to PBS data.

On month-on-month basis, the export of services decreased by 0.05 percent in May 2025 when compared to the imports of \$715.84 million in April 2025.

The imports of services also declined by 1.62 percent in May 2025 compared to imports of \$902.56 million in April 2025, PBS reported.

Liquid foreign reserves position

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The total liquid foreign reserves held by the country stood at US\$ 18,091.1 million as of 27-Jun-2025. The break-up of the foreign reserves position is as under:

Foreign reserves held by the State Bank of Pakistan: US\$ 12,727.8 million.

Net foreign reserves held by commercial banks: US\$ 5,363.3 million.

Total liquid foreign reserves: US\$ 18,091.1

Shipping activity at PQ

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity was reported at the port where the container ship 'Hansa Africa' berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal on Wednesday. Meanwhile, another bulk cargo carrier 'Nord Utopia' with Coal also arrived at outer anchorage same day. A total of nine ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, Phoenix Ocean and BBG Forever are left the port today morning, while three more ships, Hansa Africa, Amir Gas and Rose-M expected to sail.

Standard Chartered Pakistan's achievements in diversity, inclusion

F.P. Report

KARACHI: In June 2025, Standard Chartered Pakistan received two prestigious awards for its exceptional work in Diversity & Inclusion. The Bank was honoured with the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Diamond Recognition Award by the Employer's Federation of Pakistan, acknowledging its dedication to creating a gender-inclusive workspace. Additionally, SC Pakistan was recognized for its excellence in Best Accessible Documentation, Employment for Women with Disabilities, and Disability Inclusion Training & Capacity Building at the Inaugural Pakistan PWDs Finclusion Awards.

Standard Chartered Pakistan has made remarkable progress in promoting diversity and inclusion. With an industry-leading diversity ratio of 29%, the Bank has shown a strong commitment to fostering a workplace culture that values and celebrates diversity. For the last two years SC

Pakistan has sponsored the country's largest career fair for differently abled job seekers, connecting over 900 youth with more than 40 prospective employers. The Bank has also been proactive in engaging the wider industry by initiating the first-ever roundtable for banking industry HR heads to promote disability-confident hiring practices and this year also sponsored 'HuroofAccess25,' an event dedicated to the financial and workplace inclusion of persons with disabilities. Staff are also being upskilled on sign language and a virtual sign language interpretation application has also been abled at select branches.

Yasir Khwaja, Head of HR at SC Pakistan, highlighted the Bank's inclusive culture as a critical competitive advantage. He stated, "Our culture of inclusion is not just a core value but a strategic differentiator for us. Our inclusive practices ranging from flexible working arrangements and equalized parental leave policies to our proactive

efforts in hiring and supporting persons with disabilities have been instrumental in maintaining our market leading diversity ratio and ensuring financial empowerment. These efforts underscore our commitment to creating a workplace where everyone has the opportunity to thrive by creating enabling environments, addressing biases and leveraging technology."

We are a leading international banking group, with a presence in 52 of the world's most dynamic markets. Our purpose is to drive commerce and prosperity through our unique diversity, and our heritage and values are expressed in our brand promise, here for good. Standard Chartered PLC is listed on the London and Hong Kong stock exchanges.

Standard Chartered Bank (Pakistan) Ltd. is the oldest and largest international bank in Pakistan since 1863. It is also the first international bank to be awarded Islamic banking licence and the first to open an Islamic banking

branch.

The Bank serves Corporate & Institutional Banking (CIB) and Wealth & Retail Banking (WRB) clients through a comprehensive suite of products and services. The Banks serves both Retail and Corporate and Institutional Banking customers. Retail Banking provides credit cards, personal loans, mortgages, deposit taking and wealth management services to individuals. Corporate and Institutional Banking provides clients with services in trade finance, transactional banking, lending, securities services, foreign exchange, debt capital markets and corporate finance. It also offers a complete suite of Islamic banking solutions under its Standard Chartered Saadiq brand.

The Bank employs over 2,100 people in Pakistan and has a network of 40 branches in 10 cities.

Standard Chartered Bank (Pakistan) Limited is listed on the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) and was assigned a rating of AAA / A1+ by PACRA.

Stock markets, dollar steady before US jobs data

LONDON (AFP/APP): Stock markets and the dollar largely steadied Thursday before key US jobs data and as investors kept a close eye on President Donald Trump's bid to push through a tax-cutting budget.

London's stock market and the pound recovered, having taken a knock Wednesday on rumours that British finance minister Rachel Reeves faced losing her job.

Oil prices fell, with OPEC and the cartel's crude-producing allies expected to announce Sunday a rise to output.

"US stock markets made a fresh record high on Wednesday as we lead

up to today's (non-farm) payrolls report," noted Kathleen Brooks, research director at XTB trading group.

"A weak jobs reading for June... could see the market step up rate-cut expectations for the US, which may weigh on the dollar," she added.

Thursday's report comes one day after a smaller survey showed the US private sector unexpectedly shed jobs last month for the first time since March 2023, suggesting the labour market was slackening in the world's biggest economy.

Traders widely expect the Federal Reserve to cut

US interest rates twice this year but there is growing speculation that it could make three, with one possibly at the July meeting.

Bets on rates coming down -- possibly this month but more likely in September or October -- are supporting equities.

There was a muted response, meanwhile, to a US-Vietnam trade deal.

While the pact provided hope that other governments could reach agreements with Washington, dealers were cautious as it emerged that Vietnam must still pay levies of as much as 40 percent for certain exports.

The news means Hanoi will avoid paying the 46

percent levies applied on the April 2 tariff blitz, though the cost of goods going into America will still surge.

The stock exchanges in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi both dipped Thursday.

With less than a week left until Trump's July 9 deadline to avoid his "reciprocal" levies, only Britain has signed a deal with the US while China has agreed a framework that slashed sky-high tit-for-tat levies.

Trump has said he will not push back his deadline to make more deals, though he and some of his officials have said a number were in the pipeline.

Ryanair cancels flights for 30,000 passengers due to French strike

LONDON (BBC News): Tens of thousands of passengers have been hit by a French air traffic control strike that has cancelled flights in France on Thursday and Friday and had a knock-on effect elsewhere in Europe.

Budget airline Ryanair said it had been forced to cancel more than 170 flights and the holiday plans of more than 30,000 passengers had been disrupted.

Two French unions were staging the two-day strike over working conditions, leading to a quarter of flights being cancelled at the main airports in Paris and half of flights at Nice airport.

French Transport Mini-

ster Philippe Tabarot condemned as unacceptable both the unions' demands and their decision to go on strike at such an important time for people going on holiday.

Ryanair said the strike had affected not only its flights to and from France, but also aircraft flying over French airspace to destinations including the UK, Ireland, Spain and Greece.

Its chief executive, Michael O'Leary, accused the air traffic controllers of "holding European families to ransom". "It makes no sense and is abundantly unfair on EU passengers going on holidays," he complained, calling on European Commission President Urs-

ula von der Leyen to take "urgent action" to ensure minimum service levels during strikes and to protect flights going through French airspace from domestic industrial action.

France's civil aviation authority, DGAC, asked airlines to reduce flight schedules at several airports across the country.

Disruption is expected to worsen at French airports on Friday, with 40% fewer flights from the Paris airports at Charles de Gaulle, Orly and Beauvais.

The strike was called by the UNSA-ICNA union, which cited staffing shortages, management issues and the planned introduction of a controversial

clock-in system for controllers among its concerns. Talks with the DGAC earlier this week failed to resolve the dispute.

Airlines for Europe (A4E), the continent's leading aviation body, described the strike as "intolerable", warning that it would severely disrupt travel plans at the height of the holiday season.

EasyJet, another low-cost carrier affected by the disruption, expressed "deep disappointment" and urged a resolution.

Ryanair said on Wednesday it also had been hit by the recent conflict in the Middle East and had cancelled more than 800 flights last month.



Liverpool forward Jota dies in car crash

LONDON (BBC): Liverpool forward Diogo Jota has died in a car crash, aged 28.

The Portugal forward's brother Andre Silva also died in the accident, which took place in the Spanish province of Zamora.

The 25-year-old was also a professional footballer, with Portuguese second-tier club Penafiel.

The Guardia Civil has told BBC Sport that Jota and his brother died at about 00:30 local time on Thursday.

They said that their car, a Lamborghini, left the road due to a tyre blowout while overtaking another vehicle and then caught fire. Jota married his long-term partner Rute Cardoso, with whom he had three children, just 11 days ago.

He recently posted pictures on social media, external of the ceremony, which took place on 22 June.

Liverpool said they "are devastated" at the loss of Jota, who they signed from Wolves for £41m in 2020.

He scored 65 goals in 182 appearances for the Reds, helping them win the FA Cup and League Cup in 2022 and the Premier League title last season.

Jota moved to Wolves from Atletico Madrid in 2017, initially on a season-long loan before making the switch permanent, and he went on to score 44 goals in 131 appearances across his three seasons with the club. "We are heartbroken," read a Wolves statement. "Diogo was adored by our fans, loved by his team-mates and cherished by everyone who worked with him.

"The memories he created will never be forgotten. Our hearts go out to the family, friends and loved ones of Diogo and his brother."

Jota, who made his international debut in 2019, played his final match for Portugal as they beat Spain in the final of the Nations League on 8 June. He scored 14 goals in 49 appearances.

"The Portuguese



Football Federation (FPF) and all of Portuguese football are completely devastated," read a FPF statement.

"Much more than an amazing player, Diogo Jota was an extraordinary person, respected by all team-mates and oppo-

nents, someone with an infectious joy and a reference in the community itself.

"We have lost two

champions. The passing of Diogo and Andre Silva represents irreparable losses for Portuguese football, and we will do every-

thing to honour their legacy daily."

European football's governing body Uefa has confirmed there will be a minute's silence before Portugal's Euro 2025 game against Spain on Thursday.

Jota began his professional career with Pacos de Ferreira before joining Atletico Madrid in 2016 and he spent the 2016-17 season on loan with Porto, where his brother was a youth player.

"FC Porto is in mourning," read a club statement.

"It is with shock and deep sorrow that we send our heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of Diogo Jota and his brother Andre Silva. Rest in peace." After leaving Porto in 2017, Andre Silva spent time with the youth academies at three other Portuguese clubs before joining Gondomar in 2021.

He signed for Penafiel on a free transfer in 2023 and made 59 league appearances over the past two seasons.

Portugal's prime minister Luis Montenegro said: "The news of the death of Diogo Jota, an athlete who greatly honoured Portugal's name, and his brother is unexpected and tragic.

"I extend my deepest condolences to their family. It is a sad day for football and for national and international sports."

Former Chelsea and Tottenham boss Andre Villas-Boas, who is now club president at Porto added: "This is a moment of profound dismay for the entire Porto fanbase and for all Portuguese people.

"Two young men tragically lost their lives, two men who represented FC Porto in an exemplary manner and who will be remembered not only for their football but also for their personal and human qualities.

"To the family and friends of Diogo and Andre, still devastated by the injustice of their untimely loss, I offer my condolences. Football has lost two great men."

PCB shortlists 30 cricketers for U19 skills assessment camp

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Wednesday shortlisted 30 players to attend the third phase of the U19 Skills Assessment camp due to start on July 7 (Monday) in Multan.

20 young cricketers have been selected from among the 65 platers who went through a comprehensive match-based assessment process conducted in two phases under the supervision of former captain Azhar Ali, Head of Youth Development.

While 10 players have been picked from amongst those who had previously

represented Pakistan U19 and are eligible to feature in ICC U19 World Cup 2026 and are nvited to attend the third phase of the camp. The players born on or after 1 September 2006 are eligible to feature in the forthcoming ICC U19 World Cup.

To ensure a fair and detailed evaluation, the 65 players were divided into two groups, with each group playing four matches under competitive conditions. This format allowed selectors and coaches to assess a range of key skills, including

batting, bowling, fielding and tactical awareness.

The third phase of the Skills Assessment camp aims to further refine the players' technical and mental skills as part of the broader strategy to prepare a strong pool of talent for upcoming domestic event as well as international events including ACC U19 Asia Cup and ICC U19 World Cup.

Players (20) in alphabetical order:

Abbas Khan, Abdul Wahab, Ali Hassan Baloch, Asad Umar, Daniyal Ali Khan, Ghulam Haider, Hamza Zahoor,

Haroon Khan, Hazrat Ali, Huzaifa Ahsan, Ibtisam Azhar, Mohammad Arshad, Mohammad Abbas Afridi, Niqab Shafiq, Rana Adeel Mushtaq, Rizwanullah, Saad Sakhawat, Sadeeq Aman, Sameer Minhas and Yahya Shah

10 players - who have already represented Pakistan U19 - (in alphabetical order):

Abdul Subhan, Ahmed Hussain, Farhan Yousaf, Hassan Khan, Mohammad Huzaifa, Mohammad Tahir, Momin Qamar, Tayyab Arif, Umar Zaib and Usman Khan.



LONDON: Serbia's Novak Djokovic celebrates winning his second round match against Britain's Daniel Evans.

Brilliant Djokovic hits flow state to crush Britain's Evans

LONDON (Reuters): Seven-times Wimbledon champion Novak Djokovic showed that he remains a real threat for a record-extending 25th Grand Slam title at the age of 38 with a clinical 6-3 6-2 6-0 second-round destruction of Briton Dan Evans on Centre Court on Thursday.

The Serb continues to rage against the dying of the light and showed why he has identified the grass of Wimbledon as his best chance of adding to his extraordinary tally in a superb all-round performance where he looked as sharp and fit as at any time in his incredible career.

He was never remotely troubled on serve until the final game of the match, while wildcard Evans had to scramble for almost everything on his - saving nine first-set break points before eventually

succumbing on the 10th.

Djokovic continued to dominate as Evans, who beat him in their only previous meeting on clay four years ago, saw his tame sliced backhands repeatedly crashed back past him as the sixth seed romped home.

Twenty years after first setting foot on the Wimbledon grass, Djokovic is the most dangerous of floaters.

Since losing in the quarter-finals in 2017 he has reached the last six finals, winning the first four but losing the last two to Carlos Alcaraz, and it would be a brave man to bet against him making it seven in a row on Thursday's evidence.

He (Evans) can cause a lot of trouble if you're not on top of your game, which I think I was to be honest from the very beginning," Djokovic said.

"Technically, tactically I knew exactly what I needed to do and I executed perfectly.

Sometimes you have these kind of days, where everything goes your way, everything flows and it's good to be in the shoes and holding a racket on a day like this."

The tone was set almost from the start, with Djokovic racing through his service games and Evans having to fight for everything.

Roared on by a hopeful home crowd the 35-year-old Brit saved four break points in a marathon fourth game, three in the sixth and another two in the eighth, before Djokovic finally broke at the 10th attempt.

Evans was ranked as high as 21st in the world two years ago, but he has plummeted to 154th and his backhand slice was totally ineffective as

Djokovic teed off on it with unerring accuracy.

The match soon had an inevitability about it as the Serb moved seamlessly through the second set and then raced to a 5-0 lead in the third before Evans finally forced two break points, only for Djokovic to snuff out the danger.

It put him into the third round for the 19th time - a men's record in the Open era - at a tournament he loves above all others.

"I've said this a million times before, but I have to repeat it, Wimbledon still stays the most special tournament in my heart, the one that I always dreamed of winning when I was a kid," he said.

"It's the beginning of the tournament, but yes I'm aware of the history on the line and I'm thinking about the big things that I can make in this tournament."

Pak players move in Asian Jr Squash C'ships semis

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani players Abdullah Nawaz, Nauman Khan, Ahmad Rayyan Khan, Muhammad Sohail Adnan and Mahnoor Ali have moved in the semifinals of the 32nd Asian Junior Individual Squash Championships 2025 at South Korea.

According to details, all Pakistani quarter finalists

won their matches except Sehrish Ali in the Girls U-15 Category.

In Boys U-19, Abdullah Nawaz [3/4] (PAK) beat Wong W [9/16] (HKG) 11-4, 11-6, 11-6 (3-0). In Boys U-15, Nauman Khan [1] (PAK) beat Harshal R [1] (IND) 11-6, 11-5, 11-7 (3-0) and Ahmad Rayyan Khan (PAK) beat Armann M [5/8] (MAS) 11-7, 11-3,

11-3 (3-0).

In Boys U-13, Muhammad Sohail Adnan [1] (PAK) beat Abhyuday A [5/8] (IND) 11-2, 11-8, 11-2 (3-0). In Girls U-15, Siti S A S [5/8] (MAS) beat Sehrish Ali (PAK) 11-4, 11-7, 11-2 (3-0). In Girls U-13, Mahnoor Ali [3/4] (PAK) beat Anika K [5/8] (IND) 11-6, 11-2, 11-3 (3-0).

India cruise past 400 on second morning, Gill crosses 150

L O N D O N (ESPNCricinfo): India cruised past 400 on the second morning at Edgbaston, as Shubman Gill registered his new Test high score in a 203-run partnership with Ravindra Jadeja for the sixth wicket. Jadeja fell shortly before the interval for 89, gloving a catch behind down the leg side off Josh Tongue, but Gill batted serenely to pass 150 for the first time in Tests.

Gill and Jadeja added an unbroken 99 on the first evening, and reached their 100-run stand off the first ball of the day as Gill tucked Ben Stokes through the leg side. Gill played a rare false shot early on, edging Chris Woakes past second slip, but otherwise offered almost nothing while batting at a slightly higher tempo than he had on the opening day.

England's bowlers were frustrated by Jadeja's habit of taking a step or two down the pitch before deciding whether or not to attempt a run, with Stokes and Woakes both exchanging words with him. Both Jadeja and Stokes were spoken to by the umpires - Sharfuddoula and Chris Gaffaney - and encouraged to avoid the 'danger area' on a good length.

Jadeja marked his ninth 50-plus score against England with his trade sword celebration, and scored freely on both sides of the wicket. He and Gill exchanged sixes off Shoaib Bashir to take India past 400 - and take their partnership beyond 200 - before Tongue, unused for the first 85 minutes of the day, struck in his third over of the session.

Tongue found some extra bounce with an 85mph/137kph short ball, which looped through to Jamie Smith via Jadeja's glove, and bowled a hostile spell to Washington Sundar, India's No. 8. But India were well on top by the lunch break, with Gill still unbeaten and batting with a combination of class and composure.

Woodland handed US Ryder Cup role

NEW YORK (BBC) Gary Woodland will be part of his first Ryder Cup in September - two years after undergoing brain surgery.

It will be in a non-playing role, with United States captain Keegan Bradley naming the 41-year-old as his fifth and final vice-captain for the 45th Ryder Cup, which will take place at the Bethpage Black course in New York from 25-28 September.

Woodland, who won the 2019 US Open, joins Jim Furyk, Kevin Kisner, Webb Simpson and Brandt Snedeker as vice-captains on a US team aiming to regain the trophy after Europe claimed a 16½-11½ victory in Rome in

2023. "Keegan's passion for this event is contagious and I am thrilled to be a part of it," Woodland said.

"With just over two months to go until we arrive at Bethpage, I am fully committed to doing everything I can to help Keegan as well as our team of vice-captains and players."

Four-time PGA Tour winner Woodland represented his country in the 2019 Presidents Cup and recently received the PGA Tour Courage Award in recognition of his return to the sport after having surgery to remove a brain tumour in 2023.

His appointment could also take on greater impor-

tance given 39-year-old Bradley, who won the Travellers Championship last month and is ranked seventh in the world, is on course to become the first playing captain in a Ryder Cup since Arnold Palmer in 1963.

"I have an incredible amount of respect and admiration for Gary and all he has accomplished in this game," said Bradley.

"As a major champion and someone who is still competing at a high level, he is well aware of the demands of performing on golf's biggest stages.

"He will be a valuable leader for us over the coming months and throughout the 2025 Ryder Cup at Bethpage Black."

US beat Guatemala in CONCACAF Gold Cup

W A S H I N G O N T (Reuters): United States coach Mauricio Pochettino said Wednesday's 2-1 win over Guatemala in the CONCACAF Gold Cup semi-finals felt like a game on the road, adding that the spirit of the opposing fans was something American supporters could learn from.

Over 22,000 spectators attended the match in St. Louis and the majority were Guatemala supporters, loudly backing their team throughout the game even as Diego Luna's early brace helped the U.S. reach the final, where they face Mexico on Sunday.

"The fans of

Guatemala, I need to say, wow, unbelievable. It was like, to play there. And that was good for our players because it was an atmosphere we didn't expect," former Tottenham Hotspur and Chelsea manager Pochettino told reporters.

Argentine Pochettino said he hoped to see the same passion from American fans when the World Cup takes place in the U.S. next year.

"An unbelievable energy. That is football, that is football. When we say, the connection between the team and the fans, that's the connection we'd like to see at the World Cup. The connection that makes you

fly," he said.

"When we talk about culture, that is culture ... to see (Guatemala), how they fight, how the fans behave, that is an important thing that we need to learn in this country."

Pochettino said that in many countries, soccer matches were seen as much more than sporting spectacles.

"In a different country, you play (to) survive. You play for food. You play for pride ... it's not to enjoy, go home and laugh, that's it," he said.

"The moment that we, this roster, start to live in this way, I think we have big room to improve."



In brief

SP launches special drive

ISLAMABAD (APP): Dolphin Force Superintendent of Police (SP) Khalid Mehmood Awan chaired a high-level meeting on Thursday to review and enhance measures for crime prevention, particularly focusing on curbing vehicle theft and street crimes in the capital. A public relations officer told APP that the meeting was attended by officers posted at Rescue 15. During the session, SP Khalid issued directives to form special police teams to apprehend active gang members involved in car and motorcycle theft and street robberies. SP Khalid instructed officers to intensify crackdowns against criminal elements and make patrolling more effective and purposeful across all areas of the city. "Every officer must actively target and dismantle these criminal gangs," he said, adding that all patrolling and emergency response units must enhance their vigilance to prevent crimes and maintain public safety. SP Khalid emphasized that protecting the lives and property of citizens and ensuring peace in the city remains the foremost priority of Islamabad Police. He said all available resources should be utilized to combat crime and uphold law and order in the federal capital.

ANF arrests four suspects

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), conducting 4 operations across the country, recovered as many as 23.7 kilograms of drugs worth more than Rs 2.829 million and arrested 4 suspects, said an Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Headquarters spokesman on Thursday. He informed that 500 grams of opium and 8.4 kgs of hashish were recovered from two suspects near a university area in Islamabad. In another operation, 100 grams of hashish were recovered from an air cargo parcel, bound for Karachi at Allama Iqbal International Airport, Lahore. As many as 9.6 kgs of hashish were seized from the possession of a bus passenger near Colonel Sher Khan Interchange, Mardan. Similarly, 5.1 kgs of ice were recovered from a suspect near a bus stand in Lahore. Cases have been registered against the arrested suspects under the Narcotics Control Act, and further investigations are underway.

279,140 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 279,140 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 423,635 cusecs. According to the data released by Indus River System Authority (IRSA), the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1515.15 feet which was 113.15 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 273,400 cusecs and 148,200 cusecs, respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1178.05 feet, which was 128.05 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 29,295 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 211,763, 183,850, 108,983 and 50,950 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 49,100 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 42,359 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Minister stresses global partnerships — to protect marine ecosystems

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry emphasized the critical need to build strong partnerships with global organizations to safeguard marine ecosystems and effectively address escalating environmental challenges along Pakistan's coastline.

He shared these views during a meeting with Mahmood Akhtar Cheema, Country Representative of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), who called on him at his office.

IUCN is a global organization working for nature conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources.

The discussion focused on enhancing collaboration to conserve Pakistan's marine and coastal biodiversity while promoting sustainable development within the maritime sector.

The minister highlighted the severe pressures climate change exerts on coastal areas and stressed the urgent need to mobilize climate finance for biodiversity conservation projects.

He stated that such efforts are essential not only for fulfilling Pakistan's international environmental commitments but also for strengthening resilience in coastal communities vulnerable to climate impacts.

Minister Junaid Chaudhry requested IUCN's technical support for implementing the Astola Island Management Plan and acknowledged the organization's role in refining the national Maritime Policy.

He also underscored eco-tourism's potential to advance environmental protection alongside socioeconomic development for local populations.

Mahmood Akhtar Cheema offered IUCN's

expertise to align Pakistan's tourism strategies with global best practices in nature-based tourism and sustainable marine resource management.

Both parties identified pollution and untreated wastewater discharge as significant threats to marine life, prompting the Minister to advocate for modern water treatment infrastructure. IUCN committed to assisting in designing environmentally sound coastal wastewater management technologies.

The minister stressed the importance of involving local communities in conservation planning and execution to ensure inclusive and sustainable outcomes.

Mahmood Akhtar Cheema also presented IUCN's latest annual report to the Minister, reaffirming the organization's dedication to supporting Pakistan's blue economy objectives.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Science and Technology Khalid Hussain Magsi chairs meeting to review nominations for National Civil Awards.

CTO reviews traffic plan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Captain (R) Syed Zeeshan Haider, visited the Sain Boota Imambargah to review traffic arrangements ahead of Muharram processions. An official told APP Thursday that the CTO Zeeshan accompanied by officers of the district administration, also inspected the designated procession routes to ensure effective traffic flow and public safety.

CTO Zeeshan directed that all illegal parking in the vicinity of the procession routes be removed immediately and instructed that parking zones should be allocated at a distance of 100 meters from all entry and exit points.

He said strict action would be taken against vehicles found parked illegally near the procession areas.

CTO Zeeshan appealed to citizens to park their vehicles only in the officially designated areas to avoid disruption and assist in maintaining order.

He said concrete barriers and barbed wire fencing must be installed along the procession routes to enhance security and prevent any untoward incidents.

CTO Zeeshan said that, under the special instructions of IGP Islamabad, all necessary measures will be taken to ensure smooth traffic flow and public facilitation during Muharram.

Nominations for awards reviewed

ISLAMABAD (APP): A high-level meeting to review nominations for the prestigious National Civil Awards was convened at the Cabinet Division under the chairmanship of Federal Minister for Science and Technology, Khalid Hussain Magsi.

The session focused on evaluating the contributions of eminent professionals in the fields of science, technology, education, and engineering.

Federal Secretary for Science and Technology, Mr Sajid Baloch, senior ministry officials, and domain experts participated in the meeting to assess potential awardees for presidential honors.

Addressing the gathering, Minister Khalid Magsi reaffirmed the government's commitment to merit, transparency, and the celebration of excellence. "Recognizing the tireless efforts of our scientists, researchers, and

engineers not only honors their achievements but also motivates the youth to pursue innovation and knowledge," he said.

The participants held comprehensive deliberations on the accomplishments and public service contributions of the nominees. It was agreed that formal recommendations would be finalized and forwarded to the competent authorities, following the prescribed procedures.

PR earns Rs3,959 million from brake, luggage vans

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has generated over Rs 3,959 million in revenue from the operation of brake and luggage vans over the past three years.

"These operations were carried out both directly by Pakistan Railways and through outsourcing to private contractors," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP.

He said it is fact that the luggage vans have been outsourced through a transparent bidding process during this period.

"The outsourcing is done via open tenders which are publicly advertised by the

department," the official said.

The official said that the contracts are awarded in accordance with prevailing regulations, and bid benchmarks are set based on the previous year's earnings from the luggage and brake vans.

He said the successful bidders are required to deposit 15 percent of the contract value in advance, with the remaining amount payable in 10 equal monthly installments.

The official said the standard duration of these contracts is two years, with the possibility of a one-year extension based on mutual

consent and satisfactory performance by the contractor.

The official emphasized that key stakeholders involved in the process include Pakistan Railways and private contractors who are awarded the luggage and brake van operations.

In response to a query, the official revealed that Pakistan Railways also plans to outsource additional services to enhance overall service delivery.

These services include janitorial work, dining cars, catering services, and the commercial management of passenger trains, he added.

PAL chairperson thanks Prime Minister for patronage of literary institutions

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson of the Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL), Dr. Najeeba Arif, has expressed deep gratitude on behalf of the country's literary community to Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif for his special patronage of national literary institutions.

This gesture comes in response to the recent recommendation by the Rightsizing Committee, which had proposed merging these institutions and placing them under the Urdu departments of universities—a move that sparked widespread concern across academic and literary circles, said a press release on Thursday.

Prominent writers, intellectuals, and literature enthusiasts raised their voices against the proposal

through newspaper columns, television appearances, and social media platforms. Lawmakers from various political backgrounds also united to safeguard the future of these institutions.

Notably, speeches by Senator Irfan Siddiqui, Senator Shibli Faraz, and Ms. Mehtab Akbar Rashdi were widely lauded for their advocacy.

A turning point came on July 1, when Senator Irfan Siddiqui met with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

During the meeting, the Prime Minister assured that academic and literary institutions—recognized as symbols of national identity and guardians of cultural heritage—would continue to function independently as before.

He further stated that concrete steps would be

taken to improve their performance.

The Prime Minister's commitment brought immense relief and satisfaction to the literary community nationwide. Writers, poets, and intellectuals congratulated one another and praised the government's vision and dedication to preserving the country's cultural assets.

In a related development, Dr. Najeeba Arif announced that the PAL is preparing to celebrate its Golden Jubilee next year in a befitting manner. PAL remains the only national institution dedicated to the promotion and publication of literature in all Pakistani languages and to fostering international literary and cultural relations.

To enhance Pakistan's soft image through creative

literature, PAL has signed Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with literary institutions in several countries. Through reciprocal translations and international literary events, PAL has introduced global literature to Pakistani readers and promoted Pakistani literature on the world stage.

Dr. Arif also highlighted PAL's ongoing efforts to preserve endangered languages in a linguistically diverse country like Pakistan.

Additionally, the Academy offers financial assistance to underprivileged writers and supports the operational needs of other literary bodies across the nation.

The Academy's journals, magazines, and book series hold a distinguished place in Pakistan's literary

landscape. It also annually confers the prestigious Kamal-e-Funn (Lifetime Achievement) Award and National Literary Awards, which serve to encourage literary excellence.

It is worth mentioning here that in recent years, PAL has launched special initiatives to bring young and rural writers into the literary mainstream. Among these, the three-day Nasl-e-Nau Adabi Mela (Youth Literary Festival) held in August 2024 and the ten-day Young Writers' Inter-Provincial Residency in January 2025 stand out as notable achievements.

As Pakistan prepares to mark 50 years of PAL's service to literature, the reaffirmation of support from the highest levels of government has reinvigorated the nation's writers, poets, and cultural custodians.

Govt to equip Capital schools with high speed internet

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication will provide high-speed internet and fiber-optic connectivity to 532 schools in Islamabad. According to an official from the Ministry, the government has declared early education in artificial intelligence (AI), computer science, and emerging technologies a national priority.

This move is part of the Prime Minister's vision for a "Digital Nation Pakistan," focused on building a skilled and future-ready workforce.

The government is also working to improve the quality of education, aiming to help school and college graduates become more employable. To support this, a high-level committee has been formed to review the current IT curriculum, emphasizing job-oriented skills.

Although education is provincial, the Higher Education Commission (HEC), the Ministry of Education, and the National Curriculum Council are jointly upgrading the national syllabus. As part of these reforms, the government is reviewing AI and IT curricula for students from grade 6 to 12. Over 100 model schools and colleges have already been equipped with smart classrooms, labs, and digital screens. The government also plans to expand digital education to remote areas through EdTech and hybrid learning models.

Starting this academic year, AI education will be formally introduced in all schools in the federal area. So far, over 1,000 teachers have received basic AI training, with more advanced training planned for the summer holidays.

The government also aims to include private sector EdTech startups and young entrepreneurs in the national education system to boost innovation and expand reach.

Commonly used test could miss most dangerous type of heart disease

ISLAMABAD (APP): Left main coronary artery (LMCA) disease can lead to what's known as a "widowmaker" heart attack, so-called because of the low odds of survival. But this can be avoided if someone is given a stent to open up the narrowed LMCA, or heart bypass surgery, according to Medical Xpress.

However, research published in the journal *Circulation: Cardiovascular Interventions* reveals how doctors may be missing up to 28% of people with LMCA disease because current clinical guidelines on how to interpret test results may need to be updated.

When testing for LMCA disease, doctors typically

look for the same blood pressure reduction in both branches of the left main coronary artery. But the new study results overturn this approach—by showing one branch often has lower blood pressure than the other.

This knowledge could in future help doctors better judge whether people have LMCA disease and could benefit from urgent treatment.

Professor Divaka Perera, professor of cardiology at King's, said, "These findings are so important because they will guide doctors to accurately interpret seemingly conflicting test results when assessing the LMCA. That means doctors can correctly diag-

nose LMCA disease, and consider a stent or bypass surgery, or carry out further investigations of the LMCA, rather than ignoring a potentially important disease in a major artery of the heart."

The left main coronary artery is the heart's largest and most critical artery, supplying most of the heart muscle with blood. If the artery becomes substantially narrowed—as seen in people with LMCA disease—this can result in a major heart attack.

Doctors typically diagnose LMCA disease using a thin wire inserted through the wrist and guided to the heart. They are searching for reduced blood pressure in the two branches leading

from the LMCA, which indicate it has been significantly narrowed by a build-up of cholesterol.

But doctors follow guidelines which suggest a blood pressure score below 0.8 is significant and requires immediate treatment.

So, when one branch of the LMCA produces a safer score above 0.8—even if the other does not—doctors following the guidance might rule out LMCA disease.

The researchers say the new findings suggest guidelines should perhaps be updated, so that doctors do not look for the same blood pressure reduction above 0.8 in both branches—the left anterior

descending (LAD) artery and the left circumflex artery.

The study involved 80 people undergoing tests on their coronary arteries. All of them had apparently conflicting blood pressure results from the two branches of the LMCA, including the 47 who had a diagnosis of LMCA disease.

The LAD may have lower blood pressure than the LCx, as seen in the study, partly because it supplies more of the heart muscle with blood than the other artery. As a result, it could have greater capacity to maintain its blood supply.

Ruling out LMCA disease because of a normal blood pressure reading in someone's left circumflex

artery and an apparently abnormal lower one in the LAD—which researchers say doctors do routinely—would result in up to 28% of cases being missed, the study calculates.

However, the researchers highlight that more evidence is needed as the study was only conducted in 80 patients. In the meantime, researchers urge doctors to think carefully and conduct further in-depth investigations of blood vessels when faced with conflicting test results.

"These results will encourage doctors to do further evaluation before discounting LMCA disease based on mismatched results in the two branches of the artery. This could

include important further investigations like the use of an ultrasound or near infra-red cameras to directly visualize the inside of the artery," says Dr. Ozan Demir, first author of the paper from King's.

"A correct diagnosis is a crucial step in getting the right treatment for people with LMCA disease, which could prevent a major heart attack. This small study suggests that apparently conflicting results in both branches of this artery may be completely normal. More research is needed to confirm the results in more patients, but this may help doctors to more accurately interpret their results in future," says Professor Bryan Williams.

2 killed, 1 hurt in accident

AIBAK (Pajhwok): Two individuals have been killed and a third injured in a traffic accident in Samangan, an official said on Thursday. Police spokesman Hashmatullah Rahmani told Pajhwok Afghan News that the accident took place when a fielder-type vehicle veered off the road and overturned today on the Aibak-Mazar highway in Hazrat Sultan district. He said two people lost their lives and a third person was wounded in the accident.

1 killed, 2 injured in Faryab

MAIMANA (Pajhwok): One individual has been killed and two others injured in a traffic accident in Faryab on Thursday. Police spokesman Maulvi Abdullah Muradi said that the accident occurred on Wednesday in the Khwaja Qeshri area of Khwaja Sabzposh district when a Saracha-type vehicle collided with a motorbike. The motorcyclist, identified as Obaidullah, lost his life in the collision, while the vehicle's driver and a passenger sustained injuries.

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

Public reaction to destruction of poppy fields in Badakhshan

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Interior stated that its counter-narcotics officers have launched new operations in Badakhshan province to destroy poppy fields, an action carried out in accordance with the official decree of the leadership of the Islamic Emirate.

However, this operation has sparked reactions from some local residents. According to the spokesperson of the Ministry of Interior, a number of malicious individuals connected with drug trafficking networks tried to exploit the situation to disrupt order and incite people against the government.

Abdul Mateen Qani, spokesperson for the Ministry of Interior, said: "The

counter-narcotics officers of the Ministry of Interior in Badakhshan province have started their usual operations to eradicate poppy fields based on the decree of the leader of the Islamic Emirate. Unfortunately, a number of malicious individuals, who are clearly part of the drug mafia, tried to provoke people against the system, but the issue was resolved through understanding with the locals and the situation is under control."

Meanwhile, experts believe the root of such tensions lies in economic gaps and the lack of alternative livelihoods. "Sometimes small incidents occur, like in Badakhshan, where

locals tried to act against poppy cultivation, but some responded aggressively. The Islamic Emirate has always used patience in such cases," said Shahab Lewal, a political analyst.

"There must be alternative crops provided for the farmers — crops that are productive. The Ministry of Agriculture has determined which crops yield results in which provinces, and seeds of those crops should be distributed accordingly," said Shams Rahman Ahmadzai, another political analyst.

Previously, local sources had also reported several civilian casualties in these tensions, but the Islamic Emirate has not confirmed these reports.

Residents demand imported electricity in Ghazni

GHAZNI CITY (Pajhwok): Some residents of southern Ghazni province say they still use expensive privately produced electricity and ask the government to extend them imported electricity.

Shafiqullah Durrani, an influential figure, told Pajhwok Afghan News electricity was essential for people's economic growth and development, but for years, proper attention had not been paid to solving the electricity problem in the province.

According to him, besides the provincial capital, Ghazni City, areas including Qala-i-Oshrat, Mirwais Mena, Ramadan Town, University Town, Dawat Mena, Khairabad, Ahmadabad, Arbaba, Farid Baba, Ali Lala and other areas where about 2,500 families live, remain deprived of imported electricity.

Haider Khan, another tribal elder, explained imported electricity had reached Ghazni, but it had not been extended to their areas and residents had no option but to consume private electricity at a much higher price.

"Whether it's shops, homes, educational institutions, or factories, they're all facing problems; they've spent their own money on electricity, but it's taking a heavy toll on their economy and causing losses".

Other residents said some people use generators or solar power systems.

"Electricity has been connected to many areas of Ghazni city in cooperation with people. These areas were without electricity due to lack of budget. Approvals for some other areas were obtained this year, surveys have been conducted, locations determined, and work will begin shortly": Eng. Ezatullah Wahdat, deputy director of operations at District Electricity Company, explained.

According to the company, 70 percent of residents have electricity, while only 30 percent are deprived of it.

Baradar, Asadov emphasize expansion of economic ties

KABUL (Ariana News): In a significant diplomatic engagement, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs of Afghanistan's caretaker government, met with Azerbaijani Prime Minister Ali Asadov during his visit to Baku for the 17th Summit of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

The high-level meeting centered on strengthening bilateral cooperation in political, economic, trade, and transit sectors.

Baradar expressed gratitude to the Azerbaijani government for its official invitation and the warm welcome extended to the Afghan delegation.

According to an official statement, Baradar called for an upgrade in diplomatic relations and urged Azerbaijan to formally accept the Islamic Emirate's nominated ambassador.

He also invited Azerbaijan to invest in Afghanistan's key sectors, including oil and gas extraction, solar



and wind energy production, railway network expansion, and mechanized agriculture. The Afghan official also highlighted the strategic importance of maintaining the operational status of the Lapis Lazuli Corridor, describing it as a vital regional connector for boosting trade and integration.

Prime Minister Asadov, in turn, acknowledged Afghanistan's rich cultural

and historical heritage and underlined the deep religious and cultural ties between the two nations. He affirmed Azerbaijan's readiness to cooperate in mining, renewable energy, water management, transportation, and technical education.

Asadov also voiced support for facilitating the transport of Afghan coal to Turkey through Azerb-

aijani territory. Additional pledges included expedited visa processing for Afghan businesspeople, scholarship opportunities for Afghan students, and assistance in addressing the legal cases of Afghan prisoners in Azerbaijan. Both sides described the meeting as a promising starting point for launching practical measures aimed at strengthening bilateral relations.

Islamic Emirate rejects claim of United States



KABUL (Ariana News): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has rejected US claims that Afghan-American businessman Mahmood Shah Habibi was arrested by the General Directorate of Intelligence.

Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesman of the Islamic Emirate, said in a statement that the IEA had inspected all relevant authorities, following a petition by Habibi's family, but there was no sign he was arrested by any IEA directorate.

"The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, as a legitimate

system, does not need to keep anyone suspected of a crime in custody. Previously, citizens of some countries, including the United States, who were detained for violating the laws of Afghanistan, were in constant contact with their families," the statement said.

"The judicial authorities have publicly proceeded and an agreement has been reached with their respective countries in this regard." The Islamic Emirate said it has tasked a permanent committee headed by the Complaints

Hearing Agency to find missing people.

The committee will jointly work with the intelligence and security agencies to find those who have disappeared.

The US has claimed that Mahmood Shah Habibi, an American businessman, was detained by the General Directorate of Intelligence in Afghanistan on August 10, 2022.

It recently announced a reward of up to \$5 million for information leading to the location, recovery, and safe return of Habibi.

Disabled persons, heirs of martyrs being given rights in Ghor

FEROZKOH (Pajhwok): The Martyrs and Disabled Department has started distributing financial assistance to disabled individuals and the heirs of martyrs in western Ghor province.

Head of Martyrs and Disabled Maulvi Gul Ahmad Mutawakl told Pajhwok Afghan News: "About 320 million afghanis will be distributed to three quarters of disabled and heirs of martyrs in 1404 solar year".

"We have distributed more than 45 million afghanis so far, and this process is ongoing to distribute it to all the disabled and heirs of martyrs in the province, so that everyone can receive their rights".

According to him, 8,214 people with disabilities and 3,136 families of martyrs have been registered with the department, and their

money would be distributed within 9 months in the province.

They are trying to cooperate with central authorities to secure the budget needed for final months of 1404 solar year and provide it to people with disabilities and families of martyrs, he added. Some disabled people and heirs of martyrs, who received their rights, expressed gratitude to the government and said though the aid could not meet all their needs, it could partially resolve some of their financial problems.

Abdul Qayum Behboudi, a disabled person, told Pajhwok: "The amount of money varies for people with disabilities. Some are given 8,900 afghanis and others 21,900 afghanis".

He asked the officials of the Department not to for-

get disabled people who are unable to work and to provide them with more assistance.

"I was 12 years old when my left leg was amputated, I endured many hardships until today. I have two children and my husband is unable to work, we barely make ends meet and with this money, we are happy and have bought food for our home": Ms. Eidi Mah, a resident of Ferozkoh, explained.

She urged the government and institutions to pay more attention to the situation of disabled because they do not have enough ability to provide for their families.

Enayatullah Rahimi, a survivor of martyrs, expressed his happiness over the government's distribution of money to the heirs of martyrs. He added

currently, this money can meet the needs of his brother's children.

"My brother was martyred in a landmine explosion, leaving behind a daughter and two sons, and his wife. Their lives were not good, and the government distributed 2,000afis to each heir of the martyr, which has made his orphans very happy. We expect the government and institutions to also distribute food and non-food aid to the heirs of the martyrs so that their children do not resort to begging".

The rights of martyrs and disabled are being distributed at a time when poverty, hardships, and successive droughts have caused many families, especially the disabled and survivors of martyrs, to face numerous problems and challenges.

19-year-old drowns while swimming in Daikundi river

NEILI (Pajhwok): Four young men drowned while swimming in a river in the central province of Daikundi and after efforts of people and security forces, three of them were rescued, but a teenager died, an official said on Thursday.

Police spokesman Ghulam Ali Jawed said the young men from Band Barlan village of Shahrnan district had gone to Lizar River's Women's Garden for recreation when they drowned while swimming.

He said three young men were rescued by people and security forces, but a 19-year-old boy lost his life.

He urged families and youths to take precautions when traveling to water areas during hot season and recreation.

involved.

The workshop, called Afghan Pashtun Gand Clothing Production Company, was established two years ago with a private investment of one million afghanis. It is managed by Donya Jalali, who previously worked as a tailor and has been leading the company since its inception.

Jalali says the factory was founded to empower women and promote traditional Afghan attire. Currently, it employs 39 women, both directly and indirectly.

In addition to tailoring traditional garments, the workshop also produces accessories and decorative items for Henna Night ceremonies—key elements in Afghan wedding traditions.

"A major part of our work is producing Gand Afghani clothing," Jalali explains. "All of our garments are handmade by the hardworking women of this country—women who weave art into every thread with patience and dedication."

She also highlights pieces inspired by the era of King Zahir Shah, reflecting Afghanistan's rich and timeless cultural identity.

"We design each outfit according to the customer's preferences," Jalali adds.

"Henna Night dresses for brides are among our best-sellers. Some feature trailing skirts up to 16 meters



long, though shorter variations can also be tailored upon request."

The designs are rooted in local cultures from various provinces, she notes, emphasizing their authenticity. The company now has several active branches across Kabul and exports its products to Germany, Canada, and the United States.

Jalali calls on the government to support working women in all sectors: "Women who are engaged in any kind of work deserve encouragement and backing."

Moqadas Karimi, a tailor at the workshop for the past six months, shares her experience: "I've worked in various places before, but this role has been particularly fulfilling. Sewing Kuchi dresses is straightforward for me, but depending on the design, it can be time-consuming. These are some of the most intricate garments to make."

Ms. Baheer, a staff member in the sales department, says demand for Kuchi-style clothing is currently high. "Sales of Gand Afghani garments increase during Eid and in the summer. Outfits made from Banaras fabric or featuring Kuchi designs are especially popular. Customers can select designs from our catalog or place custom orders."

She says she's grateful for the employment opportunity provided by the workshop.

Shabir Bashiri, an economic analyst, stresses the importance of women's participation in the economy. "Women's involvement in small and medium-sized enterprises can significantly reduce poverty," he says.

He calls for increased support for such ventures: "If proper markets and financial resources are made available, many more families could escape poverty through these kinds of initiatives."

Warnings, prevention measures amid severe heatwave

KABUL (Pajhwok): The United Nations has issued a warning that Afghanistan will face an intense heatwave in the coming days.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) has announced that adequate facilities have been prepared in all hospitals across the country to address heat-related illnesses and seasonal diseases.

Doctors are advising the public to drink plenty of cold fluids, stay in cool and suitable environments, and wear light-colored clothing when going outside to avoid heatstroke.

FAO heatwave alert

The United Nations Food and Agriculture

Organization (FAO) has warned of a sharp increase in temperatures across Afghanistan from July 1 to July 3, 2025 (10–12 Saratan 1404).

According to the FAO, temperatures across the country are expected to rise 2 to 10 degrees Celsius above average. In southern, eastern, and northern regions, temperatures may exceed 45°C. The organization expressed concern about the upcoming heatwave and shared several recommendations for the public.

MoPH concerns

Sharafat Zaman, spokesman for MoPH, also expressed concern over the intense heat, saying that

Afghanistan has not experienced such temperatures in the past two decades.

In an exclusive interview with Pajhwok Afghan News, he said: "According to the figures shared with us, this year we have seen an increase in cases of heatstroke and other seasonal illnesses. Fortunately, appropriate treatment facilities are available in all hospitals nationwide."

However, Zaman did not provide specific statistics on heatstroke or other seasonal disease cases.

He added: "Public awareness is critically needed to prevent such illnesses. For this reason, the Ministry has launched public aware-

ness programs through the media to better inform people and help protect them from the effects of severe heat."

Rising cases of heat-related illnesses in hospitals

Dr. Faridullah Omari, a specialist trainer at Kabul's National and Specialized Infectious Diseases Hospital, reported an increase in patients suffering from heat-related illnesses.

He said that with rising temperatures, the number of people affected by infectious diseases—especially diarrhea and food poisoning—has increased. On average, 25 to 30 individuals visit the hospital daily due to heatstroke or food

poisoning.

He explained: "After patients are brought to the emergency ward and examined, treatment begins. If the patient's condition is serious, they are hospitalized; otherwise, they are given health advice."

Meanwhile, Dr. Abdullah Nazir, a physician at Kabul's Esteqal Hospital, stated: "Recently, there has been an increase in patients showing symptoms of heatstroke, low blood pressure, severe headaches, and extreme fatigue. We are trying to ensure adequate medical facilities for these patients."

Doctors' recommendations

Sharafat Zaman urged

the public—especially in Kabul and other provinces experiencing high temperatures—to drink plenty of water and fluids during hot days, and consume fruits like watermelon to prevent dehydration.

Dr. Faridullah Omari also recommended: "To prevent illnesses, people should observe personal hygiene, use clean water and healthy food, avoid expired foods, and infected individuals should avoid close contact with others."

He warned that ignoring health recommendations during intense heat could lead to dangerous consequences.

Dr. Rohullah Zaheer, an

internal medicine specialist at Esteqal Hospital, said that in extreme heat, people should stay in cool environments or wear light-colored clothing when going outside, and drink more fluids.

He added that neglecting heatstroke can lead to serious complications such as fainting, seizures, or even death.

According to him, children and the elderly are more vulnerable to heatstroke because their bodies have less resistance.

School closures

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education has issued a notice declaring that due to the extreme heat, all schools in cold regions of

the country will be closed from July 1 to July 5, 2025. Midterm exams of the academic year will begin on July 6.

Rising temperatures, impact on agriculture

Sayed Mohammad Suleimankhel, an environmental expert, said that excessive heat not only reduces soil moisture and causes dryness, but also seriously affects agricultural crops and can lead to drought.

He added that effective water resource management is crucial during the hot season to protect agricultural products. Water must be distributed fairly and purposefully for irrigation.

PHC extends KP CM interim bail till September

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has extended Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur interim bail till September, directing the authorities not to arrest him in any case, on Thursday.

PHC two-member bench comprising Justice Sahibzada Asadullah and Justice Farah Jamshaid heard the case. The Chief Minister, his counsel, the Advocate General of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and other government representatives appeared before the court.

The Chief Minister's counsel Bashir Wazir informed the court that cases are registered against him in Punjab and Islamabad, and he sought details of these cases to seek relief from the relevant courts. The court extended the interim bail until September, considering the Chief Minister's official responsibilities and the need for the government to provide detailed reports on the cases against him. PHC stopped the authorities from arresting the Chief Minister in any case registered against him.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur has stated that the government has formed a high-level committee to investigate the recent incident in Swat where 17 individuals drowned in the Swat River.

The Chief Minister emphasized that the committee will thoroughly investigate the incident and hold anyone responsible for negligence or lapses accountable. He highlighted that the government is actively work-

ing to remove encroachments along the Swat River and elsewhere in the province, stressing that no one will be spared, regardless of their influence or power. Ali Amin Gandapur also commented on the role of the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, suggesting that the Governor lacks the authority to remove the current government, given their inability to even win a councilor seat.

The Chief Minister assured that the committee will submit its report, and based on its findings, action will be taken against those found responsible for the incident. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to addressing issues such as encroachments and ensuring accountability across the province.

Chief Justice annoys CM protocol team interference in court: The Chief Justice of Peshawar High Court, Justice Syed Muhammad Atique Shah has annoyed the conduct of the security team accompanying Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur. The security team prevented journalists from entering the courtroom, on Thursday.

The security team took control of the courtroom entrance and prevented lawyers and journalists from entering the premises. The journalists brought the matter to the attention of the Chief Justice, who expressed outrage over the security team's actions. The Chief Justice questioned the authority of the Chief Minister's security team within the high court premises, emphasizing that the court has its own security arrangements.

The Chief Justice directed the

Additional Advocate General to investigate the matter and resolve the issue, ensuring that such incidents do not occur again.

Court orders Election Commission to decide on Reserved Seats in 10 days: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has directed the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to decide on the allocation of reserved seats in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa within 10 days, on Thursday.

PHC divisional bench comprising Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Dr. Khurshid Iqbal heard the case. The petitioners, including Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Parliamentarians (PTIP) and Awami National Party (ANP), challenged the ECP's decision on the allocation of reserved seats. PTIP's counsel Sultan Muhammad Khan Advocate objected to the ECP's methodology for allocating reserved seats, arguing that it was not in accordance with the law.

During the hearing, PTIP decided to withdraw its petition, leading the court to dismiss the case. ANP's counsel Babar Khan Yousafzai Advocate requested the court to direct the ECP to reconsider the allocation of reserved seats based on the party's representation in the assembly. The ECP informed the court that ANP's case was different due to its success in the by-elections. The court directed the ECP to hear ANP's plea and decide on the allocation of reserved seats within 10 days. PHC lifted the stay order on the allocation of reserved seats, allowing the ECP to proceed with the decision-making process.



ISLAMABAD: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur called on by Chairman Polio Oversight Board, Dr. Christopher Elias.

S African Air Chief calls on CJCSC

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: South African Chief of the Air Force Lieutenant General Wiseman Simo Mbambo called on Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC) General Sahir Shamshad Mirza NI (M) here Thursday at Joint Staff Headquarters.

During the meeting, both sides held discussions on a wide range of areas of mutual interest and bilateral cooperation, said a press release issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) here.

The South African Chief of the Air Force Lieutenant General Wiseman Simo Mbambo and CJCSC discussed practical measures to further expand the level and scope of engagements between the two militaries. They also exchanged views on the broader geopolitical landscape. The CJCSC shared Pakistan's perspective on the evolving regional security landscape and highlighted Pakistan's contributions towards regional peace and stability.

The South African Chief of the Air Force Lieutenant General Wiseman Simo Mbambo lauded the professionalism of Pakistan Armed Forces and acknowledged their sacrifices in the fight against terrorism. Earlier, upon arrival at Joint Staff Headquarters, a smartly turned out tri-services contingent presented 'Guard of Honour' to the visiting dignitary.

Air Chief thanks NA Speaker, MPs

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu on Thursday expressed profound gratitude to the Speaker of National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, and all members of the House for their letter of felicitation on the PAF's resolute and befitting response to the Indian aggression.

In a letter addressed to NA Speaker, the Air Chief Marshal, on behalf of all ranks of the Pakistan Air Force, extended sincere appreciation for the unwavering support, solidarity, and prayers expressed by the national leadership and members of Parliament in their speeches on the floor of the House.

The Air Chief emphasized that the PAF's operational success was a manifestation of a unified national approach, underpinned by the blessings of Allah Almighty. He lauded the Pakistani nation for demonstrating exceptional unity and standing firmly with the armed forces to counter the adversary's hostile designs. The collective resolve of the nation reflects its preparedness to confront all challenges with unwavering courage and determination, he added.

Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu also acknowledged Allah's benevolence in enabling the PAF to safeguard the aerial frontiers of the motherland in line with the nation's expectations. He further reaffirmed the Pakistan Air Force's unwavering commitment to extending full support toward fulfilling any national imperative in defence of the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. He also expressed resolve that Pakistan Air Force remained ever-vigilant and fully prepared to respond to any threat, upholding its sacred duty to protect the skies of Pakistan.

US secures trade deal with Vietnam

WASHINGTON: A trade deal between the United States and Vietnam has marked the first full pact President Donald Trump has sealed with an Asian nation, but has also raised fears that it could provoke a new standoff between the US and China.

South Korean President Lee Jae-myung, who came to power last month on a platform of pursuing pragmatic diplomacy with both the US and China, indicated on Thursday that it remained unclear whether tariff negotiations between Washington and Seoul would be concluded by next week's deadline.

Vietnam has the third-biggest trade surplus with the US of any country after China and Mexico, and was targeted with a 46 percent rate, one of the highest in Trump's "Liberation Day" tariff blitz on April 2. Analysts say the US-Vietnam trade deal may give a glimpse of the template Washington will use with other Asian countries still scrambling for accords, including South Korea, Japan and Thailand.

Speaking at his first news conference on Thursday since taking office on June 4, Lee said the tariff negotiations with the US have been "clearly not easy" and stressed that the countries must reach mutually beneficial outcomes. "It's difficult to say with certainty whether we will be able to reach a conclusion by July 8. We are now doing our best," Lee said. "What we need is a truly reciprocal outcome that benefits both sides and works for everyone, but so far, both sides are still trying to define exactly what they want."

Lee, a liberal, came to power after winning a snap presidential election caused by the removal of conservative President Yoon Suk-yeol over his ill-fated imposition of martial law in December. Trump's 90-day pause in global reciprocal tariffs is set to expire on July 9, potentially exposing South Korean products to 25% tax rates.

The US has separately been seeking higher duties on specific products such as automobiles and semiconductors, which are key exports for South Korea's trade-dependent economy. There are growing concerns in Seoul that Trump may also demand a broader deal, requiring South

Korea to pay significantly more for the 28,000 US soldiers stationed in the country to deter threats from North Korea. Lee has consistently urged patience on tariffs, arguing that rushing to secure an early deal would not serve the national interest.

South Korea's struggle to reach a trade deal with the US comes as the US-Vietnam trade deal was secured late on Wednesday, meaning that the 46 percent rate due to take effect next week has been averted. Vietnam is now set to face a minimum 20 percent tariff in return for opening its market to US products, including cars. But a 40 percent tariff will hit goods passing through the country to circumvent steeper trade barriers – a practice called "transshipping" – and has raised concerns about how Beijing will react.

Washington has accused Hanoi of relabelling Chinese goods to skirt its tariffs, but raw materials from the world's number-two economy are the lifeblood of Vietnam's manufacturing industries. "From a global perspective, perhaps the most interesting point is that this deal again seems in large part to be about China," said Capital Economics. The terms on transhipment "will be seen as a provocation in Beijing, particularly if similar conditions are included in any other deals agreed over coming days", it added.

Shares in clothing companies and sport equipment manufacturers – which have a large footprint in Vietnam – rose on news of the deal in New York. But they later declined sharply as details were released. Vietnam's government said in a statement late on Wednesday that under the deal, the country had promised "preferential market access for US goods, including large-engine cars".

But the statement gave scant detail about the transshipment arrangements in the deal, which Trump announced on his Truth Social platform. Uncertainty over how transshipping will be "defined or enforced" is likely to have diplomatic repercussions, said Bloomberg Economics expert Rana Sajedi. "The looming question now is how China will respond," she said. "Beijing has made clear that it would respond to deals that came at the expense of Chinese interests." — Al Jazeera

Putin tells Trump he won't back down from goals

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russian President Vladimir Putin told United States President Donald Trump in a phone call on Thursday that Moscow wants a negotiated end to the Ukraine war, but will not step back from its original goals, a Kremlin aide said.

In a wide-ranging conversation that also covered Iran and the Middle East, Trump "again raised the issue of an early end to military action" in Ukraine, the aide, Yuri Ushakov, told reporters. "Vladimir Putin, for his part, noted that we continue to seek a political and negotiated solution to the conflict," Ushakov said.

Putin briefed Trump on the implementation of agreements reached between Russia and Ukraine last month to exchange prisoners-of-war and dead soldiers, Ushakov said, and told him that

Moscow was ready to continue negotiations with Kyiv. "Our president also said that Russia will achieve the goals it has set: that is, the elimination of the well-known root causes that led to the current state of affairs, to the current acute confrontation, and Russia will not back down from these goals," he added.

There was nothing in the Kremlin readout to suggest that Putin had made any shift in Moscow's position during the conversation with Trump, who took office with a promise to end the war swiftly but has voiced frequent frustration with the lack of progress between the two sides. The phrase "root causes" is shorthand for the Kremlin's argument that it was compelled to go to war in Ukraine to prevent the country from joining Nato

and being used by the Western alliance as a launch pad to attack Russia.

Ukraine and its European allies say that is a specious pretext for what they call an imperial-style war, but Trump in previous public comments has shown sympathy with Moscow's refusal to accept Nato membership for Ukraine. Putin and Trump did not talk about the US decision to halt some shipments of critical weapons to Ukraine, Ushakov said.

On Iran, he said, "The Russian side emphasised the importance of resolving all disputes, disagreements and conflict situations exclusively by political and diplomatic means." Trump last month sent US stealth bombers to strike three Iranian nuclear sites, in a move condemned by Moscow as unprovoked and illegal.

Wildfires kill two in western Turkiye

ISTANBUL (Reuters): A wildfire killed a second person in Türkiye's western Izmir province as blazes raged for a seventh day across several regions, while a little-known group claiming ties to Kurdish militants said it was behind dozens of arson attacks.

The latest casualty was a backhoe operator, Ibrahim Demir, who died while battling the flames in the Odemis district, the state-run Anadolu news agency said. Earlier, an 81-year-old bedridden man who was home alone in the same area died when fire reached his house, marking the first death since the fires began.

A group calling itself "Children of Fire" claimed responsibility for "tens of fires across six Turkish cities", according to a statement shared online.

The group, which is little known, says it is affiliated with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), designated a terrorist group by Türkiye, the United States and European Union. The PKK, which said in May that it was ending a 40-year insurgency and disbanding, has not commented on the claim.

Firefighters continued to battle flames with helicopters and planes dropping water over mountainous terrain in Izmir, while authorities closed some roads to the Aegean resort town of Cesme, Anadolu said. Broadcasters showed footage of flames lining the main highway as water tankers arrived.

Türkiye, Greece and other countries in the Mediterranean are in an area scientists dub "a wild-

fire hotspot" — with blazes common during hot and dry summers. These have become more destructive in recent years due to a fast-changing climate. Wildfires across Türkiye's west have damaged around 200 homes and victims have been provided alternative accommodation. Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said. Some 50,000 people were temporarily evacuated earlier this week from areas of fires fueled by high temperatures, low humidity and strong winds.

New fires also broke out on Thursday in the southern resort province of Antalya and in forested areas near Istanbul, Türkiye's largest city, Anadolu said. Authorities have managed to contain several of the blazes.

Dozens killed in Gaza, 38 while waiting for aid

GAZA (Reuters): Hamas is seeking guarantees that a new US ceasefire proposal for Gaza would lead to the war's end, a source close to the militant group said on Thursday, as medics said Israeli strikes across the territory had killed scores more people.

Israeli officials said prospects for reaching a ceasefire deal and hostage deal appeared high, nearly 21 months since the war between Israel and Hamas began. On the ground, intensified Israeli strikes across Gaza continued unabated, killing at least 59 people on Thursday, according to health authorities in the territory.

Efforts for a Gaza truce have gathered steam after the US secured a ceasefire to end a 12-day aerial conflict between Israel and Iran. On Tuesday, US President Donald Trump said that Israel had accepted the conditions needed to finalize a 60-day ceasefire with Hamas, during which the parties will work to end the war.

Hamas is seeking clear guarantees that the ceasefire will eventually lead to the war's end, the source close to the group said. Two Israeli officials said that those details were still being worked out. Ending the war has been the main sticking point in repeated rounds of failed negotiations.

A separate source familiar with the matter said that Israel was expecting Hamas' response by Friday and that if it was positive, an Israeli delegation would join indirect talks to cement the deal. It was unclear whether those would be held in Egypt or Qatar, the two countries that have been mediating talks. The proposal includes the staggered release of 10 living Israeli hostages and the return of the bodies of 18 more in exchange for Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails, sources say. Of the 50 remaining hostages in Gaza, 20 are believed to still be alive.

A senior Israeli official close to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said preparations were in place to approve a ceasefire deal even as the

One person killed, 4 injured in Israeli airstrike on car in Beirut

BEIRUT: An Israeli drone attack hit a car on Khaldeh Road in southern Beirut at about 5 p.m. on Thursday. Initial reports suggested one person was killed and at least four injured. The drone fired two guided missiles at the vehicle, scoring direct hits. The road on which it was traveling was described as a typically busy road. The Israeli army confirmed the attack. In a message posted on social media platform X, military spokesperson Avichay Adraee said: "The Israeli army targeted a terrorist in Lebanon who was involved in arms smuggling and advancing terrorist plots against Israeli citizens and army forces on behalf of the Iranian Quds Force."

The attack took place three days before US envoy Thomas Barrack is due visit to Beirut to receive Lebanon's response to US disarmament proposals designed to restrict control of weapons in the country to the Lebanese state, and a day after Hezbollah reiterated its rejection of the demand. Hezbollah's secretary-general, Naim Qassem, said on Wednesday that the group "categorically rejects any efforts to disarm. We do not accept being led into humiliation, nor surrendering our land or weapons to the Israeli enemy."

The matter of weapons is "an internal Lebanese issue that must be addressed internally, without external supervision or interference," he added. "The party will not submit to any external threat or pressure. No one decides for us or imposes choices on us that we do not accept. Our weapons are our legitimate and legal right to confront the Israeli occupation." On Thursday morning, Israeli army forces entered the southern town of Kfar Kila and blew up a civilian home. Located across the border from the Israeli settlement of Metula, Kfar Kila is the closest Lebanese town to Israel, separated only by a border fence.

premier heads to Washington to meet Trump on Monday. Israeli Energy Minister Eli Cohen, who sits on Netanyahu's security cabinet, told news website Ynet that there was "definitely readiness to advance a deal."

In Gaza, however, there was little sign of relief. At least 17 people were killed in an Israeli strike that hit a school in Gaza City where displaced families were sheltering, according to medics. "Suddenly, we found the tent collapsing over us and a fire burning. We don't know what happened," one witness, Wafaa Al-Arqan, told Reuters. "What can we do? Is it fair that all these children burned?" According to medics at Nasser hospital farther south, at least 20 people were killed by Israeli fire en route to an aid distribution site.

The Israeli military said it was

looking into the reports and that its forces were taking precautions to mitigate harm to civilians as it battled Palestinian militants throughout Gaza. The war began when Hamas fighters stormed into Israel on October 7, 2023, killing 1,200 people and taking 251 hostages back to Gaza, according to Israeli tallies. Israel's subsequent military assault has killed more than 57,000 Palestinians, according to the Gaza health ministry, while displacing most of the population of more than 2 million, triggering widespread hunger and leaving much of the territory in ruins. Israel says it won't end the war while Hamas is still armed and ruling Gaza. Hamas, severely weakened, says it won't lay down its weapons but is willing to release all the hostages still in Gaza if Israel ends the war.

Finance Minister advances strategic partnerships in Spain

SEVILLE (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb held a series of high-level bilateral meetings and strategic engagements on the sidelines of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FFD4), currently underway in Seville, Spain.

These meetings were aimed at fostering deeper strategic cooperation with partner countries and institutions across areas such as development finance, trade, climate resilience, and institutional capacity-building, according to press release issued by finance ministry here.

The Minister is representing Pakistan at FFD4, as well as in various side events, policy dialogues, and multi-stakeholder round-table discussions. As part of his bilateral meetings, the minister met with Eelco Heinen, Minister of Finance of the Netherlands, for a detailed bilateral exchange. The meeting focused on further strengthening the long-standing and cordial ties between the two countries, particularly in the domains of trade, development cooperation, climate resilience, and institutional capacity-building.

Both sides shared perspectives on enhancing economic engagement, technical collaboration, and the potential for deepening partnerships in areas such as blended finance, climate finance, and digital transformation. The Pakistani side expressed keen interest in leveraging Dutch expertise in agri-tech, water management, and the digitization of public services.

Aurangzeb appreciated the

Netherlands' continued technical and financial support in diverse sectors, including public financial management, SME development, renewable energy, and climate-smart agriculture. The Dutch Finance Minister reaffirmed his country's support for Pakistan's structural reform agenda and emphasized the importance of policy continuity, transparency, and facilitation of investment flows.

Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb also held a detailed meeting with Axel van Trotsenburg, Senior Managing Director of the World Bank, on the sidelines of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development.

The Minister appreciated the World Bank's continued support for Pakistan's development agenda and shared updates on the successful review of the IMF EFF program and ongoing reforms under the Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF). He also highlighted the launch of Pakistan's National Green Taxonomy, developed with World Bank support, which aims to guide sustainable investments and is expected to be approved soon.

The minister welcomed the World Bank's endorsement of the new 10-year Country Partnership Framework (CPF 2026-2035), which focuses on key areas including child stunting, learning poverty, climate resilience, fiscal space, decarbonization, and private investment. He reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to closely working with the Bank to deliver on these priorities and achieve lasting

development impact.

In a separate meeting, he held in-depth discussions with Alvaro Lario, President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), a specialized UN agency focused on rural development and food system transformation. The two sides reviewed the long-standing collaboration between Pakistan and IFAD, which has seen the implementation of 29 projects to date, benefiting approximately 2.8 million rural households.

The Minister also acknowledged IFAD's ongoing support through six active projects in Pakistan. The meeting covered a wide range of IFAD-supported initiatives in Pakistan, including policy support, vocational training, community infrastructure, access to finance, climate-smart agriculture, value chain development, and resilience against climate shocks. The Minister expressed Pakistan's appreciation for IFAD's efforts in supporting poverty reduction and sustainable rural development.

Additionally, the minister met with John W.H. Denton AO, Secretary-General of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC). The two discussed avenues for enhanced cooperation in trade facilitation, SME development, investment promotion, and the role of the ICC in supporting Pakistan's economic transformation. Particular emphasis was placed on private sector engagement, international best practices, and institutional capacity building to unlock new opportunities for sustainable growth and inclusive development in Pakistan.