

DSP injured in ambush
F.P. Report
WANA: A senior police officer was critically injured in a brazen armed attack in Lower South Waziristan, marking yet another disturbing episode of targeted violence in the restive tribal district. According to official sources, DSP Birmal Rehman was en route to Tehsil Toi Khulla via Samar Bagh when his convoy came under heavy fire near the Ozarb Khwar area.

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Shehbaz leaves for country
SHUSHA (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Friday left for Pakistan after completing his two-day visit to Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani Minister of Education and Science Emin Amrullayev, Azerbaijani Ambassador to Pakistan Khazar Farhadov, Pakistani Ambassador to Azerbaijan Qasim Mohiuddin and senior diplomatic and government officials bid farewell to the Prime Minister and the Pakistani delegation at Fuzuli Airport.

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KHANKENDI: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif addressing the 17th ECO Summit in Azerbaijan.

Security forces kill 30 *khawarij*

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI (APP): Security Forces killed 30 *khawarij* belonging to Indian Proxy Fitna al Khwarij while foiling their infiltration attempt through Pakistan-Afghanistan border in general area Hassan Khel, North Waziristan District.

"Own troops effectively engaged and thwarted Indian sponsored *Khawarij's* attempt to infiltrate. As a result of precise and skillful engagement, all thirty Indian sponsored *khawarij* were sent to hell. A large quantity of weapons, ammunition & explosives was also recovered from the killed Indian sponsored *Khawarij*," said an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) issued here Friday.

The security forces demonstrated exceptional professionalism, vigilance & preparedness, and prevented a potential catastrophe, it further said. The Interim Afghan Government also needs to check and prevent the use of Afghan soil by "foreign proxies" for orchestrating terrorist activities against Pakistan. The Security Forces of Pakistan remain resolute and unwavering in

their commitment to defend the nation's frontiers and to eradicate the menace of Indian sponsored terrorism from the country.

President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday paid tribute to the security forces for eliminating 30 Indian-backed *Khawarij* terrorists while attempting to infiltrate through the Pak-Afghan border in Hassan Khel area of North Waziristan. The president and prime minister, in their separately issued statements, commended the bravery of security forces for carrying out the successful intelligence-based operations.

"Security forces' operations will continue until the complete elimination of terrorists. It is commendable that Pakistan's security forces are successfully conducting operations to eliminate Indian-backed terrorists," the president said. He also reaffirmed the nation's unwavering resolve to eliminate terrorist elements and defend the nation. Prime Minister Shehbaz, who is currently on a two-day visit to Azerbaijan, said that Pakistan's courageous security forces served as an unyielding shield to protect the nation. "The entire

nation salutes the security forces. We are determined to eliminate all forms of terrorism from the country completely," the prime minister reiterated.

Meanwhile, Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi lauded Pakistan's brave security forces for successfully thwarting an infiltration attempt by terrorists supported by India along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. The forces conducted timely operations that resulted in the elimination of 30 terrorists linked to the Fitna al-Hindustan network.

Minister Naqvi described this as a major achievement, stating that the terrorists received a fitting end. He vowed that neither the terrorists nor their backers would be spared under any circumstances. Naqvi saluted the security forces for crushing the malicious designs of these militants.

Highlighting the professionalism and courage of the security personnel, the Interior Minister said the entire nation views their efforts with pride and admiration. He affirmed that the people of Pakistan stand firmly alongside their security forces in the ongoing fight against terrorism.

Senate polls for 11 vacant seats of KP on 21st

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Senate elections for 11 seats — including seven general seats, two reserved for women, and two for technocrats/Ulema — from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are scheduled for July 21 at the provincial assembly building.

An Election Commission spokesperson stated on Friday that the commission had postponed the elections on April 2, 2024, due to an incomplete electoral college — resulting from the Speaker's failure to administer oaths to members elected on reserved seats in the Provincial Assembly.

In addition, the Election Commission has announced the schedule for filling two vacant reserved women's seats of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in the National Assembly from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. These seats were reinstated following the Supreme Court's verdict on reserved representation.

According to the official schedule, the Returning Officer will issue the public notice on July 8, 2025. Nomination papers can be submitted on July 9 and 10. Scrutiny of the nomination papers will be conducted on July 14, and the final list of candidates will be published on July 24, 2025.

The PML-N's priority list has been exhausted, and they must submit a new priority list to the Returning Officer by July 10, according to a press release.

On July 2, 2025, the Election Commission issued notifications for members elected to reserved seats in the National and Provincial Assemblies. Letters have also been dispatched to the respective Speakers, inviting them to hold oath-taking ceremonies so members may formally assume office and participate in the upcoming Senate elections for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab.

Khan.

He highlighted that the public has repeatedly rejected opposition parties in the past three general elections. Now, these parties are attempting to fulfill their ambitions through conspiracies rather than through public support. He further stated that apart from Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), all other political parties in KP have been politically wiped out.

place in KP. It is not a fabricated government formed through Form-47 that can be easily dismantled.

Dr. Saif asserted that under the leadership of the Chief Minister, all members of the assembly are united and have full confidence in him. Every MP in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa stands as a soldier of Imran Khan, and Ali Amin Gandapur enjoys the complete trust of Imran

Dream of toppling KP govt will never come true: Saif

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, Barrister Dr. Saif, has stated that the dream of toppling the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government will never be realized. He emphasized that a genuinely representative government, established on the basis of Form-45, is in

FO dismisses speculation on Pakistan joining Abraham accords — hails Pakistan's active diplomatic role amid highlighting key global engagements

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office Spokesperson Ambassador Shafqat Ali Khan on Friday highlighted Pakistan's growing diplomatic profile at international and regional forums, including its assumption of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Presidency, participation in the 17th ECO Summit, and ongoing efforts for humanitarian and legal accountability in the region.

In a comprehensive weekly press briefing, the FO spokesperson underlined, "Pakistan assumes the Presidency of the United Nations Security Council this July with a deep sense of responsibility and purpose. Our approach will remain anchored in the principles of the UN Charter, multilateralism, and international law."

The Spokesperson announced that Pakistan will convene two high-level signature events including an open debate on "Promoting International Peace and Security through Multilateralism and the Peaceful Settlement of Disputes" on July 22, and a briefing on "UN Cooperation with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)" on July 24.

Additionally, Pakistan will preside over the quarterly open debate on the

Question of Palestine on July 23, all chaired by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, he added. "These meetings reflect Pakistan's intent to serve as a bridge between the Council and the broader UN membership," the Spokesperson added.

Ambassador Shafqat also announced that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif is currently in Khankendi, Azerbaijan, leading Pakistan's delegation to the 17th Summit of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

"The Prime Minister will articulate Pakistan's vision for regional connectivity, trade, climate resilience, and sustainable development, in line with the ECO Vision 2025," said the Spokesperson, adding that the Prime Minister is also expected to hold bilateral meetings with fellow ECO leaders.

Touching on recent bilateral diplomacy, the Spokesperson confirmed that Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar had a telephonic exchange with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, in which they discussed regional developments and the upcoming ASEAN Regional Forum scheduled for July 10-11 in Kuala Lumpur. He announced that Ambassador Kamran Akhtar,

Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN in Vienna, has been elected President of the 53rd Session of the Industrial Development Board (UNIDO).

He said, "This is the first time Pakistan has held this prestigious position, a recognition of our constructive global engagement and commitment to sustainable industrial development." The Spokesperson also welcomed a Supplemental Award issued on June 27 by the Court of Arbitration in the Kishenganga and Ratle hydroelectric dispute between Pakistan and India.

"The Court reaffirmed its competence to continue proceedings despite India's unilateral attempt to hold the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance. This Award vindicates Pakistan's legal and moral stance," he stated. "We call upon India to resume normal functioning under the Treaty and fully honor its international obligations." Ambassador Shafqat briefed the media on the Fifth Round of Pakistan-China Consultations on Multilateral Issues, held on June 26 in Beijing. "Led by Special Secretary Ambassador Nabeel Munir, Pakistan and China reaffirmed convergence on a wide range of UN-related issues and agreed to further strengthen coordination on global peace and security," he

noted.

Providing an update on consular matters, the Spokesperson confirmed that Pakistan and India exchanged lists of prisoners on July 1, 2025, as mandated by the 2008 Agreement on Consular Access. He said, "Pakistan shared a list of 246 Indian or believed-to-be-Indian prisoners, while India provided a list of 463 Pakistani or believed-to-be-Pakistani prisoners."

He reiterated Pakistan's call for the immediate release of prisoners who have completed their sentences, particularly those with confirmed nationality, and urged India to grant special consular access to all those still awaiting verification, including mentally and physically challenged detainees. "Humanitarian issues remain a priority in Pakistan's foreign policy," Ambassador Shafqat emphasized. The Spokesperson expressed serious concern over the deteriorating health of senior Kashmiri leader Shabbir Ahmed Shah, incarcerated in India's Tihar Jail for over eight years.

"Mr. Shah has now been diagnosed with prostate cancer. His condition requires urgent medical attention, which cannot be administered in prison," Ambassador Shafqat said. "We strongly urge Indian authorities to release Mr. Shah on humanitarian

grounds." "Pakistan continues to pursue a principled and balanced foreign policy—guided by diplomacy, cooperation, and respect for international law," concluded the Spokesperson.

Responding to media queries, the Foreign Office Spokesperson reiterated Pakistan's position on several bilateral and international matters during its weekly media briefing. He said Pakistan rejected India's denial of the supplemental award by the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), terming New Delhi's position "illegal" and lacking legitimacy under international law.

The spokesperson emphasized that the Indus Water Treaty remains operative and the award reaffirms Pakistan's stance. On whether a formal communication has been made to India, Ambassador Khan noted that technical matters were being handled by the Ministry of Water. Commenting on Dalai Lama and Tibet, he said Pakistan reiterated its consistent support for China on issues related to Tibet, reaffirming that these are internal matters of China.

Regarding the upcoming Asia Cup Hockey tournament in India, he stated that coordination was ongoing and relevant approvals were under consideration. He further mentioned that Pakistan acknowledged Russia's

recognition of the Afghan interim government, noting it as a matter between two sovereign nations. On Islamophobia in India, he condemned the demolition of religious sites in Uttarakhand, calling it part of a broader anti-Muslim agenda.

Ambassador Khan added that the recent visit by Pakistan's Air Chief to the US was highlighted as part of ongoing bilateral defence cooperation, despite the ten-year gap in such high-level exchanges. Responding to comments by India's External Affairs Minister on an alleged Pakistani military threat, he said Pakistan reaffirmed its right to self-defence and condemned arbitrary threats to its sovereignty. The FO Spokesperson emphasized Pakistan's commitment to the 2008 consular access agreement and peaceful diplomacy.

He said that the processes for upgrading diplomatic ties with Kabul were underway. On the expired POR (Proof of Registration) cards for Afghan nationals, the matter was under government deliberation, he added. The FO Spokesperson expressed concern over India's continued arms buildup, including drone manufacturing incentives, calling it destabilizing and aimed primarily at

PM calls for regional unity

— flays Israeli, Indian aggression against Iran, Pakistan

Premier, President of Azerbaijan agree to enhance cooperation

KHANKENDI (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday met with President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev on the sidelines of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Summit in Khankendi, Azerbaijan. During the meeting, the two leaders agreed to enhance their cooperation in the fields of trade and investment while expressing satisfaction over the progress made regarding the investment prospects. Both leaders reiterated their resolve to strengthen the economic partnership, especially Azerbaijan's investment in Pakistan. The prime minister is visiting Azerbaijan to lead Pakistan's delegation in the 17th ECO Summit in Khankendi, Azerbaijan, held on 3-4 July, 2025. On the sidelines of the Summit, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif held a productive bilateral meeting with the President of Azerbaijan where he congratulated him for hosting the 17th ECO Summit in an exemplary manner. The prime minister also conveyed his gratitude to President Aliyev and the people of Azerbaijan for the gracious hospitality extended to him and his delegation during his recent visit to Lachin, Azerbaijan, from May 27-29, 2025. The prime minister thanked President Ilham on Azerbaijan's steadfast support extended to Pakistan during the recent conflict with India. He stated that Pakistan had also extended consistent support to Azerbaijan in challenging times.

Shehbaz, Erdogan discuss regional developments

KHANKENDI (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday met with President of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdogan on the sidelines of the 17th ECO Summit in Khankendi and discussed matters of mutual interest. The two leaders engaged in a comprehensive review of bilateral relations and exchanged views on key regional developments. The two leaders reiterated their resolve and commitment to bringing about a meaningful progress in relations between the two countries, in all important sectors. Both leaders emphasized the importance of deepening cooperation in trade, defense, energy, connectivity, and investment sectors. To this end, the two countries agreed to exchange high level delegations so as to ensure early finalization of the understandings reached between the two leaders. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering commitment to working closely with Türkiye in advancing their shared goals of peace, stability, and sustainable development throughout the region.

PM reaffirms Pakistan's commitment to working closely with Iran

KHANKENDI (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday met with President of Iran Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian wherein he reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering solidarity with the people and Government of Iran. During the meeting held on the sidelines of 17th ECO Summit in Khankendi city of Azerbaijan, the prime minister reaffirmed Pakistan's strong commitment to continue working closely with Iran for peace in the region through dialogue and diplomacy. During the meeting, both leaders reviewed the ongoing bilateral cooperation across all areas and expressed satisfaction over the progress made on decisions taken during their last meeting for further strengthening of Pakistan-Iran relations. The two leaders also discussed the evolving regional situation in the wake of the Israel's illegitimate aggression against Iran. Prime Minister Shehbaz appreciated President Pezeshkian's leadership and lauded Iran's decision to reach a ceasefire during recent crisis. President Pezeshkian appreciated Pakistan's strong diplomatic support to Iran, including at the international forums, during the crisis and thanked him for Pakistan's vital role in de-escalating the conflict. The prime minister requested the Iranian President to convey his warm greetings and good wishes to Supreme Leader of Iran Ali Khamenei.

PM, Uzbek President agree on Trans-Afghan Railway Project

KHANKENDI (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and President of Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, in a meeting on sidelines of 17th Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Summit on Friday, emphasized importance of regional integration and connectivity projects, particularly Trans-Afghan Railway Project. During the meeting, both the leaders agreed on visits of their senior Ministers to Tashkent and Islamabad to finalise necessary agreements on these subjects, a Prime Minister's Office news release said. Both leaders expressed their satisfaction on the strong ongoing cooperation between Pakistan and Uzbekistan at both bilateral and multilateral levels. The two sides underscored the cultural, civilizational and historical ties between Pakistan and Uzbekistan which provide a solid foundation for robust partnership in multiple domains. The two leaders agreed to enhance collaboration in diverse fields including trade and investment, connectivity, energy, regional security, culture, and people-to-people exchanges. They reaffirmed the commitment to further deepen and diversify the longstanding brotherly cooperation between the two countries. The two leaders also shared perspectives on regional and global issues of common concern.

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**INF(P)2920/25 Address: Plot No. 21, Sector B-2, Phase V,
Hayatabad, Peshawar
Phone: 091-9217205
Website: www.humanrights.kp.gov.pk**

Zero Tolerance To Corruption Email: dhr.kpk@gmail.com

KP Education Foundation approves merit-based scholarships for 224 students

PESHAWAR (APP): After the complete digitization of the scholarship program to ensure transparency, performance, and merit, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Foundation (KPEF) has finalized 224 merit-based scholarships for talented and deserving students from across the province who are currently studying at some of the country’s leading universities.

According to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Foundation (KPEF), after approval from its Board of Directors, KPEF introduced a fully digital scholarship process — the first of its kind in the country.

Conceived and implemented by Managing Director Zarif Maani, this end-to-end online system operates through a secure portal, ensuring that every step of the application and selection process remains transparent, traceable, and merit-based.

According to KPEF, a total of 3,669 applications were received from 32 districts, including 2,935 for undergraduate (BS) programs and 734 for postgraduate (MS) studies.

Managing Director Zarif Maani explained that the foundation, in collaboration with 30 top-tier universities, implemented a standardized and accountable selection process.

These universities include Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute (GIKI), National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), FAST National University, Quaid-e-Azam University Islamabad, University of Engineering and Technology Peshawar, National College of Arts, and others.

Applications were reviewed through a seven-step digital mechanism that began with a public advertisement and concluded with the direct transfer of funds to relevant universities for disbursement to selected students.

The multi-layered evaluation process included interviews by institutional scholarship award committees, internal verification by KPEF, publication of provisional merit lists, a one-week appeal period, and final approval.

According to the Foundation, the final selection results show that 122 scholarships were awarded to BS students — 64 male and 58 female — and 98 scholarships to MS students — 49 male and 49 female — reflecting the Foundation’s commitment to gender equality and regional inclusion.

Zarif Maani further stated that special attention was given to disadvantaged and vulnerable groups throughout the process. Out of 482 orphan applicants, 77 were selected; out of 285 applicants who had memorized the Quran (Hafiz-e-Quran), 26 were awarded scholarships. Additionally, ten students registered in social welfare programs were supported, and one student with a documented disability also received a scholarship.

Officials noted that the selected students were not only from disadvantaged backgrounds but also talented and selected purely on merit.

District-level participation showed a strong representation from areas like Charsadda, Chitral, Buner, Battagram, Dera Ismail Khan, Kohat, Swabi, and Mohmand, where the application-to-selection ratio was highest. In contrast, districts like Tank, Tor Ghar, and Hangu had the lowest selection numbers due to fewer applications and merit-based filtering.

The eligibility criteria for the scholarship were clear and unambiguous. Applicants were required to have at least 70% marks or a CGPA of 3.0 in their last exam. They had to



PESHAWAR Advisor to Chief Minister on Health, Mr. Ihtisham Ali, presenting shileds to the visiting Turkish surgeons.

Turkish surgeons complete 70 Pediatric heart surgeries

Special ceremony held to honor the mission; Health Advisor Ihtisham Ali attends as chief guest

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A special ceremony was held at Lady Reading Hospital (LRH), Peshawar, to mark the successful completion of 70 pediatric cardiac surgeries performed by a team of expert Turkish cardiac surgeons. The visiting team, comprising 10 renowned surgeons, carried out the life-saving procedures under the “Little Heart Mission”, aimed at providing humanitarian medical aid in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Advisor to Chief Minister on Health, Mr. Ihtisham Ali, attended the ceremony as the chief guest. In his address, he warmly welcomed the Turkish delegation on behalf of the provincial government and lauded their exceptional service.

“Today, I stand proud as we celebrate not just 70 successful surgeries, but 70 lives saved — a profound act of service to humanity,” Mr. Ihtisham said.

He praised the leadership of Dr. Saadia Ilyas, under whom the LRH Pediatric Cardiology Unit achieved this milestone. Ihtisham highlighted that beyond saving lives, the mission significantly contributed to the capacity building of local medical staff.

“These complex surgeries, performed with the support of LRH administration, served as valuable training for our local cardiac surgeons,” he noted. “We are now better equipped to handle such cases independently, which is a promising development for our healthcare system.”

The Health Advisor extended special gratitude to Muntada Aid, the organization behind the “Little Heart Mission”, and particularly to its CEO Sheikh Naif and his team for making the initiative possible. He mentioned that Muntada Aid has conducted over 3,000 surgeries across 14 countries through 50 missions, saving thousands of young lives.

Children from various parts of the country, predominantly from Peshawar, benefited from this mission.

Ihtisham congratulated the LRH administration and everyone involved in the mission for their collective success. He also announced that to reduce the burden on LRH, the provincial government is enhancing the capacity of District Headquarters Hospitals, ensuring that quality healthcare services become accessible at the local level across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Thalassemia awareness drive, blood camp held

F.P. Repor

PESHAWAR: Khan Academy Peshawar, in collaboration with Hamza Foundation, successfully organized a Blood Donation and Thalassemia Awareness campaign.

During the Camp, a total of 60 bags of blood were collected: RMOs of Hamza Foundation Mr. Ateeq Ur Rehman and Mr.Ibrarullah Jan delivered motivational speech to students about blood donation and also delivered awareness speech about Thalassemia disease and its prevention.

Dr. Tariq Khan medical director,RMOs Ateeq Ur Rehman and Ibrarullah Jan delivered motivation speech to the students about blood donation and also delivered awareness speech about Thalassemia disease and its prevention.

The management of Hamza Foundation has thanked and appreciated Dr. Manzoor sahib (Principal) and Students of the Khan Academy Peshawar for their sincere

Amjid vows to solve housing problems of govt employees

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Project Director and Assistant Director of the Housing Foundation met with Dr. Amjad Ali, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Housing Department, yesterday at his office in the Civil Secretariat, Peshawar.

They briefed the Special Assistant on Housing about the latest figures and progress of the scheme launched for government employees. It was informed in the briefing that online applications for membership in this scheme were received from February 25, 2025 to April 25, 2025, and so far 95,856 government employees have applied for it. The briefing informed that the process of verification of applicants has been formally started.

He said that the entire system from application to verification and plot allotment has been digitalized, which has been made possible through the Dastak app and this platform has been activated in collaboration with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa IT Board (KPITB) to ensure transparency, convenience and timely services. The briefing further informed that along with the scrutiny of the applications received, the process of land identification has also been started.

On this occasion, the Special Assistant issued instructions to verify the applicants as soon as possible and expedite the process of allocating quota in the existing schemes so that the government employees can benefit.

Meeting on urban development projects held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A review meeting regarding the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cities Improvement Project was held in Peshawar under the joint chairmanship of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Local Government Arshad Ayub Khan and Minister for Food Muhammad Zahoor Shah Toru. The meeting was attended by Secretary Local Government Dr. Ambar Ali and officers from relevant departments.

During the meeting, officials from the Local Government Department gave a detailed briefing on the project, highlighting various aspects of its implementation. The meeting was informed that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cities Improvement Project is being executed with the joint cooperation of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The aim of the project is to improve infrastructure and municipal services in major urban centers such as Abbottabad, Kohat, Mardan, Mingora, and Peshawar.

Under this project, initiatives in Mardan city include the development of a new drainage system, a sewage treatment plant, green space initiatives, and solid waste management.

Speaking on the occasion, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Food Muhammad Zahoor Shah Toru emphasized the need to accelerate the pace of the project so that the public can benefit from its outcomes as soon as possible. He expressed satisfaction over the progress and stated that such urban development initiatives would positively impact the province’s economy, environment, and the quality of life of its citizens.

Minister Local Government Arshad Ayub Khan instructed that all ongoing projects must be completed in a timely and transparent manner. He also directed that household connections be included within the scope of the project to ensure a comprehensive and effective system. He stressed that no negligence would be tolerated in projects of public interest and that modern technology and the best administrative practices must be adopted at all stages.

PPP is ray of hope for people, will fight for their rights: Humayun Khan

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Secretary General of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Mohammad Humayun Khan has ssid that PPP is a ray of hope for the people and it will always fight for their rights. In a statement issued here on Friday, he said that July 5, 1977, is a blackest day in the political history of Pakistan. He said that it was the day when a democratically elected government was overthrown, the Constitution was suspended, the people's right to rule was hijacked, and dictatorship seized control of the country. Humayun Khan stated that on this day, General Zia-ul-Haq toppled the democratic government led by Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and pushed Pakistan into political, social, and economic darkness. It was not just a conspiracy against a political party, but a declaration of war against democracy, people's power, and constitutional supremacy. He said that the Pakistan People's Party still observes this day as Black Day and pays tribute to Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and all those workers who sacrificed their lives for the cause of democracy. “We pledge to continue the struggle for the protection of democracy, the supremacy of the Constitution, and the people's right to rule,” he added. Humayun Khan said that our history is witness that every dictator has been defeated, and in the end, it was the power of the people that restored democracy.

PHC suspends showcause notice to former DG Health

Humayun Khan

The lawyer Babar Khan Yousafzai and Shumail Ahmaf Butt advocates argued that Dr. Shaukat Ali retired on June 9, 2025, but received a notice of termination on June 12, 2025, which he challenged in court.

The counsel stated that notice was based on allegations of irregularities in a tender for medicines and medical equipment worth Rs 4 billion.

The court noted that according to the law, a retired employee cannot be served with a show cause notice for termination.

The lawyer also argued that the inquiry committee's report itself stated that the supplies were not made by the relevant firms, raising questions about Dr. Shaukat Ali.

The court has sought a response from the provincial government regarding the show cause notice and the inquiries and FIRs registered against former Director General Health.

PHC has directed the provincial government to provide details of all inquiries and FIRs registered against Dr. Shaukat Ali.

Shopkeepers requested CJ PHC to take notice of UOP unfair notice

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A group of shopkeepers at Peshawar University has expressed concerns over an allegedly unfair decision by the university's food committee regarding the tender process for the upcoming year 2025-26, on Friday.

The shopkeepers, who have been operating in the university for a long time, received notices to vacate their shops by July 7, 2025. The shopkeepers claim that the university's food committee made an unfair and biased decision, which resulted in the cancellation of their tenders and the issuance of notices to vacate the shops. The shopkeepers are worried about the economic implications of this decision, as it would deprive them of their livelihood. The shopkeepers demand a review of the committee's decision and the establishment of a transparent commission to investigate the matter. They also demand that all tenders be put on hold until the investigation is completed. The shopkeepers have appealed to the Chief Justice of the Peshawar High Court, the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Vice Chancellor of Peshawar University, and other high authorities to take notice of the matter and provide relief.

Protecting KP’s cultural heritage: A race against time

PESHAWAR (APP): The rich cultural heritage of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), especially in its historic capital Peshawar, is facing a growing existential threat due to various factors causing intolerance in society.

The factors like commercialization, poverty, terrorism and overpowering influence of social media have pushed traditional entertainment and cultural expressions to the brink of extinction.

Once a vibrant hub for music, theater and cinema, Peshawar has witnessed systematic erosion of its cultural with the closure of cinemas, hujra live music and entertainment leaving behind a vacuum and contributing to rising social intolerance and negative behavioral shifts.

Despite producing legendary film and television stars such as Yousaf Khan (Dilip Kumar), Raj Kapoor, Qavi Khan, Ismail Shahid, Najeebullah Anjum and Firdous Jamal, the city today bears little resemblance to the cultural beacons of the past.

Out of 15 once-thriving cinemas, seven cinemas including Shabistan, Palwasha, Capital, Falak Sair, Novelty, Metro, Sabrina and Ihsrat have been demolished and replaced by commercial plazas and hotels, depriving thousands fans of entertainment.

The surviving theaters such as Arshad, Aaena, Naz, and Shama now suffer from low attendance due to poor infrastructure, lack of new film releases, and the KP government’s indifference to the entertainment industry.

“It was heartbreaking to see the Capital Cinema’s conversion into a shopping plaza, where I watched countless Pashto films,” said Mushtaq Khan, a Peshawar native taxi driver.

He accused KP Govt for its lackluster approach towards films industry especially dying cinemas in Peshawar and stressed for its immediate reconstruction.

Similarly, Muhammad Farooq, a film enthusiast from Katlang, Mardan, reminisced about his student days watching English and Pashto films in Peshawar’s once often packed Capital Cinema.

“Now, I have to travel to Rawalpindi or Lahore with friends just to enjoy a new movie after my favorite Capital cinema on Arbab Road Peshawar has been demolished,” he regretted.

Even the few active cinemas in Peshawar struggle to stay afloat before commercialization.

Gohar Yousafzai, Manager of Sabrina Cinema, revealed that recent Eid screenings drew only a handful of viewers, despite affordable ticket prices.

“It’s becoming impossible to run a cinema. Rising utility bills, staff wages and property taxes are making it unsustainable,” he said.

Veteran Pashto film directors Shahid Khan and Jahangir Khan pointed to poor storytelling, outdated cinematography and misrepresentation of Pashtun culture as reasons behind the declining interest in local films.

“Quality films require a minimum investment of Rs 10 million, but producers are being pushed to work with just Rs 2 million,” they explained.

“But, we believe that despite setbacks, Pashto films hold high commercial potential, with strong followings in KP, Karachi and Afghanistan.”

They recalled as how, not long ago, the release of a new film used to attract thousands fans clamoring and struggling for tickets outside the cinemas.

“Those scene have vanished now, whatever the reasons. But, still we believe that if a quality production is made, viewers would again throng the cinemas.”

They however look the wages standards as one of the major issues confronting this industry. “Low wages and social discouragement are keeping young talent away from the industry. Therefore, the government must support filmmakers by removing excessive taxes and offering financial incentives.”

Some experts have also linked the erosion of cultural heritage with broader societal issues.

Dr. Khalid Mufti, former Principal Khyber Medical College and eminent psychiatrist, argued that decline in live entertainment and the shrinking community spaces like hujras have fueled social alienation and intolerance besides negative tendencies in society.

“Our heritage from music, theater and drama to historical gardens like Shalimar and Wazir Bagh is under threat, not just by neglect but by the unfettered content dominating social media,” Dr. Mufti said.

Renowned Pashto singer Khayal Muhammad and Bakhtair Khattak stressed the need to revive regional music, theater and drama to engage youth and protect them from negative influences.

He called for construction of new cinemas, tax exemptions for film equipment and job security for artists.

Another important area of culture in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is its ancient civilization and efforts are underway to protect KP’s this tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

Dr. Abdul Samad Khan, Director of Archaeology and Museums KP, highlighted the province’s deep historical roots from Gandhara and Indo-Greek civilizations to the Mughals and British Raj.

Sites like 2,000-year-old Takht-i-Bahi monastery and the ruins of Pushkalavati in Charsadda stand as living testaments to this heritage.

Under the KP Antiquities Act, he said several endangered sites have been protected, digitized, and even 3D-mapped for conservation and virtual access.

Community-led initiatives in districts like Dir and Buner are training locals as heritage custodians, blending traditional knowledge with modern conservation methods.

Efforts to introduce cultural education in school curriculums and organize youth-led heritage walks are beginning to take root.

“What we are losing is not just brick and rabab but memory, identity, and wisdom,” said Dr. Samad, adding “Protecting heritage isn’t a government job alone; it’s every citizen’s responsibility.”



In brief

Punjab CM directs probe F.P. Report

PAKPATTAN: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz took notice of the death of 20 children in the District Hospital Pakpattan within a week and ordered the arrest of the MSCEO, two nurses and a technician. The Chief Minister stayed at the District Hospital for three and a half hours. Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz reached Pakpattan regarding the death of 20 children in DHQ Hospital. The Chief Minister personally inquired into the incident and the hospital's MSCEO Health. The Chief Minister ordered the arrest of two nurses and a technician. The Chief Minister visited the emergency department, children's ward, CT scan and OPD at DHQ Hospital. Later, a meeting was held in the hospital's conference room. The meeting was also attended by the members of the assembly. The Chief Secretary Punjab, Secretary Health, Director General Health Services Punjab and the Commissioner, RHE, OD, CDPO and health officials were also present. The Chief Minister of Punjab Maryam Nawaz took notice of the non-availability of medicines in the hospital. She also took notice of the overcharging in the parking stand and ordered the arrest of the parking stand's responsible persons. The Chief Minister said that she was present in the hospital for three and a half hours. Tight security was made at the hospital on the spot.

Rail traffic restored F.P. Report

GHOTKI: Railway traffic was restored within hours after five bogies of a freight train derailed near Mirpur Mathelo Railway Station in Ghotki on Friday morning. Sources said that the up and down railway track was badly damaged as five bogies were separated from the train's engine before derailment. The train was going to Karachi from Punjab. After the suspension of railway traffic, different passenger trains were stopped at various stations. Railway officials said that a relief train was sent from Rohri, and after that the repair work will be started to restore the railway traffic. Railway officials expressed the hope that normal railway traffic will be restored within a few hours. Due to severe hot weather, women, elderly persons, and children were facing a lot of difficulties in stuck trains. Later, the damaged track near Mirpur Mathelo Railway Station was restored after completion of the repair work. All the up and down trains were green-signalled after the track was declared fit for traffic.

2 girls die after eating toxic food F.P. Report

SIALKOT: In a tragic incident, two little girls breathed their last and three others lost consciousness after eating a toxic meal in Sialkot. The incident occurred in Kotla Sukhia area of Daska, Sialkot. Police said that the wife of Faryad Latif, his two sons, and two daughters were shifted to the hospital in critical condition, where two innocent girls lost their lives, and the condition of their mother and two sons is not satisfactory. The deceased girls were later identified as Ayat Fatima aged 9, and Murba Faryad aged 4. Rehan 14 and Ayan, son of Faryad aged 10 were under treatment. Sources said that the father of the dead girls is living abroad for employment, and he is in contact with his family.



KOHAT: Commissioner, Mohtasim Billah, inspecting security arrangements during Muharram processions.

Commissioner visits control room

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Commissioner Kohat Division Syed Motasim Billah Shah has under the special directions of the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur and the Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah, on Friday night made an unannounced visit to the Divisional Control Room at 12 am where he reviewed the ongoing security and administrative measures made in connection with the Muharram-ul-Haram.

On this occasion, the staff present in the control room gave the commissioner a detailed briefing on security arrangements, monitoring through cameras, routes of processions and gatherings, and surveillance at sensitive places. The staff informed that 24-hour surveillance is being carried out at all important places of the division and the situation is being monitored thoroughly through modern technology.

Commissioner Kohat appreciated the attendance, efficiency and professionalism of the staff on duty

even at midnight and commended them. He said that maintaining an atmosphere of peace and order during Muharram-ul-Haram is the top most priority of all of us and all the relevant institutions are fully cooperating for this purpose.

Expressing satisfaction with the performance of the control room, he said that all officers and personnel should remain alert and be ready at all times to deal with any emergency situation.

Meanwhile, the mourning processions of the 7th Muharram-ul-Haram peacefully concluded in the entire Kohat division including Kohat, Hangu, Kurram and Orakzai districts after passing through its traditional routes under tight security. Special security arrangements were made by the respective district administration and security forces to protect the processions.

The Deputy Commissioners besides visiting the procession routes, also remained present at the Command Posts along with the officers of the security forces and

monitored the processions through CCTV Cameras. They also reviewed the security and other arrangements.

Heavy contingents of security personnel were deployed on the internal and external routes of the processions, while patrolling was also in progress. Section 144 Cr.P.C is in forced in the entire Division and mobile service has also been partially suspended in view of law and order.

Meanwhile, the Deputy Commissioners also visited the Imambargahs where they met the Motawlian and reviewed the security and other arrangements. The Deputy Commissioner expressed satisfaction over the security measures and directed the security personnel to be alert and more vigilant. They stressed for maintenance of law and order, promotion of the religious harmony and security of citizens on this occasion. They declared that maintaining the law and order is the top most priority of the administration and no negligence in this regard will be tolerated.

One dead, two injured in separate accidents

F.P. Report

MARDAN: In the wake of series rain and related emergencies, one person was killed and two others seriously injured in separate incidents across Mardan district. A 30-year-old man, Abdullah, was shot dead in a firing incident in Rustam Khaliqabad, while a 17-year-old boy Muhammad and a 60-year-old man Gohar were critically injured when the roof of a veranda collapsed near Garu Shah shrine. In another incident, a motorcar lost control and plunged into a canal near Khazano Stop, though no casualties were reported.

Rescue 1122 teams remained on high alert under the directives of Deputy Commissioner Dr. Azmatullah Wazir and District Emergency Officer Syed Shoaib Mansoor. Teams were deployed at sensitive locations including Kalpani and Shanki Dhand with public warnings being issued via loud-

speakers. Section 144 was enforced by district authorities, urging citizens to avoid approaching rivers, nullahs and other dangerous spots.

In response to the ongoing and anticipated heavy rainfall, Rescue 1122 Mardan, following directives from KP Chief Secretary and DG Rescue 1122 Shah Fahad has handed over ten life jackets to Civil Defence personnel. Preemptive safety and rescue measures remain in place to ensure swift response to any emergencies.

Anti-encroachment drive launched: An anti-encroachment drive was carried out in Shergarh Bazaar under the supervision of Additional Assistant Commissioner, on Friday.

During the operation, illegally occupied areas were cleared, and the retrieved land was formally handed over to the National Highway Authority (NHA). The AAC also monitored progress on the installation

of iron fencing in the area. The NHA has been tasked with carrying out further beautification of the site and implementing measures to ease the prevailing traffic congestion. The district administration reaffirmed its commitment to reclaim public spaces and ensure a smooth flow of traffic in key commercial zones.

Meanwhile, District Police Officer Mardan visited the Press Club Rustam and congratulated the newly elected office bearers. On this occasion, he met all the cabinet members including President Atiq-ur-Rehman, Vice President Shahzad Raja, General Secretary Uzair Nomani and expressed his best wishes for them. DPO Mardan said that positive relations between the police and the media are essential for public awareness and law enforcement. Appreciating the role of journalists, he said that responsible journalism plays a key role in the reform of society.

Commissioner visits Institute of Cardiology

F.P. Report

SAHIWAL: Commissioner Sahiwal Division Dr. Asif Tufail paid a detailed visit to Sahiwal Institute of Cardiology and reviewed the ongoing construction work. He directed the concerned officers to ensure timely completion of the project so that the public can get modern treatment facilities for heart diseases as soon as possible.

During the visit, Axon Building Fateh Muhammad Wattoo briefed Commissioner Dr. Asif Tufail on the construction progress of the institute and the issues faced. Director Development Shafiq Ahmed Dogar, MS Sahiwal Teaching Hospital Dr.

Yadullah and other officers were also present on the occasion. Later, an important meeting was held regarding the Institute of Cardiology in which Medical Superintendent Dr. Yadullah gave a detailed briefing to the Commissioner.

Commissioner Dr. Asif Tufail directed that the work of electricity installation, completion of entrance and exit routes and operation theaters should be completed immediately. He said that the Institute of Cardiology will prove to be a big relief for the people of the area where quality treatment will be provided to heart patients through modern machinery and trained staff.

Free tractors distrib-

uted among 8 framers: Free tractors among eight farmers under the Greater Wheat Production Campaign 2024-25 distributed at the District Council Hall, Sahiwal. Members Provincial Assembly Malik Qasim Nadeem, Muhammad Arshad Malik and Rana Riaz Ahmed were the special guests of the ceremony.

Moreover, Additional Deputy Commissioner Revenue Captain (R) Usama Majeed, Director Agriculture Chaudhry Shahbaz Akhtar, Deputy Director Agriculture Dr. Tahir Javed, Assistant Director Dr. Muhammad Aslam and a large number of farmers were present on the occasion.

Police resolves blind murderer case F.P. Report

KARAK: The mystery of the blind murder of a young Pak Army soldier Tahir Irfan on Nari Panos Road in Karak district has been solved. The deceased came home on leave on June 21, 2025 and left on a motorcycle in the afternoon and did not return, while his bullet-riddled body was recovered from the mountainous area the next day.

On the instructions of DPO Karak Shahbaz Elahi, a special team was formed comprising DSP Headquarters Saadat Ali, SHO Sohail Shah, In-charge DSB Akhtar Hayat, and Investigation Officer Farman Khan, who, as a result of human source and ground intelligence and scientific investigation, arrested the two main accused of the murder, Nadeem and Samiullah, and recovered the murder weapon (pistol), the accused's motorcycle and other evidence. This successful action of Karak police is a reflection of law enforcement, rapid investigation skills and strong determination against criminal elements, which is proof that lawlessness will not be tolerated in any form.

Drowned body recovered: The body of a boy who drowned in a storm drain in Kot Banda area of Banda Daudshah was recovered after a successful 5-hour joint search operation by Rescue 1122, Civil Defense teams and local people. The body was shifted to Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Banda Daudshah. Identification: Shahzad son of Muhammad Amin, age 12, resident of Kot Banda.

Jirga announces sit-in on 11th F.P. Report

WANA: A grand tribal jirga convened under the banner of Olsi Pasoon announced a peaceful sit-in on July 11 in protest against the continued closure of the Angoor Adda border, the deteriorating law and order situation, and the alleged federal control over natural resources in the region.

The jirga, held in Wana, the district headquarters, drew participation from representatives of political parties, trader unions and civil society organizations. The gathering unanimously resolved to launch a peaceful protest to press for their demands.

Speaking to the media, Taj Mohammad Khan Wazir, former provincial candidate of the Awami National Party (ANP), said the jirga had reached consensus on key issues, including the immediate reopening of the Angoor Adda border to revive cross-border trade and restore local livelihoods. He also stressed the urgent need to restore peace in the region, as the ongoing unrest has severely disrupted public life and economic activity.

He further stated that the tribal people have an undisputed right to their local minerals and natural resources, and any external interference or occupation would not be accepted. Wazir emphasized that all political factions, business communities, and civil society stakeholders are united in support of the protest.

Rule of law forms basis of civilized society: Kundi

F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Friday emphasized that the rule of law is the cornerstone of a civilized and strong society, asserting that lawyers play a pivotal role in upholding it.

He expressed these views while addressing the oath-taking ceremony of the newly elected office bearers of the Charsadda District Bar Association as the chief guest. The Governor administered the oath to the new officials and congratulated them on assuming their responsibilities. Governor Kundi expressed hope that the

new leadership of the Bar would actively contribute to the delivery of justice and improvement of legal services.

He highlighted that Charsadda Bar holds a distinct identity not only in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but across Pakistan due to its consistent constitutional, democratic, and intellectual struggles. Praising the legal fraternity, the Governor noted, "Lawyers have always been at the forefront of the struggle for the rule of law, judicial independence, and the protection of human rights."

He added that the responsibilities of lawyers have increased manifold in

the current times. He urged lawyers to not only safeguard the rights of their clients but also play a constructive role in promoting justice, tolerance, and harmony in society.

Emphasizing the importance of access to justice for all, he said lawyers must remain particularly mindful of their professional responsibilities toward the underprivileged and middle-income segments. Concluding his address, Governor Kundi lauded the services of the Charsadda Bar Association and expressed confidence that the association would continue to uphold its rich traditions in strengthening the justice system.

Muqam meets victims of Swat tragedy

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Federal Minister and President of PML-N Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Engineer Amir Muqam, met with the bereaved families in Rustam, New Kalay, Mardan, who lost their loved ones in the tragic Swat River incident particularly with the son of Nazir Ahmad and the brother of Shafat.

On behalf of himself and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, he offered condolences, recited Fatiha (prayer for the deceased), and expressed heartfelt

sympathy. He stated that the tragic incident in Swat is an unspeakable source of grief. Despite being trapped in the river for several hours, no rescue team arrived, which is clear evidence of the complete failure and incompetence of the provincial government. He offered apologies to the people of the province, especially those of Swat.

On this occasion, the federal minister also met with three individuals who were courageously rescued by local volunteer Muhammad Hilal, who acted heroically and with-

out official support. Engineer Amir Muqam extended financial assistance on his behalf.

He prayed for the elevation of the ranks of the martyrs and for patience and strength for the bereaved families. Also present at the occasion were PML-N Mardan District President Advocate Inayat Bacha, District General Secretary and former MPA Jamsheed Khan Mohmand, Provincial President of PML-N Minority Wing Suresh Kumar, Mian Abdul Rehman, and other party leaders and dignitaries.

New delivery service launched to create jobs

F.P. Report

CHAKDARA: A new delivery service named "Tabeddar Delivery" has officially launched here aiming to provide quick and affordable doorstep delivery while creating job opportunities for local youth.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by several prominent local figures including the founder of the company, a local journalist Attiq, Chakdara branch owner Arbaz Khan his brother Babar Khan, and their father Saadullah Khan.

During the event, Attiq spoke about the goals and

vision of Tabeddar Delivery saying that it is designed to meet the urgent needs of customers by purchasing and delivering daily essentials including fresh meat and medicines from the local market to their doorstep within 10 to 15 minutes. The company will charge a nominal fee of Rs 25 per kilometer. Initially, the service will operate via SMS, but he announced that a user-friendly mobile application is in development to streamline the ordering process.

One of the most significant aspects of the initiative is its focus on employment. The service plans to engage unemployed youth, particu-

larly students who are looking for part-time or full-time work. "This service will help reduce unemployment in the area by offering flexible job opportunities," Attiq added.

Tabeddar Delivery marks a promising step forward for both convenience in daily life and youth employment in Chakdara, making it a service with a social impact. Others present on the occasion included Fakhre Alam Khan, Qari Sikander, Zalan Shah, and the President of the Chakdara Bazaar Association, Khawaja Faiz-ul-Ghafoor, alongside numerous community members.



QUETTA: A view of rain the provincial capital.

Govt finalizes foolproof security plan

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Provincial Minister for Industries, Commerce, Religious Affairs, and Auqaf Punjab, Ch. Shafay Hussain, has said that the Punjab government has made foolproof security arrangements for processions and majalis during the holy month of Muharram. He stated that Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif herself is actively monitoring security measures and religious activities across the province.

He expressed these views while presiding over a meeting of the District Peace Committee during his visit to Hafizabad. The meeting was attended by Chief Minister's Coordinator and MNA Saira Afzal Tarar,

Commissioner Gujranwala Syed Naveed Haider Shirazi, RPO Tayyab Hafeez, Deputy Commissioner Abdul Razzaq, MPA Mian Shahid Hussain Bhatti, DPO Atif Nazir, officers from various departments, members of the Peace Committee, and local religious scholars.

Chaudhry Shafay Hussain emphasized the vital role of peace committee members, religious leaders, and other prominent figures of society in promoting religious harmony, national unity, mutual tolerance, and peace. He reiterated that Islam is a religion of peace, brotherhood, and security, and it has no room for violence, terrorism, or extremism.

PPP terms July 5 as black day: District leader of

the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and former President of the Hafizabad Bar Association, Advocate Muhammad Arshad Mehind, has strongly condemned the events of July 5, 1977, terming it a dark day in the country's democratic history. He said that on this day, the democratic process was derailed through a well-orchestrated conspiracy carried out under imperialist influence, which led to the ousting of Pakistan's elected Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Speaking to party workers and the media, Advocate Arshad Mehind stated that the imposition of dictatorship not only undermined the democratic system but also pushed the country into prolonged political and economic instability.



GAZA CITY: Blood, rubble, and what appears to be a giant stuffed doll lie scattered in a cafe after it was hit in an Israeli air strike.

‘Death or food’: The Palestinians killed by Israel at Gaza’s aid centres

GAZA: At the sight of her son Ahmed's bullet-riddled body laid out in the courtyard of Nasser Hospital in southern Gaza, Asmahan Shaat collapsed on the ground, overcome by grief. Her screams echoed through the air, her voice choked by shock and sorrow. She kissed the 23-year-old's face, hands and feet as she cried. Her six other children and relatives tried to hold her back, but she pushed them away.

"Leave me with him. Leave me with him," she cried. "Ahmed will speak again. He told me, 'Mom, I am not going to die. I'll bring you something from the aid centre in Rafah.'" Ahmed had left the displaced family's shelter in al-Mawasi before dawn to collect food. He never returned. His cousin, Mazen Shaat, was with him. Mazen said Ahmed was shot in the abdomen when Israeli forces opened fire on a crowd near the United States-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) aid distribution centre in Rafah. Others were also killed and wounded. In just one month, 600 Palestinians have been killed and more than 4,200 wounded by Israeli fire near GHF aid distribution sites, according to Gaza's Government Media Office, and the number of deaths at these centres climbs on a near-daily basis. What were meant to be lifelines - facilitated by the US while bypassing United Nations agencies - have instead become fatal chokepoints.

Human rights organisations and

UN officials have criticised the GHF model as militarised, dangerous and unlawful. A report published by the Israeli newspaper Haaretz quoted Israeli army soldiers saying they had been ordered to shoot into unarmed crowds, even when no threat was present. Asmahan's grief turned to fury: "Is it reasonable that my son should die because he went to bring us food? Where is the world that calls itself free? How long will this torture go on?"

Gaza's population of 2 million people, worn out by 21 months of relentless bombing and displacement, has been pushed to the brink of famine by Israel's restrictions that have, since March 2, allowed only a trickle of humanitarian items through the sealed crossings it controls. Inside the morgue at Nasser Hospital, not far from where Ahmed lay, 25-year-old Shireen threw herself on the body of her husband, Khalil al-Khatib, 29. She was barely able to stand as she sobbed. "Khalil, get up. Your son Ubaida is waiting for you," she cried. "I told him this morning, 'Daddy will come back soon.' We don't want food - we want you." Khalil had also left from al-Mawasi in search of aid. His father-in-law, Youssef al-Rumailat, said Khalil was careful to avoid Israeli tanks and never expected to be targeted.

"He was a gentle man," Youssef said. "He feared for his safety in a place where everything has become deadly, so he hadn't been able to pro-

vide anything for his children. His son Ubaida, who just turned five, would ask for bread or rice. And he'd cry because he couldn't provide that or milk for his youngest, born just days into the war." "They use our desperation," Youssef said bitterly. "Nothing is more painful for a man than not being able to provide for his family. These places are now death traps. This is not aid. This is annihilation." Youssef said the family, like many others, has lost all trust in the new humanitarian mechanism. "We don't want this blood-soaked aid. Let us go back to the UN system. At least we weren't being killed trying to eat."

The GHF, launched in May with Israel's coordination, was intended to deliver food directly to southern Gaza. However, its deliveries are not routed through traditional humanitarian agencies like UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, which Israel has accused - without providing conclusive evidence - of ties to Hamas. Critics said this exclusion has contributed to a breakdown in oversight, coordination and safety. While Israel said it facilitates aid deliveries and targets only perceived threats, testimonies and reports paint a starkly different picture. Mustafa Nabil Abu Eid, 31, displaced from Rafah to al-Mawasi, was returning from the Rafah distribution point with his friend Abdullah Abu Ghali, 39. They were carrying a few bags of pasta, rice and lentils in their backpacks. — Aljazeera

Austria set to deport man to Syria, marking first for EU since Assad’s fall

BRUSSELS/PARIS (Reuters): Austria is preparing to deport a Syrian man whose asylum status was revoked due to a criminal conviction, in what an EU official and rights groups say will be Europe's first forced deportation to Syria since the fall of President Bashar al-Assad. Rights groups are concerned that Austria's plan could set a precedent, encouraging other European Union member states to follow suit amid rising anti-migration sentiment across the 27-nation bloc.

The 32-year-old man, who was granted asylum in Austria in 2014, lost his refugee status in February 2019 because of his criminal record, his legal adviser Ruxandra Staicu said. She declined to specify the nature of his conviction. The Austrian Interior Ministry did not immediately respond to a request

for comment. Deportation to Syria was not possible during the country's civil war as it was considered unsafe. The Austrian government argues that Assad's fall means the situation has changed and it has begun proceedings to strip some refugees of their status, though rights groups say it is premature to do so.

Austrian and Syrian authorities agreed for the man to be deported last week, but the closure of airspace due to the Iran-Israel conflict delayed the process, Staicu and a Western diplomat said. The diplomat, who requested anonymity, added that the deportation would now go ahead once the airspace reopened. Since 2015, European countries have received around 1.68 million asylum applications from Syrian nationals. Some governments, most notably Germany, initially

welcomed them warmly as civil war ravaged their homeland. But rising public concern over the scale of immigration has fueled support for far-right, anti-migrant parties. With the fall of Assad last December, many EU governments were quick to suspend the processing of Syrian asylum applications, and some have called for the security situation in Syria to be reassessed to enable deportations to resume.

In Austria, former Chancellor Karl Nehammer, from the ruling Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), is among those calling for such a reassessment, amid pressure from the far-right Freedom Party. Some rights groups and lawyers say it is still too dangerous to begin returning people to Syria. "... there are attacks against people and we have no idea in which direction

(Syria) will go," said Staicu, adding that her client's deportation would violate the European Convention on Human Rights that prohibits torture and inhumane treatment. The United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) told Reuters: "Syrians... must not be forcibly returned from any country, including those in the European Union, to any part of Syria" due to the overall situation there.

Rights groups cite attacks against minorities since Assad's fall. Syria also remains in the grip of a severe humanitarian crisis, with 90% of the population living below the poverty line, according to UN estimates. Staicu said her client had received a negative asylum decision in April. He has filed another asylum application and is awaiting a response.

Faith leaders bear witness as migrants make their case in immigration court

WASHINGTON: Rev. Jason Cook, a minister at Tapestry, a Unitarian Universalist congregation, wore his traditional white collar and a colorful stole resembling stained glass when he arrived at immigration court in Santa Ana.

For several weeks, Cook and clergy members from a cross section of religions have been showing up at courtrooms in Orange County, Los Angeles, San Francisco and San Diego to stand with immigrants during their deportation hearings. The practice was launched after faith leaders learned that many immigrants seeking asylum were being whisked away by federal agents after what had been billed as routine court appearances, and locked up in remote detention facilities without a chance to prepare or say goodbye to family.

They have sought to use their presence to comfort migrants and lend a sense

of moral authority to the proceedings. They have also taken to the courtroom benches to bear witness with silent prayer. Clergy members roamed the courthouse halls in search of Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents. If plainclothes agents sat outside a courtroom, it was a good indication that the migrants inside had been targeted for expedited removal once their cases were heard.

Cook knows the presence of clergy won't necessarily change the outcome of the legal proceedings - though in at least one instance last month, ICE agents scattered when clergy showed up at a courthouse in San Diego. If nothing else, they hope to offer spiritual comfort, so the immigrants know they're not forgotten. "There's a big piece of [our faith] that's about welcoming the stranger, about treating immigrants with

compassion and care," Cook said. "We're there trying to appeal to a higher authority than ICE."

Many of the immigrants being detained at immigration court are asylum seekers who came into the country using the CBP One mobile app that the Biden administration had employed since early 2023 to create a more orderly process of applying for asylum. Migrants could use the app once they reached Mexican soil to schedule appointments with US authorities at legal ports of entry to present their bids for asylum and provide biographical information for screening. President Trump shut down the CBP One app hours after taking office in January. His administration has given ICE officials the power to quickly deport tens of thousands of immigrants who were granted legal entry to the US for up to two years through the CBP

One program, and is waging legal battles to roll back protections for hundreds of thousands of migrants from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela who were granted temporary parole while seeking asylum.

Faith leaders say the work is an extension of their services for immigrants, who often attend their churches in sizable numbers. In the past, some places of worship have opened up their doors to shelter undocumented immigrants at risk of being deported. In L.A., faith leaders have organized food drives for immigrants afraid to leave their homes, as well as vigils and peaceful marches at the downtown Los Angeles federal building. In Los Angeles and Orange counties, the non-profit Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice has mobilized clergy and provided trainings for court visits. — Aljazeera

Japan’s emperor says he will honor Japanese POWs

TOKYO (AP): Japan's Emperor Naruhito said that he will honor thousands of Japanese prisoners of World War II who were held under harsh conditions in Mongolia when he visits the country next week.

Naruhito, marking the 80th anniversary of the end of WWII, has been visiting some of the places where the bloodiest battles and bombings occurred, including Iwo Jima, Okinawa and Hiroshima. It's part of his effort at atonement and the remembrance of the tragedy of war fought in the name of his grandfather, Emperor Hirohito. "I will pay tribute to the Japanese people who unwillingly died in the distant land away from home, and think of their hardships," Naruhito said at a news conference ahead of his July 6-13 trip to Mongolia. His Harvard-educated former diplomat wife, Empress Masako, will accompany him.

Just before the end of the hostilities in 1945, the Soviet Union had declared war on Japan, taking most of about 575,000 Japanese POWs to Siberia. But around 12,000 to 14,000 of them were taken to Mongolia, which was fighting alongside the Soviets against Japan. Most of the POWs were put to hard labor and construction work for the Mongolian government's headquarters, a state university and a theater that are still preserved in the capital Ulaanbaatar. The prisoners toiled under harsh conditions and scarce food. Japanese records show about 1,700 of them died in Mongolia. "As we mark the 80th anniversary of the end of the war this year, we should never forget the pain and sorrow of the people," Naruhito said. "I believe it is important to not forget those who died, deepen understanding of the wartime past and to nurture the peace-loving heart."

Naruhito has repeatedly stressed the importance of telling the war's tragedy to younger generations, pledging to contribute to efforts to promote the understanding of history and the determination for peace. The emperor's trip to Mongolia will be his second since he visited in 2007 as crown prince to mark the 35th anniversary of the diplomatic ties between the countries.

Climate and empowering women must be a priority

SEVILLE, Spain (Reuters): Multilateral development banks need to sharpen their focus on delivering climate action and on empowering women, the heads of two major MDBs in Asia and Europe told Reuters, as they face calls to be bolder, more flexible and inclusive. The president of the European Investment Bank, Nadia Calvino, and of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, Jin Lique, spoke on the sidelines of the once-a-decade United Nations development financing summit taking place in Seville.

The event is overshadowed by criticisms it has shown a lack of ambition and by the absence of the United States, the biggest provider of international aid until US President Donald Trump returned to office early this year. Trump has also withdrawn the United States from UN efforts to counter climate change and sought to reverse policy on inclusivity, making many companies and institutions across the globe reticent about championing diversity and sustainability. The AIIB's Jin welcomed civil society's push for MDBs to do more on climate as a "positive force for innovation and greater impact".

The AIIB supported "climate-resilient" infrastructure under a broader definition that includes digital, health, and education infrastructure, he said. The EIB's Calvino said high-level climate commitments must translate into tangible investments and projects, naming as an example an initiative for climate-related debt clauses that allows vulnerable countries to pause repayments after disasters.

Tensions rising between Russia and Azerbaijan

MOSCOW (AP): Deaths of ethnic Azerbaijanis rounded up by police for decades-old murders in a Russian city. The crash of an Azerbaijan Airlines passenger jet that Baku blamed on Moscow. Growing ties between Azerbaijan and Turkey, along with waning Russian influence in the troubled South Caucasus region.

These are among the factors that have led to the escalating tensions between Russia and Azerbaijan, the oil-rich Caspian Sea country where President Ilham Aliyev has been in power since 2003 -- almost as long as the 25-year rule of Vladimir Putin in Russia. Here is a look at the previously warm relationship between Russia and Azerbaijan and what has happened: Russia and Azerbaijan developed strong economic and cultural ties after 1993 when Aliyev's father, Heydar, who also was Azerbaijan's Soviet-era Communist boss, became president. Like Putin, the younger Aliyev has suppressed political foes and restricted independent media.

Azerbaijan has bought oil and natural gas from Russia to meet internal demand while exporting its own energy riches to the West. Russia also has been the main market for Azerbaijan's fruit and vegetable exports. It also is a key transport corridor for Russia's trade with Iran and other partners in the Middle East. Azerbaijan businessmen control significant assets in construction, real estate, trade and other sectors of the Russian economy. Russia is home to a sizable Azerbaijani diaspora. A 2021 census listed about a half-million ethnic Azerbaijanis living in Russia, but unofficial esti-

mates put that number as high as 2 million.

Relations with Baku have become increasingly important for the Kremlin since it sent troops into Ukraine in 2022, especially as Turkey has become a key economic partner for Russia as it faced sweeping Western sanctions. Just before the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, an open confrontation erupted between two of its former republics in the South Caucasus - Azerbaijan and its neighbor, Armenia. After years of fighting, Armenian-backed separatists won control of Azerbaijan's region of Karabakh and nearby territories. Russia claimed neutrality in the conflict even though it provided economic assistance and supplied weapons to Armenia that hosted its military base. Moscow sponsored peace talks under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, but they didn't produce a deal.

In 2020, Azerbaijan's military, bolstered by weapons supplied by ally Turkey, recaptured broad swaths of territory that were held for nearly three decades by Armenian forces. Russia brokered a truce and deployed about 2,000 peacekeepers to the region. Azerbaijan reclaimed full control of Karabakh in September 2023 after a lightning military campaign. Russia, busy with its war in Ukraine, didn't intervene, angering Armenia's leadership that responded by scaling down its ties with Moscow and bolstering relations with the West.

The victory in Karabakh has fueled Azerbaijan's ambitions and prompted Aliyev to take a more assertive stand in relations with his

neighbors.

On Dec. 25, 2024, an Azerbaijan Airlines passenger jet crashed while on a flight from Baku to Grozny, the regional capital of the Russian republic of Chechnya. Azerbaijani authorities said the jet was accidentally hit by fire from Russian air defenses, then tried to land in western Kazakhstan when it crashed, killing 38 of 67 people aboard. Putin apologized to Aliyev for what he called a "tragic incident" but stopped short of acknowledging responsibility. Aliyev, meanwhile, criticized Moscow for trying to "hush up" the incident. In May, Aliyev declined to attend Russia's Victory Day parade in Moscow alongside other leaders of ex-Soviet nations. Later that month, a Ukrainian foreign minister visited Baku, a sign of closer ties with Kyiv.

On June 27, police raided the homes of several ethnic Azerbaijanis in Yekaterinburg, Russia's fourth-largest city, in what authorities said was part of an investigation into murders dating back decades. Brothers Huseyn and Ziyaddin Safarov died and several other ethnic Azerbaijanis were seriously injured. The bodies were sent to Azerbaijan, where authorities attributed the deaths to "post-traumatic shock caused by multiple injuries." The Prosecutor General's Office said the brothers were subjected to beatings and other physical abuse by Russian police.

Azerbaijan responded by calling off previously scheduled Russian official visits and cultural events. Masked police stormed the Baku offices of Sputnik Azerbaijan, a Kremlin-funded media outlet, and arrested seven of its employees.

Opposition leader Nika Gvaramia jailed in Georgia

TBILISI: A court in Georgia has sentenced prominent opposition figure Nika Gvaramia to eight months in prison, amid a deepening crackdown on critics of the ruling Georgian Dream party, Gvaramia, the co-leader of the opposition Akhali party, was also barred from holding office for two years.

The court imposed the sentence over his refusal to cooperate with a parliamentary commission tasked with investigating alleged wrongdoing under ex-President Mikheil Saakashvili, a pro-Western reformer currently serving a 12-and-a-half-year prison term. Several other leading opponents of Georgian Dream have been jailed on similar charges to Gvaramia, including Giorgi Vashadze, a former deputy justice minister, who received a seven-month prison sentence last week.

The crackdown has led to growing accusations against the governing party that it is trampling on democracy amid continuing protests in the wake of

last year's disputed elections. Speaking to the AFP news agency, Gvaramia's lawyer Dito Sadzaglishvili said the verdict against his client was "unlawful" and "part of the government's attempt to crush all dissent in Georgia". The British government denounced the crackdown on opposition figures and summoned the country's charge d'affaires. "The imprisonment of prominent opposition leaders is the latest attempt by the Georgian government to crack down on freedoms and stifle dissent," the United Kingdom's Foreign Office said.

"The UK Government will not hesitate to consider further action should Georgia not return to respecting and upholding democracy, freedoms and human rights," it added. The NGO Amnesty International also criticised the government, saying last week in reaction to Vashadze's sentencing that it had "serious concerns over the misuse of legislative, policing and other powers to silence government critics in Georgia".

The human rights organisation specifically took aim at the parliamentary commission linked to the arrests of opposition figures. "With its status disputed, the commission has been instrumentalised to target former public officials for their principled opposition," said Denis Krivosheev, Amnesty's deputy director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia. After Georgian Dream claimed victory in a contested election in October, the European Union candidate nation experienced mass protests.

Critics accuse the government of undermining democracy and of bringing the country close to Moscow, allegations the governing party denies. The EU has said some 80 percent of the population supports Georgia's bid to join the bloc, a commitment enshrined in its constitution. Amid allegations of democratic backsliding, the United States and several European countries have sanctioned some Georgian government officials. — Aljazeera

Swiss authorities to shut US-backed Gaza aid group

GENEVA (Reuters): US- and Israel-backed group handing out food in Gaza under an aid system denounced by the United Nations said it was planning to shut its branch in Geneva, after Swiss authorities launched proceedings to dissolve it. Hundreds of Palestinians have been killed trying to receive aid since the GHF began handing out food packages in Gaza at the end of May, under a system which Israel says is intended to prevent aid from being diverted to militants but the UN calls a dangerous violation of humanitarian neutrality principles.

The Swiss Federal Supervisory Authority for Foundations (ESA) said in a notice published in the Swiss Official Gazette of Commerce that it could order the dissolution of the GHF unless creditors come forward within 30 days. The US-registered GHF had reg-

istered an affiliate on February 12 in Geneva, home to headquarters for most UN humanitarian agencies, the Red Cross and many of the other charities involved in global aid distribution. The GHF told Reuters it had made a strategic decision not to start operations in Switzerland, and was now working to dissolve its Swiss-based entity.

The ESA told Reuters the GHF had not fulfilled certain legal requirements to operate in Switzerland, including having the correct number of board members, a postal address or a Swiss bank account. "GHF confirmed to the ESA that it had never carried out activities in Switzerland...and that it intends to dissolve the Geneva-registered (branch)," the ESA said in a statement. Last week, Geneva authorities issued a separate legal notice to the GHF to remedy deficiencies

within 30 days or face potential action.

More than 500 people have been killed near GHF distribution hubs in Gaza or along access roads guarded by Israeli forces since the GHF started operating, according to Palestinian medical authorities in the territory. Israel's military acknowledged that Palestinian civilians had been harmed near the distribution centres and said its forces had been issued new instructions following what it called "lessons learned". The GHF has defended its operations, saying it has delivered more than 52 million meals to needy Palestinians in five weeks, while other humanitarian groups had "nearly all of their aid looted". More than 170 humanitarian groups signed a letter this week calling on countries to press Israel to end its new system and return to letting in aid mainly through UN-run channels.

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Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town, Peshawar.

Peshawar Office: 0300- 9009001

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

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

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

A war tactic

THE catastrophe unfolding in Gaza cannot be understood solely through the lens of humanitarian crisis. What we are witnessing is not just a tragic consequence of war, but the deliberate use of starvation as a tool of political and demographic control. This strategy, designed to dismantle Palestinian society, amounts to a form of structural genocide. The Israeli military and political leadership, in its pursuit of dominance and the erasure of Palestinian national aspirations, has moved beyond the tactics of bombardment and physical destruction. Today, its methods are more insidious: they target the core of Palestinian survival: food, water, and the means to endure.

Breaking the will of a people by denying them the ability to feed themselves is not collateral damage. It is policy. According to reports from independent international bodies, more than 95 percent of Gaza's farmland has been destroyed or rendered unusable. That figure is not just an economic loss; it is the intentional dismantling of food sovereignty, and with it, any hope of future independence. The destruction is systematic. Seed access has been blocked. Water infrastructure has been targeted. Fisherfolk and farmers – already operating under extreme siege conditions – have been repeatedly attacked. These are not random acts. They are part of a broader plan to re-engineer Gaza's demographic and economic future in line with Israel's long-term strategic goals: absolute control and political submission.

By making Gaza entirely dependent on outside aid while systematically dismantling local means of survival, Israel has created a trap in which Palestinians are stripped of all political and economic agency. They are being reduced to a population that can be managed, controlled, and bartered.

Every statistic coming out of Gaza must be read through this lens. That 100 percent of the population now suffers from food insecurity is not simply tragic; it is a marker of the strategy's progress. This is not about feeding the hungry. It is about breaking the spirit of a people and forcing them to accept a new reality on the occupier's terms. And yet, Gaza's resilience persists. That defiance, under siege and starvation, has exposed the moral collapse of an international order that prefers managed crises to political accountability. This is not a famine born of drought. This is not the chaos of a failed state. This is a crime in progress – carried out with eyes wide open, under the protective cover of global indifference.

Let me also add that international civil society organisations and global social movements – such as La Via Campesina – are not standing by in silence. In fact, this September, some of the world's most prominent movements of farmers, fishers, and Indigenous Peoples – many of them from conflict-affected regions – will gather in Sri Lanka for the 3rd Nyéléni Global Forum. There, we aim to build a unified global response to the widespread indifference that turns a blind eye to the dispossession of entire communities. From the ground up, we are working to develop concrete proposals to ensure that food is never weaponised and that starvation is never used as a tactic of war. At the same time, countless acts of solidarity are unfolding across the globe, led by people of conscience who are demanding that their governments take action. History will remember what is happening in Gaza. It will also remember those who chose to remain silent. Justice may be delayed, but it will come, and it will ask who stood by as starvation was used to try to break a people.

‘Anti-semitic’ fruit

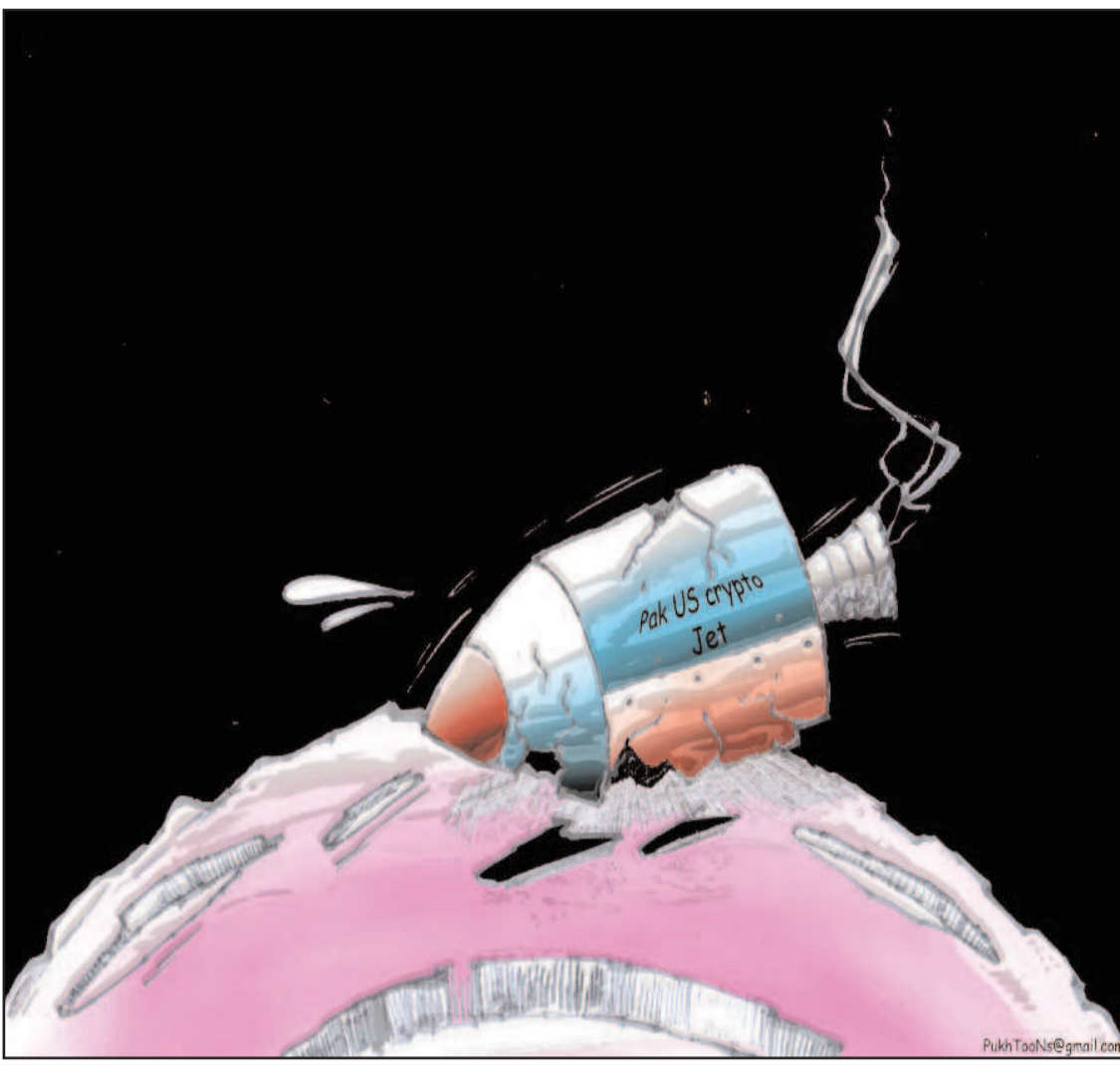
IT was a normal Teams meeting at the end of a busy week. Colleagues were discussing the hospital weekend plans. I was there too, nodding, half-present. My mind was elsewhere – on a message I'd sent earlier that morning to a friend in Gaza. I glanced at my phone. One tick. WhatsApp users know the signs: one tick means the message was sent. Two ticks mean it was received. Two blue ticks, it was read. For most people, it's a minor delay. But when you're texting a Palestinian friend in Gaza during a war, one tick carries a sense of dread. Maybe his phone's out of charge – normal in a place where power was cut off 20 months ago. Maybe there's no service – Israel often cuts communication during attacks. But there's a third possibility I don't allow myself to think about, even though it's the most likely outcome if you are living through a genocide. Still one tick.

Back in the meeting. We wrap up. Plans are made and people start to think about their own weekend plans. I glance again. Still one tick. This is the curse of being Palestinian. Carrying the weight of your homeland, its pain, its people – while being expected to function normally, politely, professionally. Then, I was told my Teams background was “potentially anti-Semitic.” It was a still-life image: figs, olives, grapes, oranges, watermelon, and a few glass bottles. A quiet nod to my culture and roots. But in today's climate, even fruit is political. Any symbol of Palestinian identity can now be interpreted as a threat. Suddenly, I was being questioned, accused, and possibly facing disciplinary action. For a background. For being Palestinian. Still one tick. I felt silenced, humiliated, and exposed. How was my love for my culture, for art, for my people being twisted into something hateful? Why is my choice of virtual background more controversial than the devastating violence unfolding in real time?

How could I explain to him what had happened to me that day? That while he ran for his life, I was threatened with disciplinary action about a painting of fruit? That I was accused of racism for an image, while he was witnessing the destruction of entire families? This is what it means to be Palestinian today. To constantly navigate a world that erases your humanity, silences your voice, distorts your identity. To be told your pain is political. Your joy is provocation. Your symbols are offensive. I've worked in the NHS for 25 years. It's more than a job – it's part of who I am. And now, along with two colleagues, I'm taking legal action. Not for ourselves, but to protect the NHS from external political lobbying. To say, firmly and clearly, that our National Health Service should belong to its patients and its staff – not to those who seek to silence, intimidate or twist it into serving a toxic agenda. What happened to me is not just unjust – it is unlawful. Speaking up against genocide is not only my moral responsibility as a human being, but also my right as a British citizen in a democratic society. I don't write this to compare my experience with my friend's suffering. I write it to expose the absurdity, the cruelty, of how Palestinians are treated across the world. Whether under bombs or under suspicion, we are made to justify our existence. It shouldn't be this way. Being Palestinian is not a crime. But too often, it feels like the world treats it as one.

Important Notice

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Keep your America, Mr Trump, and we'll keep our Africa

Tafi Mkaha

ON June 16, The New York Times disclosed that United States President Donald Trump is considering broadening his travel ban list to include as many as 36 additional countries, most of them African – including my country, Zimbabwe.

Twelve days earlier, Trump had enacted a proclamation barring citizens from 12 nations from entering the US. Seven of them – Chad, Congo Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Libya, Somalia, and Sudan – are African. He also imposed partial travel restrictions, rather than a complete ban, on individuals from Burundi, Cuba, Laos, Sierra Leone, Togo, Turkmenistan, and Venezuela. Citizens from these nations are barred from permanently relocating to the US or obtaining tourist or student visas.

As promised on the campaign trail, Trump is cracking down on immigration. For the first time in my life, I now face the extraordinary prospect of being barred from travelling to the US – a nation that several of my family members and friends call home. My cousin, Dr Anna Mkaha, for example, completed her medical studies and practised exclusively in the US. Spencer Matare, a former classmate, has lived in Indianapolis for more than two decades and is a US citizen.

Despite the Trump administration's political grandstanding and vilification of migrants – both legal and undocumented – Anna and Spencer, like millions of others, are industrious, law-abiding members of US society. I know many in Africa hope to follow in their footsteps, and are deeply alarmed by the growing barriers to migration that Trump has erected. Yet, I am not one of them.

Since graduating from the University of Cape Town in 1997, I have never felt inclined to travel to America – let alone live there. I recognise that this makes me something of an anomaly. I come from a

time and place where the West was idealised – romanticised through the assimilated lens of an Anglicised upbringing. That longing was all around me, not just in my community but across the African continent, shaped by the enduring legacies of French, Portuguese, Spanish and British colonial rule. Yet it was never mine.

On International Migrants Day – December 18, 2024 – Afrobarometer released a report based on data from 24 African countries. It found that 49 percent of Africans had considered emigrating, with North America and Europe the top destinations – though a significant number preferred relocation within Africa. Nearly 49 percent cited the search for better work opportunities as their reason for wanting to emigrate; 29 percent pointed to poverty and economic hardship.

Many Africans still believe in the “American dream” – or its European equivalent – and I do not begrudge them. Across the US, Africans have found success in business, academia, and sport. The late NBA star Dikembe Mutombo, from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), is a case in point. During his lifetime, Mutombo donated \$15m of his wealth to establish the Biamba Marie Mutombo Hospital in Kinshasa – a \$29m medical and research centre built in memory of his mother, who died in 1997 after failing to receive timely care.

Her tragic, though common, story reflects the deep-rooted socioeconomic challenges across Africa – the very conditions that continue to drive emigration: Broken healthcare systems, entrenched corruption, unemployment, poverty. In contrast, the US often appears as a refuge. A January 2022 report by the Pew Research Center on Black immigrants in the US showed that African-born Black immigrants are among the most recent arrivals: Three-quarters

came in 2000 or later, with 43 percent arriving between 2010 and 2019.

Though the Caribbean remains the top source region, Africa has spurred much of the recent growth. Between 2000 and 2019, the number of Black African immigrants rose by 246 percent – from about 600,000 to two million. Today, individuals of African descent account for 42 percent of the US's foreign-born Black population – up from 23 percent in 2000. When I first heard of Trump's proposed visa bans, I felt profound disdain. It was impossible not to recall his infamous “shithole countries” comment from January 11, 2018 – another act of racial profiling aimed at African nations.

But, on reflection, I have come to see his divisive, insular policies in a different light. On January 20, he froze US aid to Africa. Now, he is close to denying many of us visas – from Burkina Faso to Cameroon and Ivory Coast.

Unwittingly, Trump is nudging African nations towards greater self-reliance – forcing us to confront the unmet needs of our restless populations. But he is not alone in “anti-African” politicking. Anti-immigration rhetoric has hardened across the US political spectrum. For Africans, even securing a student visa has become harder. In 2023, sub-Saharan African countries had the highest US visa refusal rates – averaging 57 percent.

Excluding Southern Africa, where rejection sits at about 19 percent, the rate across other regions rises to 61 percent.

These declining approvals do not affect me, as I have no desire to visit or settle in the United States. My reluctance to set foot in the so-called “land of the free” stems from a deep-seated fear: The fear of becoming yet another victim of American police brutality – as the world witnessed with the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25,

2020. I know that Black people – African or otherwise – are far too often subjected to racism, violence and discrimination in the US, regardless of their immigration status.

But racially charged police brutality is not the only reason I choose to stay away. There are many more reasons for an African never to consider settling there. Many Americans struggle with the same, deep-rooted problems facing Africans across the continent. Roughly 29 million adults in the US struggle to access affordable healthcare, according to the West Health-Gallup healthcare indices – a challenge as familiar in Kinshasa as it is in many parts of America. In 2023, the US Census Bureau reported that 36.8 million Americans were living in poverty.

Despite the glossy illusion projected by Hollywood, the US is no utopia. While people like Anna and Spencer have succeeded there, for most Africans there is no path to achieving the “American dream”. They must find their futures within their own countries or in other parts of Africa.

A huge transformation is needed. China, after all, achieved sweeping economic reform in just 40 years. With Africa's vast mineral wealth and its young, educated population, similar change is possible. A focus on domestic processing of raw materials could drive industrial growth, job creation, and higher gross domestic product. But peace and good governance must come first. And our investment priorities must change. Rather than pouring money into defence and security, African governments should focus on artificial intelligence, healthcare, and scientific research. As Africans, we must stop defining ourselves through Western aid, validation, or instruction. Whatever comes, I will remain in the motherland. Keep your America, Mr Trump – and we will keep our Africa.

Aljazeera

Starmer's reno of UK going brilliantly

Marina Hyde

WELL, British politics has served up another week of compellingly packaged action. Like Drive to Survive, but for clown cars. Leave it to “no-drama Starmer” to come up with the only thing weirder and more awful than watching the chancellor of the exchequer sob on the frontbench – wheeling her out a mere 22-and-a-half hours later for an unscheduled appearance at a wellbeing centre(!), where Rachel Reeves had to get her happy face on and pose for selfies.

The whole thing gave Keir Starmer the feel of one of those remorseless boyband managers who reacts to one of their young charges having a breakdown by getting them a special injection and shoving them straight back out on stage the next night. I think you can probably do it with a member of Take That or Five or whoever, and only run the risk of them turning on you in a documentary decades later. But is it a vibe you want at the heart of the team in charge of the world's sixth largest economy?

Yes, imply some allies of Reeves, who are now suggesting that because the (debunked) possibility that the chancellor was crying about losing her job clearly spooked bond traders, she has actually emerged in a stronger position from the whole business. Again: really? Having to physically hug your boss to calm the markets doesn't feel like a textbook power move – but look, like people kept saying last July: the grownups are back in charge.

Anyway, never mind last July. Watching the turbo-fiasco of this week unfold, I kept thinking instead of a speech Starmer made in the Downing Street garden near the end of last August. I want to say it was the first reset of his government ... ? But who's counting. This government's had more rebots than Batman. And, like that particular character's screen incarnations, it all just seems to keep getting darker and grittier every time.

That August speech featured an extremely extended analogy between the country and a house that had some kind of rot, but could be fixed by being completely made over, if you really had a go at overhauling the foundations.

Rereading it in the wake of Labour's full-spectrum Commons chaos over the universal credit and personal independence payment bill reminded me of one of those movie scenes where an idealistic young newcomer is telling a guy in the town about the house they've just bought. It's a real fixer-upper. They're going to do it all themselves, it was quite the bargain, but it could be beautiful – and the guy just cuts them off as it dawns on him. “Oh right,” he says. “The murder house.”

No one is saying the House of Commons was built on an Indian burial ground ... but this week's

deranged farce certainly seemed to release the spirals of the Brexit years back into its cursed chamber. Much as Theresa May's 437 Brexit votes never actually achieved a Brexit, the universal credit and personal independence payment bill now has nothing about personal independence payments in it. If that doesn't take you back down memory lane, meanwhile, other throwbacks are available. Shortly after 9pm last night, the Coventry South MP, Zarah Sultana, announced she was going to “co-lead the founding” (what?) of a new party with Jeremy Corbyn. And shortly after that, sources close to Corbyn let it be known he was furious and bewildered this plan had been launched without consultation. According to what one ally told the FT, “Zarah has really overplayed her hand”, which is believed to include the three of clubs, Mr Bun the Baker, and an expired student railcard. Out loud, Corbyn said things like “Zarah will help us” and “discussions are ongoing”. Let's pray for peace – if not in the wider world, then certainly in this new and fractured party.

Then again, which part of our politics isn't fracturing before our very eyes? It is quite possible none of us will be able to escape the murder house's past. In some ways, the most bizarre thing about the welfare bill fallout was the cabinet ministers attempting to clean it up with the same strange, dead language that a growing number of people feel characterises most contemporary politicians bar Nigel Farage. No sooner had the horror show unfolded than cabinet office minister Pat McFadden was explaining that though there would be a cost, Labour would still stick to its manifesto promises on tax. Is this the gibberish about not raising taxes on “working people”? It would seem so.

Yet even back at manifesto stage, this already felt like a deliberately obscure way of talking that just comes across as lying. Newflash, Pat: you already have raised taxes on working people. People who run small businesses are working people. And the reason they haven't employed more working people, and in some cases have let go the working people they used to employ, is because you raised taxes on them. By chance I heard McFadden's interview right after one of my children told me they'd seen Reeves crying on loads of YouTube videos. He's 12, so I think that's what they call cut-through – and underscores the feeling that you just can't control politics in the knackered old ways any more.

As for what we're feeling – all those wonderful working people out there in the dark – the answer is surely: like we've been here before, and that the dysfunction is more wearying for its familiarity. Starmer came to power promising his government would fix broken Britain. One year on, it would be a start if he could even fix his broken government.

The Guardian

A new chapter in impactful digital cooperation

Hajar El haddaoui

WHEN the Digital Cooperation Organization was established in 2020 on the sidelines of the G20, with its headquarters in Riyadh, it marked a significant milestone for the region.

It was a bold step by Saudi Arabia, alongside four additional founding members, to anchor a global multilateral platform focusing on the digital economy to enable digital prosperity for all. Today, the DCO unites 16 member states across the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Europe, collectively representing over 800 million people and a gross domestic product of \$3.5 trillion.

The organization was created with a clear purpose – to ensure that no country is left behind in the digital economy. It exists to help governments design and implement forward-looking digital policies, build foundational infrastructure and

align on responsible innovation. It is action-oriented, member-led and impact-focused.

The DCO is already making a difference. Over the past four years we have launched key tools, including the Digital Economy Navigator, which helps member states assess their digital readiness and align policy frameworks. We have built strategic partnerships with the UN, the International Telecommunication Union and other global institutions. And we have supported digital upskilling, cross-border regulatory collaboration and startup ecosystem development, all tailored to the needs of our members.

Now, we are entering a phase of intensified execution, guided by the Four-Year Agenda, a roadmap co-developed with member states that sets out strategic priorities and measurable goals. Our focus will be on

accelerating inclusion, promoting digital trust and enabling investment in infrastructure, people and innovation.

The DCO Four-Year Agenda is aimed at enhancing cooperation among member states to boost digital economic resilience and foster social prosperity. It is focused on building a modern, integrated digital economy. Central to this effort is the digital enablers pillar, which aims to establish a unified policy framework, accelerate regulatory harmonization and enhance resilience through resource sharing.

The agenda also emphasizes digital corridors, integrating the digital economies of member states by strengthening cross-border digital trade and mobility. This includes promoting secure data exchange and cultivating a skilled, mobile workforce.

To support innovation, the digital business and innovation pillar empowers startups and small and medium-sized enterprises by fostering innovation ecosystems and expanding access to capital, driving growth in digital enterprises.

Finally, the digital society pillar champions digital inclusion, accessibility and environmental sustainability, ensuring equitable digital access and minimizing environmental impact. This comprehensive strategy focuses on advancing digital maturity across the region, recognizing the critical role that digital technologies play in today's economy.

At a time when digital regulation, artificial intelligence and data governance are reshaping the global landscape, the DCO continues to help member states lead, not just adapt. Whether it is helping a gov-

ernment harmonize its data policies, supporting the rollout of artificial intelligence frameworks or enabling small enterprises to connect to global markets, we are committed to practical, inclusive solutions.

The reappointment of Secretary-General Deemah Al-Yahya to a second four-year term, announced during a visit to Kuwait – the member state currently holding presidency of the organization – reflects a clear vote of confidence in her leadership. Over the past four years, the DCO has moved from concept to implementation. Under the secretary-general's stewardship, we are already delivering real value to member states.

The next chapter will be about delivering more, scaling our work, deepening our impact and turning vision into long-term outcomes that benefit people and economies. This is also

a moment of pride. While Saudi Arabia submitted the nomination for her reappointment, it was endorsed by the DCO council – a powerful reflection of the Kingdom's growing leadership in multilateral diplomacy and digital policy.

Our member states may span diverse geographies, cultures and economies, but they are united by a shared belief in the power of cooperation. The power of partnership. That belief is the foundation of everything we do. As director general of DCO, I am honored to work alongside our secretary-general, member states, observers and partners to realize the organization's full potential. The next four years will be defined by action, alignment and achievement. Together, we are building a future where the digital economy works for all.

Arab News

Disaster that just passed the US Senate - I

I'M taping this introduction on Tuesday, July 1. The Senate passed Donald Trump's "big beautiful bill" just moments ago in a 50-50 vote, with Vice President JD Vance as the tiebreaker. This bill is a bad piece of legislation - trillions of dollars in tax cuts, very much tilted toward the rich, with savage cuts to Medicaid, nutrition assistance and green energy. Even with those cuts, we can expect more than \$3 trillion to be added to the national debt over 10 years.

And befitting a policy like that, the bill is hugely unpopular: A poll from late June found nearly two-to-one opposition to the bill. Vulnerable Republicans do not seem excited to run on the wreckage it's going to create. Thom Tillis, the Republican senator from North Carolina - a state Trump has won over and over again - just announced he's stepping down at the end of this term, in part over the Medicaid cuts. But bad policy only matters if people know about it, and a lot of people don't. Those of us hearing about this bill - even those of us covering it - can't keep the whole package in mind. The Times has a great list of nearly all the provisions, and a lot of them would be major policy fights on their own.

But in part because of that - and because the Trump administration is flooding the zone with so many other major policy fights - it has been hard to focus attention on what is passing and what can actually be done about it. So I asked Matt Yglesias back on the show to go through what is in this bill, and why it has been so hard to generate the kind of political force on it that we saw in Trump's first term, when the Obamacare repeal went down to defeat.

Matt, of course, is the author of the Slow Boring Newsletter. We spoke on Thursday, June 26. Ezra Klein: Matt Yglesias, welcome back to the show. Matthew Yglesias: Really glad to be here.

So the "big beautiful bill" - Chuck Schumer calls it the "big ugly bill." What is your high-level description of how this thing fits together? You have two different versions. They both contain about \$5 trillion worth of tax cuts - of which they're trying to disguise the cost and say it's more like \$4 trillion. But it's trillions of tax cuts, mostly tilted toward wealthier people, although some for middle-class, working-class people. And then it's offset by cuts to nutrition assistance, clean-energy programs and Medicaid.

There's a lot of disagreement between the House and the Senate about exactly how to do the Medicaid cuts. And that's a lot of what the wrangling is about. But the broad shape of the bill, which has been the locked-in framework for months, continues to be the parameters they're dealing with. So has Donald Trump just always been Paul Ryan in orange makeup? I don't know that he's exactly Paul Ryan in orange makeup, but he has always been in favor of big tax cuts, and there is some pressure to offset the cost of those tax cuts with spending cuts.

The big change is that Trump made Republicans much more cautious about cutting Medicare and Social Security. So that means that the Trump-era Republican cut proposals fall much more heavily on poor people, specifically, rather than on the elderly, which was the Paul Ryan version of this. And I think it's a really underplayed aspect because Trump has actually gained a lot more support from low-income voters than Republicans have in the past. He has really changed the image of the party with regard to how it relates to lower-income people. But the policy is incredibly unfavorable to them. This is a bill where some of the most brutal cuts fall on Medicaid users. How do they cut Medicaid?

This is part of what they're disagreeing about. One of the big ways is that they're changing what's called Medicaid provider taxes. States raise money for Medicaid in part by taxing the hospitals and others who provide Medicaid services. The House and the Senate have different ways of putting even stricter, tighter rules on the use of these provider cuts. The other thing they do is big work-requirement rules. So you're going to have to certify that you are working or participating in some kind of work-related activity. And a lot of people are expected to fall through the cracks of that kind of system. Really reduced spending. They're also putting higher enrollment barriers for Affordable Care Act subsidies. And different rules around immigration status. But the biggest ones are those provider cuts and the work requirements.

The way Republicans defend this out on the trail is: Look, all we're saying is, if you're on Medicaid, you should either be working, or if you're an able-bodied adult, you should be trying to find work. And you said people fall through the cracks. But when I talk to people who do Medicaid work, who know about how these work requirements work, they say they're not going to fall through the cracks - that this is a very onerous paperwork and reporting requirement. People often just fail to be able to do it. They check in with the government but then forget to one month - or don't realize they have to. And they argue that the work requirement is a way of using administrative burden, like all this paperwork, to kick people off the program. I think you could see there's a mismatch in the way Mike Johnson characterizes this. He talks about: We've got all these able-bodied young men who are sitting on the couch all day playing video games, collecting Medicaid benefits.

But you don't collect Medicaid benefits. Able-bodied young men are not racking up incredible medical bills, almost by definition. So for the bill to save money, it has to be cutting off care to people who are in fact sick

and in need of medical care. That's how the savings work. It's also easy to neglect how hard it is to fulfill certain kinds of requirements. But people who are poor, who are dealing with medical problems, who have a lot of stuff going on in their lives, aren't always able to get all this check-box stuff done, which is why millions of people are going to lose coverage - and why it's going to save a meaningful amount of money. The only way to offset the cost of tax cuts is to deny medical care to people who need treatments.

I really want to underscore this thing you just said because I think you stated it very clearly: You could save money on Social Security by not having Social Security send people checks every month, but you cannot save money on Medicaid that way. The way Medicaid has to save money is that somebody who would have gotten treatment for cancer, for C.O.P.D., for an aching back - whatever it might be - will now either not go get that treatment or somehow this person who was on Medicaid and was poor enough to qualify for Medicaid is going to pay for it some other way. The federal government is implementing an onerous set of paperwork and reporting requirements where, if people who are already poor, sick or otherwise disorganized cannot or do not abide by them, when they get sick, they will not be able to get chemotherapy - or they will have to go into medical debt to get chemotherapy. Like - why? So I can get a tax cut?

There's a profound ideological disagreement. One of the things Gallup asked people: Should it be the federal government's responsibility to make sure that everybody gets health care? And about 60 percent of the public said yes. At the highest level of abstraction, the public has a progressive view about this, and Republicans don't. They were not for the Affordable Care Act. The most conservative states don't accept Medicaid expansion funds. They have tried to impose work requirements in Arkansas, for example. So we ran the experiment: Does putting work requirements on Medicaid increase employment? And the answer was no. When they did it, employment didn't go up. People did lose coverage, but employment didn't go up.

And Republicans didn't reverse course after that. They didn't say to themselves: Oh, our goal here was to get more people working, but we didn't succeed at that. They said: You know what? This cut the rolls. It cut spending. We're happy with that. That's a free market view: If you want a television, you've got to pay for it yourself. If you want chemotherapy, you've got to pay for it yourself. And I think that's a morally questionable worldview. But I think it's something that Republicans believe in pretty sincerely. But they also don't want to articulate it in those terms because it sounds terrible. In the 2012 election, Mitt Romney famously got caught on tape saying: Look, there's 47 percent of this country who are just takers. They're not paying income taxes, they're just getting things from the federal government.

I'm paraphrasing him here, but he basically says: Look, our job is going to be harder because that's always going to be a popular politics, and those are not our voters. But Donald Trump won voters making less than \$50,000. It is very plausible that a majority of people on Medicaid now vote for Republicans. So I think the politics of this used to be that Republicans want to make these cuts for the ideological reasons that you're describing. But they were cuts to the Democratic Party's voters. Now they are very substantially cuts to the Republican Party's voters. They're cuts to Republican states. They're cuts to Republican hospitals - rural hospitals in areas that vote for Republicans and are very dependent on the care that gets financed by Medicaid in order to stay open. This is the Republicans' old ideology coming into conflict with their new coalition.

Absolutely. If you look at the share of people who are on Medicaid by state, there are seven states where more than a quarter of the population is on Medicaid. One of them is New York, and one of them is California. But the other five are New Mexico, Louisiana, Arkansas, Kentucky and West Virginia. And then you look at states like Mississippi and Alabama: If they would accept Medicaid expansion funding, there's a huge, potentially eligible population share in those states. It's a big conflict inside the heart of Republican politics. Mitch McConnell is from Kentucky. His political swan song is really just saying what he thinks about everything. He said about this: I know my colleagues are hearing from people who are worried about Medicaid, but we have got to get this done. His literal words were: "They'll get over it." - which I think is not something a person running for re-election would say. But it's very emblematic of what you're talking about. There's just a conflict between the Republican Party electorate and their ideology, which has shifted in some ways but really remains focused on low taxes, on investment income, low corporate taxes and wanting to cut spending on programs for the poor.

Let's talk about the tax side of this bill. You can cut taxes in a lot of different ways. There's not just a giant, individual income tax cut. What are the major things this bill does? And I don't just mean here how the bill is tilted toward the rich or the poor. But how does it change the incentives for people to do, or not do, things in the economy? The centerpiece of this bill is taking the temporary provisions from the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act and making them permanent. A lot of that is just small reductions in the income tax rate at every particular bracket. Some of that is an expansion

of the child tax credit. And a lot of it is corporate tax breaks - different ways to lower the taxes of businesses that have large investments. Trump then also piled on the campaign these new ideas: No tax on tips, no tax on Social Security, no tax on overtime. Those weren't really fleshed out in the campaign in a real way, but Congress has felt the need to put some version of them in here - which is part of why Republicans are having trouble with this. Making the T.C.J.A. permanent is nonnegotiable for them, but delivering on Trump's promises is also nonnegotiable. And so that has turned this into this very, very expensive sort of thing. The no tax on Social Security didn't really make it in, though, right? Because of various budget rules?

The "Byrd Rule" - yes. I'm just going to give a very quick budget explainer before I go on. In order to not have this be subject to the filibuster, in which case it would not pass, Republicans are using a legislative vehicle called budget reconciliation. This is now used for almost everything that's very big. Build Back Better, the Inflation Reduction Act used it. And it has weird rules, according to something called the "Byrd Rule." One of those rules is it can't really do all that much to Social Security. Other rules are that everything has to be explicitly budgetary in nature. So then the parliamentarian goes through it, and things get challenged, and the parliamentarian decides: Is doing this really a budget thing? Or are you trying to sneak in another change and calling it a spending and tax change?

So one thing about this bill that's a little strange, I guess, is that if you talk to conservative tax wonks, the thing that they are most excited about is the business provisions - a 100 percent bonus depreciation for equipment and domestic R&E expensing. So these are corporate tax breaks that conservatives believe will encourage more investment and make the economy more prosperous. That totals to about \$700 billion to \$800 billion worth of costs. I don't want to say that's not a lot of money, but it's a relatively minor share of a \$5 trillion tax bill. So the bulk of the dollar cost of the bill is repealing the alternative minimum tax, expanding the standard deduction and rate cuts in individual income taxes, and this 1099 pass-through deduction thing. Which is basically: If you own certain kinds of closely held businesses, you get to claim a huge tax cut. So for example, if you are a real estate developer or you own golf clubs, you just arbitrarily pay a lower tax rate. And then there's a \$200 billion estate tax cut. Again, on the merits, the conservative view is that these kinds of tax cuts encourage higher levels of savings than investment in the economy. Because the people who save and invest are disproportionately very rich, it has a very skewed distributional tilt.

So they've also thrown in all kinds of other stuff that doesn't have that same kind of impact. There's a bonus standard deduction for senior citizens that's supposed to be something that you can go to a town hall and say to you, know, grandma: This is what I did for you. But the cost of that is \$90 billion versus \$212 billion from the estate tax cut. It's amazing the way a bill this big begins to warp one's ability to talk about big numbers. Like: That's only \$90 billion. That's pocket change. Those of us who have to read a lot of Congressional Budget Office reports know there is a long-running fight over whether they'll use something called dynamic scoring or static scoring when a bill like this has its cost estimated by the Joint Committee on Taxation and - sort of but not exactly by the C.B.O.

Static scoring just totals up how much things cost. And then dynamic scoring, in theory, runs a model saying: Will this help grow the economy or not? And if it does help grow the economy, then in theory that should offset some of its cost - because a faster-growing economy creates more tax revenues that then can be put in. The Republican argument is always that these things are overestimated in their cost because they're using static scoring, not dynamic scoring. And we need to use dynamic scoring. So they got, in this case, dynamic scoring. But what happened when they got the dynamic scoring, Matt?

So the dynamic score actually raised the cost of the bill by about \$400 billion. Why did it do that? Because it expands the deficit by trillions of dollars - which they think, in the current climate, will raise interest rates. Importantly, this would raise interest rates throughout the economy. But it means that the federal government's interest rate costs will go up, and that swamps the growth impact that this bill is supposed to have. One reason for that also is that the dynamic modelers see a very muted growth impact because the big pro-growth measures are temporary. Bonus depreciation, interest rate limits, domestic research expensing - those are all extended through 2029. So if you're talking about changing the long-term trajectory of business investment, a temporary extension doesn't necessarily move the needle that much. If you're adding trillions of dollars to the debt in what's already a somewhat inflationary environment with some upward pressure on interest rates, you create bigger costs for the federal government - but also bigger costs for if you want to get a mortgage, if you want to get a car loan, if you want to build a house, any kind of project like that.

And that's a big difference from 2017. When Trump was president before, interest rates were superlow. So the professional deficit hawks were saying: Oh, this is bad. But the modeling was like: It's probably fine. But now it's not fine. The deficit is a

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serious issue. And this makes it much worse. I have genuinely not seen a big tax cut bill fail a dynamic score like this. I know this question has a sort of naive, begging quality to it, but: There is some world in which you would have expected the cost estimate to get Republicans who are running the policy process here to stop for a minute and wonder if this bill is well designed for the moment in which they are trying to drive it. In theory, they care about the debt. In theory, they're trying to grow the economy. The fact that this gave them so little pause - aside from listening to Donald Trump and paying off big donors, what they're even trying to achieve here becomes a little bit opaque. They're not going to get more people working. What is all this for? Donald Trump, I think even his fans would acknowledge, is not a super-detail-oriented policy wonk. He is a person with a certain kind of feel for the vibes in the electorate.

The idea that there should be no taxes on car loan interest rate payments - I think that's a terrible idea on the merits, but I also acknowledge that it probably sounds good to most people. So he kind of hit on some of this stuff over the course of the campaign trail, and they're putting it in the bill. And it really raises the cost, even though it doesn't relate to the core objectives of Republican Party tax policy designers. And one of the things I have often lamented about the Democratic Party in recent years is that it has lacked the kind of strong leadership that can make choices and put its stamp on things. Republicans have very strong leadership in the form of Donald Trump, and that means that nobody wants to tell him: This overtime thing, we can't do it. It's undermining our goals here. It's going to backfire, even though it sounds good to people. They don't really want to pick and choose between these provisions. So they've come up with something that's just too big to pull off unless you want to make the spending cuts even bigger and even harsher. So already they're facing a lot of pushback and some dissension inside the caucus about what they are going to do. If you took trillions of dollars more out of spending, you could make this work. Once upon a time, Elon Musk was claiming that he was going to find \$2 trillion worth of fraud in the federal government. That didn't happen. The difference between the state of the world in which you can save hundreds of billions of dollars in fraudulent Social Security payments and one in which you can't should alter your policies. But we're not in that mode.

This is really a lot of money to put on the credit card at a time of high interest rates. Because there is such a tendency for the out-of-power coalition to emphasize the deficit and the consequences of unpaid-for spending or tax cuts, I'm always trying to catch myself: Am I just doing motivated reasoning here? But the Biden administration really did pay for the Inflation Reduction Act. That really did have pay-fors in it. Barack Obama paid for the Affordable Care Act. How are you thinking about the debt and deficits right now? What is actually the problem? And why is it actually different than maybe it was 10 years ago? And how much does this actually then matter layered on top of that? I remember four years ago we were talking about the American Rescue Plan, which was not paid for - deliberately. It was a stimulus measure. And some people were saying: This costs way too much money. It's too big.

And my thought at the time was: Interest rates have been superlow forever. For basically my whole career. So A, I sort of just don't believe that inflation and high interest rates can happen. And B, if it does happen, the politics is just going to shift. We're going to be back to where we were in 2011, when everybody was fanatically focused on deficit reduction - and that might be good. And I was just completely wrong about that. Inflation did go up. Interest rates went up to get inflation contained. It became a serious concern. And then we got the Inflation Reduction Act, which, sure, it was paid for. But it wasn't a deficit reduction bill. And then there was nothing. There was no big speech about how we have to get everybody around the table and talk about things. And Trump came back with just incredibly fiscally irresponsible proposals. And it's weird, right? If you ask anyone in politics, they'll be like: Voters are really upset about the cost of living.

And I get that it is a little bit complicated to explain to somebody why a giant deficit-increasing tax bill will raise your cost of living, but it will. Factually. How? Because it's going to raise interest rates. It's going to raise the cost of money. Why will it raise interest rates? Explain it to me like I'm 5. All right, here we go: So when the budget deficit goes up, the federal government needs to sell more debt. And the federal government is the safest entity you could lend money to in the universe - certainly in the United States of America. So however much money is sort of loaned to the federal government drains the pool of potential savings that could be lent to everybody else. That's one way to think about it: Loanable money will become scarcer because the federal government is borrowing all of it. Another way is to look at it through the inflation mechanism. The gap between what the federal government spends and what it taxes is like extra money into the economy. That has an inflationary impact, which the Federal Reserve then has to offset by keeping interest rates higher. So you have JD Vance and Trump and others who are on Twitter screaming: Powell has got to get the interest rates down.

And I think reasonable people can disagree: Should there be a quarter-

point rate cut next meeting? Or should there be no rate cut? But if you borrow trillions of additional dollars, that's going to make it harder to make the case for those kinds of rate cuts. It's also going to make it harder for these short-term rates to pass through to the longer term rates. So if you're talking about young people who want to buy a house, the sticker price of a house matters, but the price of a mortgage also matters. It's a huge influence on what you can afford to do in practice: small business loans, car loans, large equipment. I don't really think people should be financing consumer purchases with credit card debt, but a lot of people do. So it's going to raise costs across the board for middle-class people, take away health care from lower income people, put a big strain on rural hospital systems. We haven't talked about the energy provisions - which are going to make electricity probably more expensive in the face of rising demand. Let's go back to the energy revisions in a moment. The other thing I want to emphasize that you said there: When we talk about the cost of living in a bill like this, we tend to be talking about interest rates and inflation, just as you did. But I do want to state the obvious, which is: If you are poor and you had Medicaid and now you don't, your cost of living just went up. Health care becomes more expensive for you if you don't have another form of equivalently subsidized and comprehensive health insurance sitting in your back pocket. If you were on food stamps, on SNAP, and you got thrown off the program because of these proposed cuts, food just became much more expensive for you. Republicans sometimes try to pretend that government transfers are not real, that the role they play in people's budgets is not real. But it is a real role. For a president who ran promising to bring down the cost of living and also promising to balance the budget, the scale of the dishonesty and the cruelty is so staggering. There's a robust debate happening about the health impact of Medicaid cuts. The lottery-style evidence tends to show a fairly muted health impact but has a small sample size. If you look at different research designs that offer more statistical power - but raise more questions about causation - the data tends to show that many lives will be endangered by these Medicaid cuts.

The skeptical analysis shows that the financial benefit of Medicaid is large. I think it's important for affluent people not to lose sight of that. For instance, my son has been to see the doctor a lot of times over the course of his life, but he's never actually had a serious medical problem. If we had been unable to get him medical treatment all those times, I think in the grand scheme of things, he would have been fine. But the anxiety, for parents, of not being able to take your kid to the doctor when he's sick is extreme. If you had any ability to pay for medical care for your sick child, you would do it. What we see is that Medicaid expansion states reduce medical debt by about \$1,400 to \$2,300 per person because people are more likely to seek health care when they feel that they need it. Per person on Medicaid or just per person in the state? Per person on Medicaid. The other thing is that you get uncompensated care in hospitals, because we don't actually have a system in the United States where we're going to leave you on the street corner if you're having a stroke or something like that. So you are shifting costs onto foregone care by poor people, medical debt and uncompensated care for hospitals. This cost is then paid for by the insured population. There's this threat that hospitals will go out of business. I'm in Maine right now in a very rural area, and hospitals don't have a ton of customers here. If they lose let's say 10 percent or 15 percent of their customer base and have higher uncompensated care burdens - some of the facilities will just close. Senate Republicans have discussed creating a hospital bailout fund to prevent this, but it seems crazy to me to address hospitals' business model problems by giving them direct payments to stay in business even though they're not treating patients, rather than just letting people get the treatment they need.

I do want to talk about the energy credits. Tell me about that side of the bill. The Inflation Reduction Act created a lot of tax credits for different kinds of zero-carbon energy. They took what were existing investments in production tax credits for wind and solar as well as somewhat different ones for geothermal and nuclear. They folded it all together into a technology-neutral tax credit program that was made permanent. Republicans in the House have proposed basically scrapping all of this. That would leave us with less financial support for clean energy than we had in the previous Trump administration. The context for this is that electricity demand is going up a lot, primarily because of data-center construction. The pipeline for building new natural gas turbines has been bottlenecked - the turbines are not available. Most of the new electricity that is coming onto the grid in the United States is utility-scale solar or onshore wind. There's going to be less of that built. If the House version were to pass, you would also be cutting off promising speculative research in clean firm technology. So we're going to have less but dirtier electricity and higher bills. These were promising sources of investment. I was just reading a story the other day about how this is throwing battery investment into turmoil. That was a pretty bright part of the US economy. We've done a lot to begin building the supply chains, and we consider them important. We also consider the solar panel supply chains important. One way we were inducing those supply chains to grow in the

US and in other friendly countries was through tax credits. There was always a lot being done by this part of the I.R.A. It had these intense "Buy American" provisions because we were trying to onshore this technology as well as deploy it. If you rip this up, you have the increasing climate change risk and consequence. You also risk greater electricity volatility and possibly higher electricity bills. And you're ceding yet more to China, which is investing massively in solar and battery technology. If you look at the charts of Chinese utility-scale solar installations, it is astonishing.

This has this quality of destroying a useful part of the economy - just because they ideologically don't like renewables and didn't like the I.R.A. The battery stuff, especially. Batteries have improved significantly over the course of the past five, 10, 15 and 20 years. Most batteries are manufactured in China through supply chains dominated by China. This has been a Republican critique of electric car promotion - that it will only increase the United States' dependence on the Chinese supply chain. Democrats tried to address this concern by investing in creating an American supply chain for batteries. Republicans, however, are not assuaged by that and now want to eliminate the supply chain altogether. Setting aside the electric cars, if you look at the war in Ukraine or the fighting between Israel and Iran, battery-powered drones clearly represent the future of warfare. It's genuinely dangerous for the United States to cede the battery technology entirely to the People's Republic of China. It's probably not viable to have a military-only battery industry, because the batteries used in military drones aren't special. So if you have a good civilian industry, you can also have a strong military industry. Also the amount of money at stake there is not very big. A lot of it seems like cultural identity politics. Trump claimed in his first campaign that he was going to bring back the American coal industry. That just completely didn't happen during his first term - but he's making another run at it. They're going to classify coal as a critical mineral. And they seem to be trying to cut off all other potential forms of energy other than coal. And wind in particular is really big in red states. Iowa, Kansas - these are places with big, empty open space that are good for building wind. So I don't know that there's any logic to it - other than just an affective disdain for batteries and renewables. They also seemed - though you can tell me if this is still true in the current versions of the bill - to be causing havoc in nuclear loan guarantees and subsidies, which are the kinds of things that might support technologies like advanced geothermal. In environmental politics, there's this weird divide where a few clean energy technologies fall on the other side of the left-right culture divide. Nuclear and advanced geothermal were both in that group, but now it seems like they're slashing into that, too. The sort of center-right or right-wing innovation types I know have seemed very unhappy about what this bill is doing to the kinds of energy they support and get excited about. The House bill in particular does. The Senate bill reflects more input from those kinds of people, such as Lisa Murkowski and others. In the House bill, they were going to eliminate the Energy Department's Loan Programs Office - which has been supporting most nuclear development - and cut tax credits for geothermal. Republicans tend to like these technologies more than renewables, at least in principle, but they are very speculative. The provision of subsidies to keep investment flowing into those industries is very important. Right now, you can't actually make money right now by investing in advanced geothermal. The hope is that, in the future, as they adapt drilling technologies to the case of hot rocks - that this will unleash incredible amounts of clean energy. But someone still needs to drill the money-losing wells today. You know what's interesting? We say that Republicans like nuclear and geothermal a lot more than they like renewables. I think that's true of D.C. Republicans and Republican Party theoreticians. But the Republican Party is closely attuned with the fossil fuel industry as such. The natural gas industry, I would argue, is more fearful of nuclear and geothermal than it is of wind and solar. Gas sort of complements renewables. When the sun doesn't shine, you can just turn on the natural gas plants. The whole virtue of clean firm technology is that you don't need to turn it off when the sun isn't shining, and that could put fossil fuels out of business. On an interest-group level, there's as much or more hostility to those kinds of clean firm technologies. Even though, theoretically, Republicans are more open to it.

If you go back to the inauguration, you'll see all the tech C.E.O.s arrayed at the inauguration. And if you've been listening to JD Vance interviews, you'll notice that he's very pro-nuclear. This influence comes from figures like Peter Thiel and Elon Musk, both of whom have been strong advocates for technology and innovation. Musk is known for his work with rocket ships, electric cars and batteries. And that kind of promise is reminiscent of the futuristic vision associated with the Trump administration - what I would call "reactionary futurism." People like Marc Andreessen and Joe Lonsdale embody this idea. The folk understanding of where their ideology has gone is that we need an authoritarian leader to drive us past the weak, risk-averse interest groups and fractured mess of politics in order to get to this technofuturistic technocracy we've all imagined. But that just has always seemed really weird.

(To be continued)



PESHAWAR A prominent businessman delegation led by Pervaz Akhtat called on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi at the Governor's House in Peshawar.

Business delegates meet with Kundi

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A prominent businessman delegation led by Pervaz Akhtat met with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi at the Governor's House in Peshawar.

During the meeting, they discussed challenges

facing business activities in the province, the law and order situation, and other important issues.

Farzand Ali Wazir, Vice Chairman of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Red Crescent, was also present. The meeting focused on the challenges hindering business growth in the province and potential

solutions to address them.

The law and order situation in the province was also discussed, highlighting the need for stability and security to promote business activities.

Other important issues related to the province's development and welfare were also discussed during the meeting.

Gold rates dip by Rs.1,500

ISLAMABAD (APP): The price of 24 karat per tola gold decreased by Rs.1,500 and was traded at Rs.355,500 on Friday as compared to its sale at Rs.357,000 on the last trading day. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported.

The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also decreased by Rs1,286 to Rs.304,783 from Rs. 306,069 and for 10 grams of 22 Karat it went down by Rs.1,179 to Rs.279,394 from Rs. 280,573

The rates of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs.3,871 and Rs.3,318 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$15 to \$3,335 from \$3,350, whereas that of silver remained unchanged at \$36.87, the Association reported.

Tesla's UK sales jump in June

LONDON (Reuters): Tesla's (TSLA.O) opens new tab new car sales in Britain rose year-on-year in June amid a broader recovery in the electric-vehicle market, data showed on Friday, as the U.S. auto maker started deliveries of its updated Model Y last month.

Overall, Britain's new car registrations grew 6.7% in June from a year earlier to 191,316 units, the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) said in a report, boosted by demand for battery electric vehicles.

Though sales remained below pre-COVID levels, it was the best June since 2019. Battery electric car demand rose 39% to 47,354 units, with every one in four buyers going electric, the SMMT said.

"That EV growth, however, is still being driven by substantial industry support with manufacturers using every channel and unsustainable discounting to drive activity, yet it remains below mandated levels," SMMT Chief Executive Mike Hawes said in the report. Tesla sold 7,719 units in June, up 14% from a year earlier, according to the SMMT. Data from research group New AutoMotive earlier in the day showed a 12% increase in June to 7,891 units.

The SMMT and New AutoMotive use different sources of data and methods of calculation, explaining the differences in the figures published.

Despite the growth in June, Tesla's UK sales are still down nearly 2% so far this year, while those of Chinese rival BYD (002595.SZ), opens new tab have increased nearly four-fold to 2,498 units, according to New AutoMotive.

US automaker Ford's (F.N), opens new tab EV sales grew the fastest among its rivals in Britain in the first half of 2025, rising more than four-fold from a year earlier, New AutoMotive said.

"Further growth in sales, and the sector, will rely on increased and improved charging facilities to boost mainstream electric vehicle adoption," Jamie Hamilton, automotive partner and head of electric vehicles at Deloitte, said. The US-UK trade deal lowering some tariffs on imports from Britain, including for British car manufacturers that will now be able to export to the U.S. under a reduced 10% tariff quota from an earlier 27.5%, came into effect this week.

PSX stays bullish, gains 1,262 more points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 Index continued with bullish trend on Friday, gaining 1,262.41 points, a positive change of 0.97 percent, closing at 131,949.07 points against 130,686.66 points last trading day.

A total of 733,079,943 shares were traded during the day as compared to 899,849,566 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 34.924 billion against Rs 43.252 billion on the last trading day. As many as 473 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 255 of them recorded gains and 177 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 41 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were



WorldCall Telecom with 58,256,083 shares at Rs 1.55 per share, Bank Makramah with 35,806,875 shares at Rs 5.12 per share and Treet Corporation with 29,716,643 shares at Rs 23.93 per share.

LimitedB witnessed a maximum increase of Rs2,151.83 per share closing at Rs 23,670.14 whereas runner-up was Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited with Rs46.99 rise in its share price to close at Rs23,646.99.

Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 32.82 per share price, closing at Rs 887.69, whereas the runner-up was Supernet Technologies Limited with Rs 23.40 decline in its per share price to Rs 801.89.

Beijing joins hands with global partners to build digital-friendly city

BEIJING (APP): "The question is not whether global digital transformation will continue, but whether we can ensure its benefits are inclusive, equitable, and accessible to all," UNDP Deputy Resident Representative in China, James George, delivered opening remarks at the Global Digital Economy Conference 2025 held in Beijing.

The representative noted that UNDP together with our sister UN agencies and development partners, we have long worked at the intersection of digital innovation and sustainable development-supporting efforts ranging from inclusive digital policies to digital public infrastructure, from smart city diagnostics to responsible data governance.

"Today, I am proud to announce that we will officially sign the UNDP Demonstration Project on Digital-Friendly and Digital Economy for Sustainable Development in Beijing, together with our project partners:

Beijing Municipal Bureau of Economy and Information Technology, the People's Government of Daxing District, and the China International Center for Economic and Technical Exchanges (CICETE)," George added. "Just as importantly, it will contribute to global knowledge-sharing-connecting local practice with international dialogue on what works and lessons learned."

Digital Silk Road is connecting the world. China is becoming increasingly connected with other countries, especially the countries along the Belt and Road Initiative, in the field of digital economy. "The digital economy is becoming an important tool for realizing the national sovereign development strategy. In order to fully unleash the potential of the digital economy, Nicaragua has formulated and implemented the National Digital Transformation Plan, which includes the active participation of Chinese companies and uses Chinese technology to enhance our con-

nectivity, digital services, technological innovation and talent training capabilities," noted Ramio Jose Cruz Flores, Nicaraguan ambassador to China, who is full of confidence in the prospects for digital cooperation between the two countries.

It is reported that the China-Nicaragua Free Trade Agreement, which will officially take effect on January 1, 2024, has opened up new space for the two countries in e-commerce and digital services. Encouraging more Nicaraguan students to come to China to study cutting-edge technologies such as AI, cloud computing, and big data is also in Nicaragua's national strategic plan, CEN reported.

"As artificial intelligence has developed to this day, the potential of scenarios and data resources it brings to various fields of the digital economy is unlimited," said Yu Xiaohui, President of China Academy of Information and Communications Technology (CAICT). "The

export or open source of digital technology to achieve inclusive development is our vital foundation. We have established the BRICS Artificial Intelligence Development and Cooperation Center to fully promote the export of Chinese technology as well as combine it with global development needs. Soon, we are going to release a development index to boost the specific application of AI technology in various countries and regions."

Beijing has taken the lead in exploring international cooperation in the digital economy at the city level by establishing digital economy partnerships with 27 cities worldwide, including but not limited to Abu Dhabi, Busan, Colombo, London, Copenhagen, San Francisco, Johannesburg. In 2024, the city's digital economy growth value has exceeded 2.2 trillion yuan, with more than 2,400 artificial intelligence companies, and the core industry revenue has exceeded 300 billion yuan.

US equity funds see largest weekly inflow in eight months

WASHINGTON (Reuters): U.S. equity funds attracted strong inflows in the week to July 2, as U.S. stocks hit record highs on AI optimism, even as a 90-day pause on U.S. reciprocal tariffs is nearing its July 9 expiry with little progress in trade talks.

According to LSEG Lipper data, investors acquired a hefty \$31.6 billion worth of U.S. equity funds in their largest weekly net purchase since November 13, 2024.

Optimism about artificial intelligence-linked stocks surged last week as Micron Technology (MU.O), opens new tab, an AI-chip supplier to Nvidia (NVDA.O), opens new tab and Advanced Micro Devices, forecast robust fourth-quarter sales.

The large-cap U.S. equity funds segment pulled in \$31.04 billion in their best week since December 25, 2024. But mid-cap and small-cap funds had \$1.72 billion and \$1.09 billion

worth of net sales.

Demand for sectoral funds was at the highest in five months as they attracted about \$3.4 billion worth of net inflows during the week. The technology and financial sectors had a significant \$1.17 billion and \$1.04 billion worth of net purchases.

Investors also snapped up a net \$6.66 billion worth of U.S. bond funds in an 11th successive week of net buying.

The short-to-intermedi-

ate investment-grade funds segments gained a net \$4.14 billion weekly inflow, the largest figure since November 20, 2024.

General domestic taxable fixed income funds also received \$3.03 billion, while short-to-intermediate government & treasury funds had a net \$2.11 billion weekly outflow.

Weekly net investments in money market funds, meanwhile, were at \$57.98 billion for the week, the highest in four weeks.

In labour-starved Japan, workers land another bumper pay hike

TOKYO (Reuters): Japanese companies agreed to raise wages by an average 5.25% this year, their biggest pay hike in 34 years and the third straight year of robust growth as they grapple with severe labour shortages and seek to shield workers from inflation.

The final figure tallied on Thursday by the Rengo labour union group - Japan's largest with 7 million members - follows an increase of 5.10% last year and 3.58% the year before - a sharp contrast to prior decades of stagnant wages.

Japan's biggest business lobby Keidanren also said on Thursday that the average summer bonus payment at major companies this year increased 4.37% from the previous year to a record 990,848 yen (\$6,889).

Rapidly ageing Japan has developed an extreme labour crunch with shortages among non-manufacturers and small firms reaching historic levels, even pushing some into bankruptcy.

A Reuters survey published in January showed that two-thirds of Japanese companies believe that labour shortfalls were seri-

ously or fairly seriously affecting their businesses.

Whereas workers around the world are unhappy about high levels of inflation, the Japanese now have much more bargaining power.

"There is an emerging consensus among companies that a pay raise that exceeds inflation is a must," a government official said on condition of anonymity. "It's the new norm now."

Inflation in Japan, as measured by the core consumer price index, which excludes volatile fresh food

prices, is currently around 3.7%. Fresh food prices have also risen steeply, causing much angst among consumers.

Steady wage hikes are crucial for sustaining a consumption-led recovery - a prerequisite for the Bank of Japan to resume interest rate hikes.

Mizuho Research & Technologies predicts wages will increase 4.7% next year, assuming oil prices will weaken and help cushion the impact that US tariffs are likely to have on corporate profits.

"As wage hike momen-

tum is likely to be confirmed in January-March, we expect the BOJ to start raising interest rates during that quarter," said Saisuke Sakai, chief Japan economist at Mizuho Research.

That view is reasonably widespread with a slight majority of economists in a Reuters poll expecting the BOJ's next 25-basis-point increase to come in early 2026.

Toru Suehiro, chief economist at Daiwa Securities, similarly predicts an average wage hike of 4.5% to 4.9% next year but notes that Japan's non-manufacturers will have to step up and take on a leading role in raising pay as manufacturers will be hit by US tariffs.

"Wage growth in recent years was led by manufacturers which benefited from a weak yen, but now it's going to have to work differently," he said.

Trade talks between the US and Japan have hit roadblocks and US President Donald Trump has threatened to impose a tariff of 30% or 35% on Japanese imports, well above the 24% rate he announced on April 2 and then paused until July 9.

World shares are mostly down as Trump's tariff deadline looms

MANILA, Philippines (AP): World shares mostly fell on Friday even as U.S. stocks climbed further into record heights as the clock ticks on President Donald Trump's July 9 tariff deadline.

In early trading in Europe, Germany's DAX shed 0.8% to 23,730.61, while the CAC 40 in Paris fell 1.1% to 7,666.91. Britain's FTSE 100 was down 0.4% to 8,790.21. The futures for S&P 500 and Dow Jones Industrial average were both 0.5% lower.

In Asia, Japan's Nikkei 225 recovered early losses, gaining 0.1% to 39,810.88, while South Korea's KOSPI index was fell 2% to 3,054.28.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng index lost 0.6% to 23,916.06 while the Shanghai Composite index

added 0.3% to 3,472.32.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 rose 0.1% to 8,603.00 while India's Sensex index shed 0.1% to 83,148.45.

"Asian markets slipped into Friday like someone entering a dark alley with one eye over their shoulder — because while US equities danced higher on a sweet spotted post-payroll sugar rush, the mood in Asia was far less celebratory," Stephen Innes, managing partner at SPI Asset Management, wrote in a commentary.

"The reason? That familiar, twitchy unease every time Trump gets near the tariff trigger," he added.

Mizuho Bank Ltd. said countries may be receiving letters from Trump stating tariff levels as early as Friday. Countries will have to brace for volatility, it said. On Thursday, after a

report showed a U.S. job market stronger than Wall Street expected, the S&P 500 rose 0.8% and set an all-time high for the fourth time in five days. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 344 points, or 0.8%, and the Nasdaq composite gained 1%.

Many of Trump's stiff proposed taxes on imports are currently on pause, but they're scheduled to kick in next week unless Trump reaches deals with other countries to lower them.

Elsewhere Friday, U.S. benchmark crude was down 45 cents to \$66.55 per barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, shed 53 cents to \$68.27 per barrel.

The U.S. dollar slid to 144.34 Japanese yen from 144.92 yen. The euro edged higher to \$1.1773 from \$1.1761.





In brief

White House to host UFC event

WASHINGTON (Agencies): US President Donald Trump says he plans to host a UFC event at the White House next year as part of America's 250th anniversary celebrations. Speaking at a rally in Iowa, Trump said UFC president Dana White will build the event which will feature a "championship fight" in front of "20,000-25,000 people". "We're going to have a UFC fight on the grounds of the White House. We have a lot of land there. Dana's going to do it," said Trump. The UFC are yet to officially confirm the show but the promotion's president White shared a video of Trump announcing the news on social media with the caption "this will be epic". The UFC's Instagram account also shared the video, asking followers "who would you like to see headline the event?" Trump is close friends with White, with the UFC chief becoming a key supporter during his 2024 election campaign. He has attended a number of UFC shows during his two stints as president and was most recently at UFC 316 in New Jersey last month. Trump's speech in Iowa marked the first of a series of events to celebrate the anniversary of America's signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Chopra aims to give Indian athletics a boost

BENGALURU (Agencies): Former Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra believes his eponymous javelin competition could be the catalyst that transforms India's athletics landscape, as the country prepares to host a world-class field event on Saturday. The inaugural edition of the Neeraj Chopra Classic will feature an impressive lineup including 2016 Olympic gold medalist Thomas Rohler, 2015 World champion Julius Yego, and Chopra himself alongside domestic talent. "I never dreamt of this event as I had always thought of representing India and winning medals. Apart from the medals, I now feel that I have given something to India and its athletes," Chopra told reporters on Friday ahead of the meet in Bengaluru. Chopra, who won gold at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 and silver at the 2024 Paris Games, believes "the event is just the start for many more international competitions to come to India" and has grander ambitions beyond Saturday's meet. "We see so many competitions in Germany - A, B, C category, similarly I wish to see at least five to six such world-class competitions in India as well," the 27-year-old said. Chopra breached the 90-metre mark with a 90.23 throw at the Doha Diamond League in May, while Yego holds the African record at 92.72m and Rohler's personal best stands at 93.90m. While the javelin throw may appear straightforward to the untrained eye, Rohler said it comes with unique pressures. "Any 90-metre throw has a huge impact on the body ... So it's really tough. We have to do the training for the impact and also for the technique. Doing it again and again is a mental challenge," the German said. "It's about dealing with the pressure from the outside. In 2012, you won the Olympic Games with 84m," he added, referring to the mark by Keshorn Walcott of 84.58 that secured gold. "Now people expect you to throw 90m, and if you don't do it, people ask you, was it a bad day?"

Pakistan win Asian Youth Girls Netball C'ship



ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan clinched the Asian Youth Girls Netball Championship 2025 after defeating Maldives in the

final at the Jeonju Hwasan Gymnasium, Jeonju-si, South Korea on Friday. According to Pakistan Netball Federation

Pakistan displayed exceptional teamwork and skill throughout the match, dominating all four quarters with scores of 17-5, 34-17,

45-23 and finally sealed the win at 60-35.

Standout performances were delivered by Leya Raza Shah, Alisha Naveed, Sumayya Kouser, Haleema, Jasmine Farooq, Alina, Amani, Parisa and Farah Rasheed, who collectively maintained Pakistan's stronghold on the game from start to finish.

Chairman of the Pakistan Netball Federation Mudassar Arian, President Sameen Malik, and Secretary General Muhammad Riaz extended their heartfelt congratulations to the national team for their remarkable victory.

The Asian Youth Girls Netball Championship 2025 was held from June 27 to July 4 under the banner of the Asian Netball Federation, featuring top youth teams from across the continent.

Australian Open champion Keys stunned at Wimbledon

LONDON

(AFP):

Australian Open champion Madison Keys became the latest star to crash out of Wimbledon as the American sixth seed was stunned by Laura Siegemund on Friday.

Keys slumped to a 6-3, 6-3 loss against the German world number 104 in the third round on Court Two.

The 30-year-old is the fifth player among the top six seeds in the women's draw to suffer a surprise exit from this year's tournament.

Coco Gauff, Jessica Pegula, Jasmine Paolini and Zheng Qinwen had already bowed out, though world number one Aryna Sabalenka is still alive.

Keys, who beat Sabalenka to clinch her maiden Grand Slam crown in Melbourne in January, is yet to make it past the quarter-finals in 11 visits to the All England Club.

She made 31 unforced errors in a lacklustre display against Siegemund.

It was a miserable way to spend the fourth of July for Keys while her compatriots celebrated the Independence Day holiday back in the United States.

Siegemund, who beat former US Open finalist Leylah Fernandez in the second round, is through to the Wimbledon last 16 for the first time.

At 37, she is the oldest

player left in the women's tournament, with her best Grand Slam singles run coming when she made the French Open quarter-finals in 2020.

"When you beat a great player like Madison you have to be really happy," said Siegemund. "I managed to keep my nerve in the end. If you don't have nerves in this moment you are probably dead."

"It was a big opportunity. You just take a deep breath and remember your strategy."

"All the girls on the tour are perfectionists. I'm the same but there was no pressure for me. I don't feel like I need to prove anything anymore."

Pak players move in Asian Jr Squash C'ships finals

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan players Nauman Khan, Ahmed Rayyan Khalil, Muhammad Sohail Adnan, and Mahnoor Ali have qualified for finals of the 32nd Asian Junior Individual Squash Championships 2025, at South Korea.

The semifinals concluded at 32nd Asian Junior Individual Squash Championships 2025 with Pakistani players Nauman Khan, Ahmed Rayyan Khalil, Muhammad Sohail Adnan, and

Mahnoor Ali winning their respective matches, said a press release.

In Boys U-19, Jooyoung Naa [1] (KOR) beat Abdullah Nawaz [3/4] (PAK) 11-7, 10-12, 11-2, 11-4 (3-1).

In Boys U-15, Nauman Khan [1] (PAK) beat Aryaman S (IND) 11-5, 11-1, 11-5 (3-0); Ahmad Rayyan Khalil (PAK) beat Yuen.T.L [3/4] (HKG) 11-8, 11-2, 11-1 (3-0).

In Boys U-13, Muhammad Sohail Adnan [1] (PAK) beat

Amarya.B (IND) 11-5, 11-1, 11-2 (3-0).

In Girls U-13, Mahnoor Ali [3/4] (PAK) beat Maisarah.B.K.N [1] (MAS) 11-7, 11-5, 11-7 (3-0).

On Saturday, Ahmed Rayyan Khalil and Nauman Khan will play against each other in Under-15 Category, Muhammad Sohail Adnan will play against Ayyan Dhanuka (India) in Under-13, and Mahnoor Ali will play against Yin.Z (China) in the Under-13 Girls Final.

Osaka still dreams of glory despite latest Wimbledon flop

LONDON (AFP): Naomi Osaka admits she contemplates life without tennis but the Japanese star does not plan to quit just yet despite her latest painful defeat at Wimbledon on Friday.

Osaka blew a golden opportunity to reach the Wimbledon fourth round for the first time as she was beaten by Russian world number 50 Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova. The 27-year-old took the first set on Court Two, but she lost her way as Pavlyuchenkova battled back to clinch a 3-6, 6-4, 6-4 victory.

Osaka is a four-time Grand Slam champion but she has not won a major since 2021 and has still never been beyond the third round at the All England Club. "Right now I'm just really upset. I wanted to be better than I did before. I thought I could make a great run here but clearly not," Osaka said.

Since her triumph at the Australian Open four years ago, she is on a dismal run of 12 successive Grand Slam appearances without reaching the fourth round.

Osaka gave birth to a daughter in July 2023, returning from a 15-month sabbatical for the start of the 2024 season. Visibly frustrated throughout her post-match press conference after losing on Friday, she was asked if she thought about hanging up her racquet to find happiness elsewhere.

"Yeah. I feel like I'd be kind of crazy to not, but I think right now I have so many things I want to attempt to achieve," she said. "I feel like while I still have the opportunity to try to do it, I want to, even though I get very upset when I lose, but I think that's my competitive nature. That's also the younger sister syndrome."

"No person wants to feel this way, like, multiple times throughout the year, but tennis players are crazy." The former world number one, now a lowly 53rd in the WTA rankings, has always struggled on grass and is relishing a return to hard courts.



LONDON: Laura Siegemund plays a backhand against Madison Keys of US during the Ladies' Singles Third Round match of The C'ships Wimbledon 2025.

Bangladesh drop Shanto, make five changes for T20Is

DHAKA

(Agencies):

Bangladesh selectors have dropped Najmul Hossain Shanto in one of the five changes to T20I squad for three-match series against Sri Lanka later this month. Shanto was part of the squad for their previous T20I series against UAE and Pakistan in May, but featured in only one of the six matches.

Shanto had an underwhelming 2024, where he averaged 18.84 in 21 T20Is, with just a single half-century. In contrast, he fared better in 2023, scoring 218 runs in ten innings at 31.14 average, and a higher strike rate of 119.78. Having stepped down from the T20I captaincy in January this year, he now finds himself out of the squad entirely.

Left-handed opener Mohammad Naim has been recalled in Shanto's place, among four other changes in the bowling unit. Naim, who has played 35 T20Is, has returned back to form during the 2024-25 domestic season. He was

the highest run-getter in both the BPL and NCL T20s, finishing on 827 runs at an average of 37.59 average and a strike rate of 140.40, including a century and six fifties.

Pace duo Taskin Ahmed and Mustafizur Rahman have also returned to the squad, having recovered from injury and featured in the first ODI against Sri Lanka on Wednesday. Mohammad Saifuddin has earned a recall as well, marking his return after more than a year.

The 28-year-old fast bowler was overlooked for last year's T20 World Cup after a disappointing performance in the T20I series against Zimbabwe in May. He subsequently took a two-month break from cricket in August. Since returning, Saifuddin has picked up 37 wickets across the BPL and DPL -- Bangladesh's premier white-ball competitions.

Shoriful Islam, who suffered a groin niggle during the second T20I against Pakistan in May, has been retained in the squad. In the

spin department, there's another shuffle, with Nasum Ahmed replacing Tanvir Islam. The ongoing switch between left-arm spinners suggests the selectors are still undecided on their preferred option for the white-ball formats.

Bangladesh will play the three T20Is on July 10 in Pallekele, July 13 in Dambulla and July 16 in Colombo.

Bangladesh squad: Litton Das (capt, wk), Tanzid Hasan, Parvez Hossain, Emon, Mohammad Naim, Towhid Hridoy, Jaker Ali, Shamim Hossain, Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Rishad Hossain, Mahedi Hasan, Nasum Ahmed, Taskin Ahmed, Mustafizur Rahman, Shoriful Islam, Tanzim Hasan Sakib, Mohammad Saifuddin.

In: Mohammad Naim, Nasum Ahmed, Taskin Ahmed, Mustafizur Rahman, Mohammad Saifuddin.

Out: Khaled Ahmed, Tanvir Islam, Hasan Mahmud, Soumya Sarkar, Najmul Hossain Shanto.

Hamilton on top after opening practice for British GP

SILVERSTONE (AFP): Lewis Hamilton delivered a reminder of his halcyon days on Friday when he returned to his favourite track to top the times for Ferrari in opening practice ahead of this weekend's British Grand Prix.

The 40-year-old seven-time world champion beat the McLarens of title-chasers Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri with a best lap in one minute and 26.892, revelling in clearly his best Friday practice session since he joined Ferrari this year.

Hamilton has won the British Grand Prix a record nine times, started from pole seven times and been on the podium 14 times, a record for any driver at his home event. It was the first time this season that Hamilton had topped a practice session.

His Ferrari team-mate Charles Leclerc was fourth ahead of George Russell of Mercedes, Racing Bulls' rookie Isack Hadjar, Alex Albon of Williams and Liam Lawson in the second Racing Bulls.

Kimi Antonelli was ninth in the second Mercedes ahead of four-time champion Max Verstappen of Red Bull.

The session began after a busy morning with news of Alpine confirming the appointment of former



Renault sporting director Steve Nielsen as managing director, in the wake of the exit of Oliver Oakes as team principal in May.

A highly-respected and experienced F1 operator, Nielsen has had many roles at Enstone in the past with Benetton, Renault and Lotus.

He starts work on September 1 and will report directly to the team's executive advisor Flavio Briatore.

As expected, American Tim Mayer also confirmed his decision to stand against incumbent Mohammed Ben Sulayem for the presidency of the sport's ruling body, the International Motoring Federation (FIA) in December.

Mayer, son of former McLaren team boss Teddy Mayer and a vastly-experienced motor racing official, said: "Mohammed Ben Sulayem made promises three and a half years ago

that were good ideas -- transparency, governance -- and he even promised he would be a non-executive president. He hasn't delivered on those ideas. In fact, it has been quite the opposite."

On a cooler day, Hamilton was one of the first men out to much appreciation from the big crowd, setting an early fastest lap before Norris and then Russell took command.

Both McLaren and Red Bull introduced heavily-updated floors with the Milton Keynes based team handing Yuki Tsunoda's car over to 17-year-old Briton Arvid Lindblad, a front-runner in F2, while Alpine reserve Paul Aron was given a run in Nico Hulkenberg's Sauber.

The first incident came when Gasly spun at the exit of Copse, but survived unscathed. "I absolutely lost it," he admitted.

Salah 'frightened' to return to Liverpool after Jota death

LONDON (AFP): Mohamed Salah said the death of Liverpool team-mate Diogo Jota in a car crash had left him "frightened" to return to the club as the Premier League champions postponed the return of some players for pre-season training.

The Portugal forward and his younger brother Andre Silva, died in the early hours of Thursday after their car veered off a motorway in Spain and burst into flames.

Mourners gathered at a wake in Portugal on Friday ahead of the brothers' funeral on Saturday.

Jota's Liverpool teammates have spoken of their struggle to comprehend his death, with captain Virgil van Dijk writing on Instagram that he was "absolutely devastated and in total disbelief".

Liverpool manager Arne Slot said everyone



associated with the club owed it to Jota to "stand together and be there for one another".

Egypt international Salah paid tribute to Jota on Friday. "I am truly lost for words," last season's Premier League top-scorer posted on Instagram. "Until yesterday, I never thought there would be something that would frighten me of going back to Liverpool after the

break. "Teammates come and go but not like this. It's going to be extremely difficult to accept that Diogo won't be there when we go back."

"My thoughts are with his wife, his children, and of course his parents who suddenly lost their children. Those close to Diogo and his brother Andre need all the support they can get. They will never be forgotten."

Jota had married his partner Rute Cardoso on June 22, posting a video of their wedding on Instagram just hours before the accident. They had three children.

The first group of Slot's Liverpool squad were scheduled to be at the club's training complex on Friday for the opening round of physical tests after their post-season break.

But their return has reportedly been pushed back until Monday.

Liverpool's first pre-season match is against Preston on July 13.

The club have opened a book of condolence and lowered flags to half-mast.

Fans have left flowers, scarves and shirts at a makeshift shrine outside Anfield and there are similar scenes at Wolves' Molineux Stadium, where Jota played previously.

ATLANTA (AFP):

A glance at the quarter-final line-up for the Club World Cup suggests that whoever comes out on top in the heavyweight last-eight showdown between Paris Saint-Germain and Bayern Munich on Saturday will be the favourites to go on and win FIFA's new competition.

Real Madrid can never be ruled out, but the Spanish giants are a work in progress under new coach Xabi Alonso before playing Borussia Dortmund on Saturday in New Jersey.

Meanwhile PSG came to the United States fresh from winning the UEFA Champions League in style in Munich at the end of May, and Luis Enrique's side have eased their way to the quarter-finals despite a slip-up against Brazil's Botafogo in the group stage.

Bayern finished second in their group behind Benfica but the manner with which they disposed of Flamengo in the last 16, with Harry Kane scoring twice in a 4-2 victory, showed that the German champions mean business.

Vincent Kompany's team have netted 16 goals across four matches and

may now feel they have a point to prove after falling short in the Champions League -- Bayern lost in the last eight in Europe to an Inter Milan team eventually humiliated 5-0 by PSG in the final.

"We followed PSG's season with interest. It was a great story because things were not perfect at the beginning and yet, despite the criticism of them, they kept fighting and believing," Kompany said.

"But that doesn't change anything for us. We want to win." Club World Cup success would cap a promising first year in charge of Bayern for former Belgium defender Kompany, who led them to Bundesliga glory as they reclaimed the domestic title from Bayer Leverkusen.

"We can beat anyone" PSG eventually conquered Europe, but Bayern defeated the French side 1-0 in the league phase of the Champions League back in November.

"We have to try to take the energy and the good feeling into this match. We know it's going to be difficult but we feel like we can beat anyone when we're at our top level,"

Kane, who has 41 goals in 50 club appearances since last August, told Bayern's website.

PSG -- who lost to Bayern in the Champions League final in 2020 -- are fresh from crushing Lionel Messi's Inter Miami 4-0 in the last 16 and the dream of a world title to add to their French and European crowns is very much alive.

"We are having a historic season for our club and we want to extend it in this competition," said coach Luis Enrique.

"Our objective is to go as far as possible, but to do that (and reach the final) we still need to come through two ties."

This will be PSG's 63rd match in all competitions going back to the start of the Ligue 1 season last August, and Luis Enrique is hoping for one last push from his exhausted players before they can enjoy a short summer break.

The build-up to the game at the Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta has been overshadowed by the tragic death of Liverpool and Portugal forward Diogo Jota in a car accident in Spain on Thursday.



In brief

Shaza visits NADRA headquarters

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja has visited the NADRA Headquarters for an in-depth briefing on the advancement of Pakistan's Digital ID ecosystem, a key component of the Digital Economy Enhancement Project (DEEP). During the visit, the Minister underscored the pivotal role of a robust Digital ID infrastructure in achieving the goals of Digital Pakistan and propelling the Uraan Pakistan roadmap—both focused on building a secure, citizen-centric, and innovation-driven digital future. Chairman NADRA reaffirmed the Authority's unwavering commitment to scaling and sustaining the Digital ID framework by aligning with international best practices while addressing national development priorities.

Two dead in bus-trailer collision

ISLAMABAD (APP): At least two people were killed and two others injured when a passenger bus collided with a trailer on the M-3 Motorway near Nankana Sahib early Friday morning, according to a Motorway Police spokesperson. As per initial reports, Motorway police indicate that the accident occurred due to the bus driver's drowsiness, causing the vehicle to crash into a trailer that was either parked or moving ahead and killed two on the spot, private news channel reported. Rescue teams quickly arrived at the scene and shifted the injured to the nearest hospital. Two of the victims died instantly at the site. Motorway Police have once again urged drivers to ensure they get adequate rest and avoid driving while fatigued, especially during long-distance journeys. An investigation is ongoing to determine further details.

Woman killed in road accident

RAWALPINDI (APP): A woman was killed in a road accident that took place near the G.T.Road area of Rawalpindi, a TV channel quoting Rescue sources reported on Friday. According to initial reports, a rashly driven dumper hit an elderly woman near the G.T.Road area of Rawalpindi. As a result, the woman died on the spot. The Rescue team rushed to the site and shifted the body to the hospital. The Police team also reached the spot and started search for the driver of the heavy vehicle.

IRSA releases 275,954 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 275,954 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 408,931 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1520.00 feet which was 118.00 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 272,900 cusecs and 151,500 cusecs, respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1178.50 feet, which was 128.50 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 21,577 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 203,798, 178,886, 122,717 and 54,770 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 45,200 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 42,779 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.



ISLAMABAD: A large number of people attending the main procession of 8th Muharram-ul-Haram observing Youm-e-Ashura at G-9 Road. Muharram ul Haram, the first month of the Islamic calendar is known as the mourning month to pay homage in remembrance of the martyrdom (Shahadat) of Hazrat Imam Hussain (AS).

Water crisis a national emergency, requires joint effort: Sherry

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson of the Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change Sherry Rehman on Friday expressed concern over Pakistan's severe water crisis, ranking third globally and urged urgent steps including rainwater harvesting, forest protection, small dams, water recycling and modern weather alert systems, to address climate change impacts.

In an exclusive conversation with a local news channel, the Chairperson of the Senate Standing Committee called for a robust and coordinated response to Pakistan's escalating water crisis. Emphasizing the urgency of the situation, she stated that according to World Bank and IMF reports, Pakistan ranks among the top three countries most at risk of water scarcity and warned that the problem will worsen if provincial

and national governments fail to act in unison.

She urged a shift from reactive to proactive water governance, highlighting the need for stronger institutional coordination between federal and provincial authorities. Rehman outlined several key strategies to address the crisis, including widespread rainwater harvesting initiatives, construction of small and medium-sized dams, rehabilitation of outdated irrigation infrastructure and the promotion of water-efficient farming techniques.

She also stressed the importance of forest conservation and the use of climate-smart technologies such as early weather warning systems and real-time water monitoring. Rehman added that without a unified approach backed by political will, the water crisis could become a full-blown national emergency, threaten-

ing livelihoods, agriculture and overall climate resilience.

Responding to a query, she mentioned that the Senate Standing Committee has held several meetings with the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) to review early warning systems and preparedness measures. She expressed concern over the lack of timely alerts and stressed the need to enhance forecasting technologies and coordination between departments.

Rehman also called for strict anti-encroachment measures, particularly near riverbanks and hotels built in ecologically sensitive areas, warning that such developments increase the risk of flooding and environmental degradation. She reiterated that climate resilience demands not only policy reform but enforcement and local accountability.

OGDCL, PMYP, NAVTTC sign MoU to empower 1,000 Pakistani youth

ISLAMABAD (APP): A landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL), the Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP), and the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTC) to empower Pakistan's youth.

The signing ceremony, held at OGDCL headquarters in Islamabad, was attended by senior officials from all three organizations, including Ahmed

Hayat Lak, Managing Director/CEO of OGDCL, Chairman Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan of PMYP, and Chairperson Gulmina Bilal Ahmad of NAVTTC.

The MoU outlines a framework to strengthen youth-focused initiatives across Pakistan, promoting vocational and technical education, enhancing employability, supporting innovation and sports programs, and encouraging environmental consciousness.

The partnership aims to support skills-based education and career develop-

ment, create job opportunities, and engage young people in activities such as esports, talent hunt sports programs, and volunteerism.

The project initially targets 1,000 youth aged 15 to 35 from across the country, with a strong emphasis on inclusivity, regional diversity, and merit-based selection. The collaboration will also promote green initiatives on university campuses and beyond, fostering environmental stewardship among students.

The heads of the three

organizations highlighted the importance of this collaboration, emphasizing the need to equip young Pakistanis with the skills and platforms necessary for their personal growth and national progress.

This MoU marks the beginning of a long-term collaboration between OGDCL, PMYP, and NAVTTC, aiming to foster a more skilled, engaged, and environmentally conscious generation that will contribute meaningfully to Pakistan's sustainable development and national unity.

First-ever mobile control room set up for Ashura security

ISLAMABAD (APP): On the directions of Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, a mobile control room has been established for the first time in Islamabad as part of the Ashura security plan.

The mobile control room is capable of operating even without mobile signals, ensuring uninterrupted monitoring and coordination.

Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry, accompanied by Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, visited the central Imambargah Asna Ashri in G-6 sector. They inspected the main hall and reviewed the implementation of the security plan in detail.

Both ministers also visited the newly set-up mobile

control room by Islamabad Police and expressed satisfaction over the security measures in place.

Talal Chaudhry stated that 1,762 personnel have been deployed for security, with 350 traffic officials assigned to manage entry points at four main access routes. He assured that foolproof arrangements have been made to protect mourners.

Advanced surveillance through drones and modern technology will be used to monitor Majalis and processions. CCTV cameras have been installed along procession routes for real-time monitoring.

To prevent the spread of hateful content, the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency is actively monitoring social

media platforms.

Inspector General of Islamabad Police, Ali Nasir Rizvi, briefed the officials, stating that a sector-wise security plan has been developed. Volunteers will assist the police in managing the security of Majalis and processions.

According to the plan, mourners will travel from Rawalpindi to Islamabad on the 9th of Muharram and return on the 10th. An integrated security network has been established to ensure the safety of all religious gatherings.

Chief Commissioner Islamabad Muhammad Ali Randhawa, Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, DIGs, Chief Traffic Officer, and other senior police officers were also present during the visit.

HEC welcomes 350 Afghan students for academic programs

ISLAMABAD (APP): As many as 350 Afghan students have reached Pakistan to pursue studies in top-tier Pakistani universities across diverse disciplines under HEC Allama Muhammad

Iqbal Scholarships Programme is a mega initiative of the Government of Pakistan, under which 4500 scholarships are being awarded to Afghan students. On their arrival, the students were received by In-charge HEC Regional Centre Peshawar Mr. Nasir Shah and Project Director Allama Iqbal Scholarships Programme Jehanzeb Khan. Representatives of National University of Technology (NUTECH) Islamabad and National University of Computer and Emerging Sciences

In addition, 50 PhDs and 100 Master's students will also join in September, 2025 to pursue their education in Pakistan.

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(N U C E S - F A S T) Faisalabad were also present on the occasion.

The Allama Muhammad Iqbal Scholarships Programme reflects the shared commitment of Pakistan and Afghanistan to deepening educational collaboration with a spirit of Islamic brotherhood and neighborhood.

Project Director Jehanzeb Khan expressed his enthusiasm in hosting the scholars, stating, "We are honoured to welcome these young ambassadors of Afghanistan to Pakistan. Their presence will not only enrich our academic institutions but will also strengthen the cultural and strategic bond between the two nations."



ISLAMABAD: A skilled person carving a replica of lion at his roadside workshop to attract the customers at 17Mil area. —APP Photo

ANF recovers over 113 kg of drugs worth Rs 27.9 million

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), conducting 9 operations across the country, recovered as many as 113.690 kilograms (kg) of drugs worth more than Rs 27.9 million and arrested 7 suspects, including 5 women, with a British-Pakistani lady, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Friday.

He informed that 1,032 kgs of heroin were recovered from the luggage of a British-Pakistani woman traveling to Manchester at Islamabad International Airport.

As many as 20,430 kgs of ice were recovered from a parcel destined for Australia, seized at the

cargo office, at Allama Iqbal International Airport.

Similarly, 2,646 kgs of weed were recovered from a parcel at a courier office in Karachi sent to Lahore.

In another operation, 600 grams of heroin and 500 grams of ice were recovered from a courier parcel in Rohri, Sukkur, destined for Gujranwala.

On Indus Highway near Kohat, 9.6 kgs of hashish were recovered from the possession of two women.

As much as 182 grams of heroin and 500 grams of ice were recovered from a woman near Tarkai Toll Plaza, Jhelum.

Near the Islamabad

Motorway Toll Plaza, 4 kgs of heroin and 9 kgs of ice were recovered from a vehicle and two suspects, including a woman, were arrested.

During another operation, 4 kgs of weed were recovered from hidden compartments of a vehicle and the suspect was arrested.

As many as 61.2 kgs of hashish hidden for smuggling were recovered in the abandoned area of Shahkas in Khyber.

Cases have been registered against the arrested suspects under the Narcotics Control Act, and further investigations are underway.

Mehfil-e-Musalma held at Art Council

RAWALPINDI (APP): A spiritually uplifting "Mehfil-e-Musalma" was organized on at Adabi Baithak, under the auspices of the Punjab Council of the Arts, Rawalpindi, in honor of the sanctity of Muharram-ul-Haram. The purpose of this gathering was to commemorate the tragedy of Karbala, pay tribute to the great sacrifices of the martyrs, and introduce the younger generation to the teachings of the Ahl-e-Bayt (peace be upon them).

Renowned poets paid poetic tributes in their unique styles to the immense sacrifices made by the grandson of the Holy

Prophet (PBUH), Imam Hussain (A.S.), and his companions for the sake of truth and the dignity of religion. The session was presided over by the esteemed literary figure Manzar Naqvi, while the special guests included the well-known broadcaster Momin Khan Momin, along with a large number of prominent writers, poets, intellectuals, and lovers of literature from the city.

The Director of the Arts Council, Muhammad Shakoor, thanked all the honorable guests and remarked that the incident of Karbala teaches us patience, perseverance, and

the spirit of selflessness. He emphasized the importance of educating the youth about Islamic history and the noble example set by the Prophet's grandson and his companions, who stood firm for the truth with unmatched sacrifice.

The program also included reverent recitations of Durood and Salam.

At the conclusion of the gathering, Langar and Niaz-e-Hussain were distributed among the attendees. Additionally, a traditional Sabeel (refreshment station) was arranged. The proceedings of the event were graciously conducted by Nasir Ali Nasir.



ISLAMABAD: Residents of Tarlai area fetching drinking water from a nearby Naan shop due to insufficient supply of water in the area. —APP Photo

China ‘welcomes’ Russia’s recognition of Taliban

KABUL (Amu tv): Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning, at a press briefing on Friday, in response to a question about Russia’s recognition of the Taliban rule in Afghanistan, said that China welcomes the latest developments in relations between Russia and the Taliban. When asked whether China has similar plans, Mao noted that since the return of the Taliban, “the diplomatic missions of the two sides have maintained normal operations.

IEA envoy presents credentials to Turkish ministry

KABUL (Ariana News): The Embassy of Afghanistan in Ankara announced on late Thursday that Saniullah Farhamand, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Islamic Emirate, has presented his credentials to Ahmet Cemil Miroglu, the chief of protocol at the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The embassy stated the meeting took place at the ministry’s headquarters in the Turkish capital.

Mullah Baradar meets Uzbek, Turkmen officials

KABUL (TOLONews): The Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs of the Islamic Emirate held separate meetings on the sidelines of the ECO summit with Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the President of Uzbekistan, and Rashid Meredov, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan. The talks focused on economic, transit, and trade cooperation with Afghanistan’s neighboring countries. Hamdullah Fitrat, Deputy Spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate, stated that Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, referring to more than \$1 billion in trade with Uzbekistan, expressed hope that the figure would increase to \$2 billion. He also requested facilitation for the transit of Afghan goods to Central Asia via Uzbekistan. During the meeting, the President of Uzbekistan expressed readiness to



invest in various sectors, including the Balkh–Herat–Kandahar railway project, textile factories, cement production, oil refining plants, salt mine extraction and processing, e-governance, and more. In his meeting with Rashid Meredov, the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs emphasized the importance of the TAPI and TAP projects, stating that the TAP project’s design has been completed by the Afghan side, and efforts are underway to begin work soon. According to Fitrat, the Turkmen Deputy Prime Minister also assured cooperation in advancing the TAPI and TAP projects.

Baradar urges ECO states to formally engage with IE

KABUL (TOLONews): Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, called on member states of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) to formally engage with the Islamic Emirate during the organization’s summit held in Azerbaijan. He emphasized that Afghanistan’s inclusion within the framework of regional cooperation not only benefits the country itself, but also contributes to regional stability and development. In his speech, Baradar referred to the Russian Federation’s recent decision to recognize the caretaker government, calling it a “significant step” toward the international legitimacy of Afghanistan’s current administration. Former diplomat Aziz Maarij stated that, under the current circumstances, it is beneficial for senior officials of the Islamic Emirate to participate in international and regional gatherings, such as those hosted in Azerbaijan. “This is a valuable opportunity,” he said. Political analyst Najiburrahman Shamal also noted that the participation of the Deputy



Prime Minister for Economic Affairs in the ECO summit is particularly important under the present conditions for good governance, economic development, and several other key issues. The ECO summit was held in Baku, Azerbaijan, with the participation of presidents from Turkey, Iran, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Tajikistan, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, and senior officials from ten member states. The summit focused on expanding economic cooperation, advancing regional trade, improving transit facilities, and launching joint projects in energy and sustainable development. Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, in his speech at the ECO summit in Azerbaijan, announced his country’s comprehensive support for Afghanistan. He stated: “We are pleased that after a long break, a delegation from Afghanistan’s caretaker government is participating in our summit. In fact, we consider our neighbor

Afghanistan, China strengthen political, economic ties

KABUL(BNA): The country’s Foreign Minister Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi met with Zhao Chao, Deputy Secretary-General of China’s Xinjiang Province, along with his delegation. The meeting focused on enhancing political ties and boosting economic cooperation between Afghanistan and China. During the discussions, Minister Muttaqi emphasized the importance of aligning the cooperation with Afghanistan’s foreign policy principles, highlighting the potential for cooperation in various sectors. The two sides explored avenues for expanding trade, economic, and transit opportunities, reflecting a



mutual interest in fostering closer ties. Chinese representatives expressed their readiness to assess joint projects and initiatives aimed at strengthening economic ties between Xinjiang and Kabul.

Germany seeks dialogue with Islamic Emirate over migrant repatriation

KABUL (TOLONews): The Islamic Emirate has welcomed Germany’s willingness to engage in dialogue with the caretaker government regarding issues related to migrants. The spokesperson of the Islamic Emirate Zabihullah Mujahid emphasized that the caretaker government also supports resolving the challenges of Afghan migrants through dialogue with host countries. Mujahid stated: “Yes, Afghanistan also desires dialogue with the countries where Afghans reside. Before making decisions about migrants or taking unfriendly actions against them that could lead to further suffering and harm to Afghans, there must be coordination with Afghanistan to reach a suitable solution.” Recently, Germany’s Interior Minister

Alexander Dobrindt announced the country’s desire for a direct agreement with the caretaker government to repatriate Afghan deportees from Germany. Alexander Dobrindt added that, at present, Germany needs the cooperation of third countries for such negotiations, which he said is not very effective. Alexander Dobrindt, Germany’s Interior Minister, said: “Anyone who wants to enable orderly returns to Afghanistan must also speak with those who are decision-makers. Therefore, my goal is to initiate these talks so we can organize orderly returns to Afghanistan.” Meanwhile, these remarks by Germany’s Interior Minister have sparked reactions within the country.

Some German officials, including the Green chair of the committee of Germany Konstantin von Notz, have stated that dialogue with the caretaker government in Afghanistan would upset the country’s allies. Konstantin von Notz said: “This action was definitely taken without international coordination. It will upset our allies, as we have internationally agreed not to negotiate with the Afghan government (Taliban).” The debate over deporting Afghan migrants and citizens from some other countries intensified after an Afghan injured several people, including a police officer, during a protest organized by an anti-Islamic movement in the city of Mannheim, Germany. The police officer later died from his injuries.

Recognition of the IE is ‘acknowledgment of an undeniable reality’: Haqqani

KABUL (Ariana News): Anas Haqqani, a senior member of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), has said that official engagement with the IEA is acknowledgement of an undeniable reality and called on the international community to replace pressure-based policies with dialogue and cooperation. In a statement posted on X, Haqqani described the Islamic Emirate as a movement rooted in the faith and will of the Afghan people. “The Emirate is a movement that emerged from the heart of the believing Afghan nation,” he said. Reflecting on the IEA’s two periods of rule, he asserted that in its first phase, the Emirate had liberated Afghans from the chaos of warlordism, and in its second, it had restored Afghanistan’s independence. “Its emergence in the form of a state was the hope of the Afghans, an experience shared by many other nations,” he added. Criticizing the international approach of isolation and sanctions, he said, “The politics of pressure and distance has proven fruitless. Only dialogue and engagement can resolve matters and bring proximity.” His remarks come amid shifting diplomatic attitudes toward the IEA, particularly following Russia’s recent formal recognition of the Islamic Emirate—a move welcomed by China and closely watched by regional actors.

Business owners buckle under economic strain

GHOR (Amu tv): In the highlands of central Afghanistan, small business owners in Ghor Province say economic hardship has brought local commerce to near collapse, describing a level of downturn unseen in years. Shopkeepers and laborers in the province cite widespread poverty and a sharp drop in consumer purchasing power as primary drivers of the economic slowdown. With few job opportunities and minimal income, residents say they are struggling to meet even the most basic needs. “I run this mill, but there is barely any work,” said Izzatullah, a resident of Ghor who has operated a small grain mill for more than a decade. “Maybe two or three sacks of wheat come in a day. I grind them and make 200 to 300 afghanis, which all goes toward fuel. A liter of diesel costs 60 afghanis.” The economic desperation extends beyond the milling business. In a small grocery shop elsewhere in the province, similar concerns are echoed. “With this situation, our financial problems have only gotten worse,” said Ghulam Mohammad, another resident. “As a village representative, I’m trying to convince aid organizations to come help.” For many in Ghor, migration has become a last resort. “If we didn’t have economic problems, we wouldn’t leave our country,” said Rahman, who had recently returned from abroad. “If the economy were better, we’d live here with our families. But we are forced to go elsewhere, even to countries at war.”

Interior Ministry assures security on day of Ashura

KABUL (TOLONews): As the tenth day of Muharram, or Ashura, approaches, the Ministry of Interior announces that security will be ensured across the country during the days of Muharram and the Ashura ceremonies. Abdul Mateen Qani, the ministry’s spokesperson, stated that necessary security measures have been taken to ensure the safety of citizens nationwide. Qani stated: “To reassure the citizens, we assure the public that, according to the security plan and in coordination with all security institutions, security is ensured

in all provinces and there is no cause for concern.” Meanwhile, some Shia citizens in Kabul say that their mourning ceremonies have so far been held in a secure environment, and they call on security institutions to enhance their cooperation. These residents also urge the public to continue cooperating with security forces to help secure the venues of the mourning ceremonies. Safdar Ali, a Kabul resident, said: “This ceremony commemorates the fight against oppression. The uprising of Imam Hussain will never be forgotten. May God bless the fighters

who cooperated with us and contributed to the success of the ceremonies.” Ali Akbar, another Kabul resident, said: “This year is going better compared to previous years. Today is the 8th of Muharram, and so far, there have been no issues. We trust in God that things will continue smoothly. I hope the ceremonies are held successfully every year.” The assurance of security on the 10th of Muharram and during Ashura ceremonies comes as these events are scheduled to be held in several provinces, including Kabul, in the next day.

Mujahid welcomes Russia’s move, backs Afghan global engagement



KABUL (TOLONews): The Islamic Emirate has expressed hope that Russia’s allied countries, such as China, Iran, Pakistan, and several Central Asian nations, will also follow Moscow’s lead in recognizing the caretaker government. Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate, stated: “We also call on other countries to fulfill their responsibility in engaging and building relations with Afghanistan. This is, in general, a major cooperation with the Afghan people. It will assist in economic development and regional connectivity. It is also the rightful demand of Afghans.” Senior Islamic Emirate official Anas Haqqani said that the strategy of pressure and isolation has proven ineffective. He emphasized that only dialogue and engagement can resolve issues and bring about closer relations. In this context, China was among the first countries to welcome Russia’s move. A spokesperson for

China’s Foreign Ministry stated that the country has always believed Afghanistan should not be isolated from the international community. Anas Haqqani also wrote on X: “Formal engagement with the Islamic Emirate is an acknowledgment of a reality that cannot be ignored.” Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said: “China welcomes the new progress between Russia and Afghanistan’s caretaker government. China has always believed that Afghanistan should not be isolated from the international community. We support increased engagement and stronger relations between the international community and Afghanistan’s caretaker government.” Russia’s recognition of the Islamic Emirate carries broad political, diplomatic, economic, and security implications for Afghanistan. According to political analysts, these outcomes include an increase in the Islamic Emirate’s political legitimacy, the

paving of the way for recognition by other nations, growth in economic and trade cooperation, and broader effects on the Afghan population. Political analyst Hamidullah Hotak said: “Our message to the Islamic Emirate is to fulfill its domestic responsibilities. If those responsibilities are properly addressed, it won’t be long before other countries also recognize the Islamic Emirate.” Another analyst, Sayed Abadullah Sadiq, said: “Recognition of the Islamic Emirate will be a concrete development in the region and will benefit the economy, along with other improvements.” Analysts believe that for the Islamic Emirate to gain international recognition, it must take practical steps toward forming an inclusive government and upholding the rights of women and girls, particularly in education and employment. In recent years, Russia has played an active role in regional affairs concerning Afghanistan and has even hosted intra-Afghan peace talks. Despite Western sanctions and domestic economic challenges, the Kremlin has continued to pursue its strategy of consolidating influence in Central and South Asia. Russia’s recognition of Afghanistan’s caretaker government is seen as part of its broader effort to expand regional influence and counterbalance its Western rivals.

Afghan migrants from Iran face crisis at Islam Qala border



KABUL (Khaama Press): Afghan migrants returning from Iran face a dire situation at the Islam Qala border, struggling with severe shortages of shelter and resources. Hundreds of Afghan migrants who were recently deported from Iran are facing severe conditions at the Islam Qala border, struggling with a lack of drinking water, food, and shelter. The situation has worsened due to extreme heat, with temperatures soaring to 45°C, and a lack of organized management at the site, raising serious concerns about the migrants’ health and safety. Many families, particularly women and children, are enduring these harsh conditions without access to essential services such as drinking water and healthcare. The dire circumstances have placed these vulnerable groups at significant risk. In response to the crisis, some residents from Herat have voluntarily traveled to the Islam Qala border to provide assistance. However, the efforts have been limited and unable to meet the growing needs of the increasing number of migrants arriving daily. The escalating deportation of Afghan migrants from Iran is a major contributing factor to the growing humanitarian crisis. In just the past 24 hours, around 31,000 Afghan migrants have crossed into Herat through the Islam Qala border, further straining the region’s capacity to provide necessary aid and resources. Tajuddin Avila, a repre-

sentative of UNICEF in Afghanistan, reported that 256,000 individuals returned from Iran to Afghanistan in June alone. This rapid increase in the number of deportees has put additional pressure on Afghanistan’s already limited resources. The ongoing mass deportation of Afghan migrants from Iran has been intensifying in recent months, driven by economic pressures and security concerns within Iran. The escalating number of deportations is exacerbating the humanitarian situation along the border. The absence of a coordinated relief effort at the Islam Qala border and the insufficient resources to manage the influx of migrants has left them vulnerable, especially children and families. The situation is rapidly becoming unsustainable. International organizations, including UNICEF, have raised alarms over the growing number of deportations and the urgent need for humanitarian intervention. It is critical for both the local and international bodies to coordinate efforts to address the worsening crisis and ensure the protection and support of migrants.



MUZAFFRABAD: Rescue workers trying to rescue dead bodies of passengers as tourists vehicles fell down in Neelum River.

Trump says he is disappointed in Putin

WASHINGTON (Agencies): President Donald Trump told reporters early on Friday he is disappointed in Russian President Vladimir Putin and does not think Putin will stop the war in Ukraine. Trump also said he will speak to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Friday.

Earlier on Thursday, Trump said that a phone call Putin resulted in no progress at all on efforts to end the war in Ukraine. "No, I didn't make any progress with him at all," Trump told reporters on Thursday when asked if he had moved closer toward a deal to end Russia's invasion, adding that he was "not happy" about the ongoing war.

The Kremlin earlier said Putin told Trump that Moscow will not "give up" on its aims in Ukraine. The pair spoke as US-led peace talks on ending the more than three-year-old conflict in Ukraine have stalled and after Washington paused some weapons shipments to Kyiv. The Kremlin said

the call lasted almost an hour.

Trump has been frustrated with both Moscow and Kyiv as US efforts to end fighting have yielded no breakthrough. "Our president said that Russia will achieve the aims it set, that is to say the elimination of the root causes that led to the current state of affairs," Kremlin aide Yuri Ushakov told reporters. "Russia will not give up on these aims."

Moscow has long described its maximalist aims in Ukraine as getting rid of the "root causes" of the conflict, demanding that Kyiv give up its NATO ambitions. Moscow's offensive in Ukraine has killed hundreds of thousands of people and Russia now controls large swathes of eastern and southern Ukraine. Even so, Putin told Trump that Moscow would continue to take part in negotiations. "He also spoke of the readiness of the Russian side to continue the negotiation process," Ushakov added.

"Vladimir Putin said that we are continuing to look

for a political, negotiated solution to the conflict," Ushakov said. Moscow has for months refused to agree to a US-proposed ceasefire in Ukraine. Kyiv and its Western allies have accused Putin of dragging out the process while pushing on with Russia's advance in Ukraine. The Kremlin said that Putin had also "stressed" to Trump that all conflicts in the Middle East should be solved "diplomatically," after the US struck nuclear sites in Russia's ally Iran.

Putin and Trump spoke as Kyiv said that Russian strikes on Thursday killed at least eight people in Ukraine. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky was visiting ally Denmark on Thursday. A senior Ukrainian official said that Trump and Zelensky planned to speak to each other on Friday. The US deciding to pause some weapons shipments has severely hampered Kyiv, which has been reliant on Western military support since Moscow launched its offensive in 2022.

Six die as tourist vehicle plunges into Neelum River

F.P. Report

MUZAFFARABAD: At least six people dead, including five women, after a tourist vehicle plunged into the Neelum River. According to Deputy Commissioner Neelum, Nadeem Janjua, the incident occurred in Neelum Valley's Chilhana area where the vehicle fell into the river, resulting in the tragic loss of lives.

The DC stated that a child remains missing following the incident, and authorities have launched a search operation to locate the missing individual. Rescue efforts are underway, but the operation is being hampered by the challenging terrain and the depth of the ravine where the vehicle landed. Deputy Commissioner Janjua noted that the difficult access to the site is posing obstacles in recovering the bodies and assisting with the ongoing search for the missing child.

IAEA inspectors depart Tehran

TEHRAN: A team of inspectors from the United Nations' nuclear watchdog have left Iran, following Tehran's decision to suspend cooperation with the organisation after the 12-day conflict with Israel and the United States.

In a statement posted on X on Friday, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said its employees would return to its headquarters in Vienna, Austria. IAEA Director-General Rafael Grossi stressed "the crucial importance" of holding talks with Iran to resume its monitoring and verification work as soon as possible, the post added.

Al Jazeera's Resul Serdar, reporting from Tehran, said it was not clear what proportion of the IAEA staff left the country. "Based on the language used, it is not clear if all or some of them left Iran, but we understand that some of them are still here," he said.

"What we know is that they did not fly out; this departure happened through land into Armenia yesterday or the day before," he added. "And then they went to Vienna," Serdar said, adding that the development has started an era of "nuclear ambiguity" in Iran.

The inspectors stayed in the Iranian capital throughout the recent fighting, which started on June 13 when Israel attacked Iranian military sites and killed a number of the country's most senior commanders, top scientists, and civilians. The US later became involved in the conflict, dropping bunker-buster bombs on nuclear facilities in Iran, in a mission the Trump administration claimed had significantly set back the country's nuclear programme.

In the aftermath of the US and Israeli aerial attacks, Iran, which has said it is still committed to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), made painfully clear its burgeoning distrust of the IAEA.

Since the start of the conflict, Iranian officials have sharply criticised the IAEA not only for failing to condemn the Israeli and US strikes, but also for passing a resolution on June 12 accusing Tehran of non-compliance with its nuclear obligations, the day before Israel attacked. — Al Jazeera

KP govt roll out good governance roadmap to improve service delivery

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has formally rolled out the Good Governance Roadmap, in order institutionalize reform and a culture of delivery-based governance in the province. This strategic two-year plan is aimed at improving public service delivery, driving institutional efficiency, and building an effective governance system.

Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur formally launched the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Good Governance Roadmap in an event held in the Chief Minister House here on Friday. The event was attended by provincial cabinet members, Chief Secretary, Additional Chief Secretaries, and Administrative Secretaries, other government high ups, representatives of development partners and media persons in large number.

The roadmap reflects the government's long-standing commitment to citizen-centric development, transparency, and data-driven decision-making. It provides a unified framework that integrates all provincial reforms and development initiatives, setting the direction for delivery-oriented governance across the province. Anchored around three priority pillars - Good Governance, Robust Security, and Smart Development - the roadmap outlines interventions 12 governance, 1 security & 3 Development domains.

Under the Good Governance pillar, the roadmap prioritizes 12 domains with defined key performance indicators (KPIs) to be achieved by 2027. The high-impact domains include health, education, social protection, economic uplift, infrastructure development, agriculture, energy, tourism, digitization etc. The Smarter Development initiative focuses on prioritizing high-impact projects, ensuring efficient budget allocation to maximize public benefit. It emphasizes monitoring mega projects for timely delivery



and attracts investment by showcasing key projects to potential investors, driving economic growth and job creation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The Strong Security framework aims to enhance safety through a coordinated approach involving all stakeholders, with a focus on civil leadership and ownership. It strengthens police capacity with proper training and resources and encourages community involvement in counter-terrorism efforts, ensuring a secure and resilient environment for the province. Under digitization over 35 departments are adopting digital platforms such as e-Office and digital procurement systems. Simultaneously, more than 100 public services will be digitized under the Dastak Portal, enabling citizens to access government services online.

In the health sector, the roadmap sets out an ambitious plan to upgrade 250 Basic Health Units (BHUs) and Rural Health Centres (RHCs) into 24/7 maternal care facilities. Essential medicines will be made fully available at hospitals, while 54 Category-D hospitals will be outsourced through Public-Private Partnerships to enhance management and service quality. Additionally, a central Health Information and Service Delivery Unit is being established to digitize health systems and monitor outcomes. Education reform features prominently in the roadmap. The government aims to reduce out-of-school children by 50% and upgrade the learning outcomes in public schools.

Furthermore, 1,500 schools will be outsourced to improve the quality of instruction. Higher education is also

being realigned with market needs via launch of industry-relevant degree programs, internships, and entrepreneurship support initiatives.

A strong social protection component addresses the needs of the most vulnerable segments of society. Through the Digital Welfare Registry, the province will identify and support persons with disabilities, widows, orphans, senior citizens, transgender individuals, and persons recovering from substance abuse. Monthly stipends, assistive devices, and institutional care are being prioritized. Shelter homes (Panahgahs), women's crisis centers (Dar-ul-Amans), and child protection units (ZamungKor) will be expanded across KP, especially in underserved districts.

The roadmap also gives substantial focus on to economic revitalization and infrastructure development. Work on the D.I. Khan - Peshawar Motorway, linking southern districts to the provincial capital, will be expedited. Two major flyovers in southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are to be built, benefiting 68,000 daily commuters. Additionally, projects like the New Peshawar Valley, General Bus Stand and the Northern Bypass are slated for completion. Under the New Peshawar Valley housing initiative, 14,000 residential plots will be developed, and 130,000 low-income households will be transitioned to solar energy as part of the clean energy agenda. To spur industrial growth, four Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in D.I. Khan, Mohmand, Bannu, and Karak are being operationalized. Thirty-two technical training institutes are also being upgraded to improve workforce skills and boost employability.

11 dead, dozens trapped as building collapses

F.P. Report

KARACHI: At least 11 people died on Friday after a five-storey residential building collapsed in the Baghdadi area of Lyari, leaving several others injured. According to rescue sources, 10 others were pulled out alive — one of them in critical condition.

Rescue teams, police, and Rangers reached the scene shortly after the incident and launched relief operations. Rescuers have been using heavy machinery to remove the debris. Local residents are also actively assisting in rescue 25-30 people trapped under the rubble.

Rescue officials reported that 10 injured individuals — including three women — have been shifted to the Trauma Centre at Civil Hospital. Hospital authorities

have confirmed that one of the injured women is in critical condition.

An Edhi Foundation spokesperson stated that two bodies and five injured people were recovered from the debris. Emergency has been declared at both the Jinnah Hospital and the Civil Hospital. Eyewitnesses said that several families were living in the building, which was in a dilapidated condition.

Karachi Mayor Murtaza Wahab visited the site of the collapsed building in Lyari's Baghdadi area and said that the rescue operation is underway. He stated that Rescue 1122, KPT, and district administration teams are actively participating in the operation.

Wahab mentioned that the rescue operation will take some more time to

complete. So far, seven people have been reported dead in the tragic incident, and teams are working to recover those trapped under the rubble. The mayor vowed that those responsible for this tragic incident will not be spared. He revealed that the SBCA had issued four notices to vacate the affected building, but the residents considered it their personal property and refused to leave.

Karachi Mayor Murtaza Wahab said on X, "Relief and rescue work is ongoing," trapped individuals be rescued as quickly as possible. Roof and building collapses are common across Pakistan, mainly because of poor safety standards and shoddy construction materials in the South Asian country of more than 240 million people.

NHA to provide facilities on M-1: PHC told

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has disposed of a petition regarding the provision of facilities to travelers on the M-1 Motorway, on Friday.

A two-member bench comprising Justice Waqar Ahmad and Justice Dr. Khurshid Iqbal heard the petition filed by Muhammad Hamdan, Advocate. The petitioner had alleged that travelers on the M-1 Motorway were not being provided with basic facilities such as water, ambulance services, and service areas. The authorities were collecting taxes from the public but not providing the necessary facilities. NHA Deputy Director Maintenance, M-1 Motorway, informed the court that the service areas on the M-1 Motorway were being activated and all facilities would be provided by August 2025.

PHC disposed of the petition, noting that the petitioner's grievances had been addressed and provision of the timeline provided by the motorway authorities and expected them to complete the work by August 2025.

Kundi calls on Bilawal

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, called on PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari here on Friday to discuss the political and security situation in the province.

During the meeting, the Governor briefed the PPP chairman on recent interactions with members of allied political parties held at the Governor House. The two leaders also discussed the current political landscape in the provincial assembly following the allocation of reserved seats.

A key focus of the meeting was the deteriorating law and order situation, particularly in the southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Governor Kundi updated Chairman Bilawal on the rising security concerns in these areas. The Governor also provided a detailed briefing on the recent tragedy in Swat, where flash floods claimed several lives. He criticized the provincial government's inadequate response to the crisis and informed Bilawal Bhutto that, on his instructions, he had visited the affected areas in Daska and Rustam, Mardan to meet with the victims' families.

India monsoon season death toll hits 69

SHIMLA (AFP): Flash floods and landslides after torrential rain over the last two weeks killed at least 69 people and injured 110 others in India's northern Himalayan regions, officials said Friday.

Scores of people die each year during the rainy season due to flash floods and landslides across India, a country of 1.4 billion people. Rivers swollen by lashing rain — including the mighty Beas, which starts from the region's glacial peaks — disrupted several routes in the state of Himachal Pradesh.

The "cumulative damage" includes 69 people dead, and 110 others injured in different incidents over the past two weeks, the state's revenue department

said in a statement. India's meteorological department Thursday issued a fresh alert for "heavy to very heavy rainfall" in Himachal Pradesh and neighbouring Uttarakhand, another picturesque Himalayan state popular with Indian tourists.

India's annual monsoon season from June to September offers respite from the intense summer heat and is crucial for replenishing water supplies, but also brings widespread death and destruction. Heavy monsoon rains claimed at least 30 lives and injured dozens in India's remote northeast region in June.

It led to the Brahmaputra, another major river that originates in the Himalayas, overflow-

ing into nearby towns and villages in India's state of Assam. Other instances of landslides and flash floods were also reported in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Manipur, with authorities pressing the Indian military to aid in relief and rescue operations.

South Asia is getting hotter and in recent years has seen shifting weather patterns, but scientists are unclear on how exactly a warming planet is affecting monsoons. Last month, India's financial capital Mumbai was swamped by monsoon rain that began two weeks earlier than usual, the earliest for nearly a quarter of a century, according to weather forecasters.

PM calls for regional unity

(Continued from Page 1)

On the economic front, Shehbaz Sharif emphasized the need to operationalize long-pending agreements under ECO Vision 2025, especially the ECO Trade Agreement (ECOTA) and transport corridors, connecting member states. He referenced ECO's origins as the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD), a partnership between Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey in the 1960s, as a historic blueprint for present-day integration.

"Promotion of trade and investment is key to achieving common goals of regional connectivity, energy security, and economic growth." The prime minister thanked ECO member states for designating Lahore as the ECO Tourism Capital for 2027, inviting all delegates to experience Pakistan's rich cultural heritage. "Lahore, the cultural heart of Pakistan, will enthral all who visit us. We extend a warm invitation to all member states."

Azerbaijan to invest \$2b in economic sector of Pakistan: Pakistan and Azerbaijan in a major development Friday signed

a partnership agreement of \$ two billion investment in Pakistan. The agreement was reflective of the continuing flow of investment in Pakistan under the leadership of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

In the presence of the prime minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar and Azerbaijan Economy Minister Mikayil Jabbarov signed the agreement for investment of a total of \$ two billion by Azerbaijan in the economic sector of Pakistan. The Pakistani delegation was also present on this occasion. The agreement was signed between the two countries after a cordial meeting between the Prime Minister and the Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in Khankandi.

While the final and detailed agreement will be signed during the Azerbaijani President's visit to Pakistan. The agreement has taken investment and trade relations between the two countries to a historic level. This agreement will prove to be a milestone for further promotion of brotherly relations between the two countries and for

strengthening of trade partnership. Prior to the recent visit of the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Pakistani diplomatic mission and delegations reached consensus on different aspects of this agreement. Both countries also agreed on further exchanges to promote cooperation in various sectors.

While talking to media in Shusha, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif told that Pakistan and Azerbaijan signed investment agreement of \$ two billion, adding in future the investment will be increased manifold. "We are thankful to President of Azerbaijan for investment in Pakistan," he remarked.

He said he had a productive and useful meeting with the President of Azerbaijan. The prime minister said the member countries at the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) summit agreed to enhance cooperation in trade, investment, water resources and different other fields. The member countries also agreed to increase cooperation on issue of melting of glaciers, he added.