

20 die in heavy rains
F.P. Report

QUETTA: At least 20 people, including 11 children and four women, have died in Balochistan due to heavy monsoon rains, according to a report issued by the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA). The report said two women were among the eight injured during the downpours.



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Saad calls on PM
F.P. Report

LAHORE: Former Federal Minister Khawaja Saad Rafique called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif here on Sunday. During the meeting, the country's political and overall situation was discussed. Party affairs and organizational matters also came under discussion between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Saad Rafique.

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairing a review meeting on Cashless economy.

Death toll tops 400 NDMA warns of severe monsoon spells, urban flooding

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Sunday forecast three more severe monsoon spells and warned that the intensity of rainfall would be 50 percent higher than before which would enhance risk of urban flooding including in Lahore and Rawalpindi.

The fear of harsh weather was expressed here by NDMA Chairman Lieutenant General Inam Haider during a press briefing on the damages caused by rain and flooding. He confirmed 313 deaths due to torrential rains in Buner, Bajaur, and Battagram, while flash floods and tourist accidents in Gilgit-Baltistan have enhanced the number above 400.

Search operations to find missing persons were going on, he added.

General Inam said that several communities in Gilgit and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have been cut off from the rest of the country after land sliding damaged roads. Relief supplies and food would be provided to the people in the affected districts, he continued.

He quoted Pakistan Met Department forecast for more rainfall from August 17 to 22 which could cause urban flooding in cities such as Lahore, Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Gujranwala.

General Inam noted that due to intense summer heat, the severity of monsoon has increased and it would continue until the

first ten days of September with 50 percent increased ferocity.

He said a survey would be conducted on the instructions of Prime Minister to assess damage, with priority to restoring communications infrastructure. From tomorrow, relief packages would be delivered to districts with the highest casualties, he maintained.

The NDMA chairman said that the losses in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are part of the broader impacts of climate change, and the nation has to collectively face these challenges. After the monsoon spell is over, infrastructure rehabilitation will be carried out in collaboration with the Ministries of Communications and Housing. The focus in the next two weeks will be on northern Punjab, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan.

NDMA Technical Expert Dr Tayyab Shah stated that the current monsoon spell would continue until August 22, but with more intensity. Another monsoon system would likely generate after August 22 and three additional systems have been moving toward Pakistan.

One new system, emanating from the Bay of Bengal, and another from the Nangarhar and Kandahar regions of Afghanistan have been moving towards Pakistan, he added.

NDMA General Manager Zahra Hassan said that a heavy rainfall is expected in the next 24 to 48 hours. Currently, 98 percent of Tarbela Dam is

filled, and there could be a dangerous rise in water levels during this period.

She stated that water levels have risen by up to 15 feet in Kattarian and Gawalmandi. A new spell of rainfall has already started in areas along the Sulaiman mountain range. Flood risks have increased in Neelum, Poonch, and Bagh districts of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. There are higher flood risks in Peshawar, Chitral, Dir, and Charsadda in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, she added.

Brigadier Kamran, NDMA Member Operations, stated that preparations for the monsoon began in February 2025, and preventive measures were taken in coordination with provincial governments. However, the recent destruction in Buner and Bajaur occurred due to a cloudburst.

He said that 337 people have died and 178 have been injured in the past two days.

Brigadier Kamran said that the Army and Frontier Corps (FC) have been providing resources to provincial governments for rescue operations. A second batch of relief goods from the federal government would be dispatched to Buner tomorrow.

Amid heightened risks of landslides and flash floods during the ongoing monsoon season, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has issued a public advisory urging citizens to avoid travel to hilly and disaster-affected regions.

Hamas rejects Israel's Gaza relocation plan

CAIRO (Reuters): Palestinian militant group Hamas said on Sunday that Israel's plan to relocate residents from Gaza City constitutes a "new wave of genocide and displacement" for hundreds of thousands of residents in the area.

The group said the planned deployment of tents and other shelter equipment by Israel into southern Gaza was a "blatant deception".

The Israeli military has said it is preparing to provide tents and other equipment starting from Sunday ahead of its plan to relocate residents from combat zones to the south of the enclave "to ensure their safety".

Hamas said in a statement that the deployment of tents under the guise of humanitarian purposes is a blatant deception intended to "cover up a brutal crime that the occupation forces prepare to execute".

Israel said earlier this month that it intended to launch a new offensive to seize control of northern Gaza City, the enclave's largest urban centre. The plan has raised international alarm over the fate of the demolished strip, which is home to about 2.2 million people. The war began when Hamas attacked southern Israel on October 7, 2023, killing 1,200 people and taking 251 hostages, according to Israeli authorities. About 20 of the remaining 50 hostages in Gaza are believed to be still alive.

Israel's subsequent military assault against Hamas has killed over 61,000 Palestinians, Gaza's health ministry says. It has also caused a hunger crisis, internally displaced most of Gaza's population and left much of the enclave in ruins.

Digitization of economy priority of govt: PM

Shehbaz vows to use all resources for tree plantation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Sunday here said the government was working on priority basis to digitize the economy and take all transactions to cashless and digital system.

He was chairing a review meeting on the cashless and digital economy.

He expressed satisfaction over the measures and progress made towards cashless economy.

He directed that all Chief Secretaries should fully cooperate with the federal government in taking the Raast system to the level of district governments. The meeting was briefed on progress on steps to promote cashless economy.

It was told that digital identifications will be created through Pakistan Digital Public Infrastructure, which will contain information about every person's national identity card, biometrics and mobile phone numbers. Digital payments will be made through these digital IDs.

The meeting was informed that provincial governments have made significant progress to link the system of payments, from public to government and government to public, with the Raast system.

Regarding the construction of digital infrastructure, the Capital Development Authority has given the right-of-way for fiber connectivity, while discussions are underway with Pakistan Railways and the National Highway Authority on the issue.

Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahmad Khan Cheema, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik, Adviser to the Prime Minister Dr. Tauqir Shah, Minister of State for Finance and Railways Bilal Azhar Kayani and relevant senior government officials attended the meeting.

Govt to use all resources for tree plantation campaign: PM

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif said the government of Pakistan was committed to the new tree plantation campaign by utilizing all available means and natural solutions in order to increase the proportion of forests and soil fertility under its Green Pakistan Programme.

In a message on the occasion of Monsoon Tree Plantation Campaign, he said, "Let us unite in this

national tree plantation campaign and make it a success in a systematic manner so that a green, healthy, clean and prosperous Pakistan can be our destiny and that of our future generations."

"On the launch of the Monsoon Tree Plantation Campaign in Pakistan, I urge all my dear countrymen to develop a sense of responsibility to fulfil this important national, environmental and climate duty," he remarked.

"Let the federal and provincial governments, social and religious leaders and citizens of all ages from different classes and walks of life renew their commitment to plant trees because the tree plantation campaign is not just a symbolic act, but it is a national duty to create a healthy and natural environment for future generations and prevent the disasters of climate change," he added.

The prime minister said the government was observing the monsoon tree plantation campaign under different themes this year to highlight the importance of tree plantation and the role of different segments of society.

"The campaign needs the involvement of women, youth and various institutions in tree plantation and climate change prevention activities.

It will also be an occasion to pay tribute to the sacrifices of those who

were martyred during different rescue operations," he noted.

He said, "Plantation, with its positive impact on human life, plays a key role in the conservation and growth of our beloved country's invaluable natural resources, flora and fauna."

"Increasing the proportion of plantation is essential to prevent the harmful effects of climate change. Pakistan is among the countries worst affected by climate change in the world," he observed.

He reminded that the recent monsoon season's exceptional rainfall and the destruction caused by flash floods and the loss of life and property had once again shown that climate change mitigation measures were crucial for Pakistan.

"The proportion of forests in Pakistan is five percent, which is insufficient for the environmental protection of any country. With the joint and united efforts of all citizens and classes, the proportion of forests can be significantly increased, and Pakistan can cope with environmental challenges and difficulties," he stressed.

He said in the current national plantation campaign, 41 million new saplings will be planted across the length and breadth of Pakistan during the three months, from August to October.

Gaza civil defense says Israeli attacks kill 18

GAZA CITY, Palestinian Territories (AFP): Gaza's civil defense agency said Israeli strikes and gunfire killed at least 18 Palestinians on Sunday, including seven people shot dead while waiting to collect food aid.

Civil defense spokesman Mahmud Bassal said that seven people were killed in an Israeli drone strike that hit a hospital courtyard in Gaza City, in the territory's north.

Witnesses said the victims were members of a Hamas unit, which a source from the Palestinian militant group described as responsible for distributing aid and "fighting thieves."

There was no comment from the Israeli military, which is preparing a broader offensive in Gaza City and has sent ground forces to the city's Zeitun neighborhood in recent

days.

After more than 22 months of war, UN-backed experts have warned of widespread famine unfolding in Gaza, where Israel has drastically curtailed the amount of humanitarian aid it allows in and convoys have been repeatedly looted. Witnesses on Sunday reported Israeli air strikes across the Gaza Strip overnight and into the morning.

Bassal said four people were killed in a strike that hit a tent sheltering displaced Palestinians in the southern area of Khan Yunis. The civil defense spokesman said Israel continues its intense bombardment of Gaza City's Zeitun, where troops have carried out a ground operation for the past week.

He said there were many casualties, but civil defense crews were facing "enormous difficulties reaching those trapped under the rubble" due to the ongoing violence and lack of equipment.

Media restrictions in Gaza and difficulties accessing swaths of the Palestinian territory mean AFP is unable to independently verify the tolls and details provided by the civil defense agency or the Israeli military.

Israel on Saturday hinted at an approaching call to push civilians from Gaza City ahead of the new offensive demanded by the security cabinet.

A defense ministry statement said that "as part of the preparations to move the population from combat zones to the southern Gaza Strip for their protection, the supply of tents and shelter equipment to Gaza will resume."

Hamas later slammed the move, saying the

announcement was part of a "brutal assault to occupy Gaza City."

On the ground on Sunday, Bassal said six people were killed by Israeli gunfire near an aid distribution point in the south.

Another person was killed near an aid site in central Gaza, Bassal added, with a nearby hospital saying the body had been taken there.

The war was triggered by Hamas's October 2023 attack on Israel, which resulted in the deaths of 1,219 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official figures.

Israel's offensive has killed more than 61,897 Palestinians, most of them civilians, according to figures from the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza which the United Nations considers reliable.

Gandapur praises administration for timely response in 'one of the biggest' rescue operation

Shafi Ullah

SWAT: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur on Sunday visited flood-hit Swat on the second day of his tour to affected districts.

At the Commissioner Malakand Division's office, he chaired a meeting on the situation arising from the recent floods. Provincial cabinet members Arshad Ayub Khan, Fazal Hakim Khan, Dr. Amjad Ali, elected representatives from Swat, Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah, and senior officials were in attendance.

Officials briefed the Chief Minister that Mingora city was the worst affected by the floods. Rescue and relief operations were in full swing, while surveys of

damages to public infrastructure and private properties were underway and would be followed by restoration works.

Gandapur directed authorities to mobilize additional machinery from other districts to clear flood debris and expedite damage assessments so that compensation payments could begin without delay.

He announced that the provincial government had already released Rs3 billion through the Communication and Works Department and the Relief and Rehabilitation Department for compensation and restoration activities.

He stressed the uninterrupted availability of food, medicines, and other essentials for victims. To prevent future

disasters, the Chief Minister ordered the formation of a committee under the Deputy Commissioner Swat, in consultation with elected representatives, to demarcate the riverbed of the Swat River according to revenue records. He also asked lawmakers to submit feasible proposals regarding the demand to bifurcate Swat into two districts.

Earlier, speaking to the media, Gandapur described the flooding as a natural calamity but praised the timely response of the administration, institutions, and elected representatives.

"This was one of the largest rescue operations in the country's history, and I am proud of the swift response," he said. He acknowledged the loss of hundreds of lives and

widespread destruction of homes and infrastructure, assuring that the government would fully compensate property losses. He added that past governments had failed to honor promises to flood victims, eroding public trust, but his government would fulfill every commitment.

"As Chief Minister, I pledge that no victim will be left alone — all losses will be compensated in full, and every resource will be mobilized for rehabilitation," he declared.

Gandapur also announced plans to relocate vulnerable populations from flood-prone mountainous areas to safer locations, in consultation with local representatives. If residents agreed, the government would provide them with

new homes and develop safe settlements to protect lives in future disasters.

Thanking the Prime

Minister and the three other provincial Chief Ministers for expressing solidarity, Gandapur said,

"We welcome federal support if extended, but even if none comes, Alhamdulillah, KP has

sufficient resources to restore infrastructure and fully compensate victims.

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LAHORE: Prime Minister, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif exchanges views with former Federal Minister, Khawaja Saad Rafique during meeting held in Lahore. —PPI Photo

Naqvi lauds role of armed forces, intelligence agencies

LAHORE (APP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Raza Naqvi has lauded the remarkable role of Pakistan's armed forces, intelligence agencies, and national leadership in the country's victory during the May war against India. Speaking at a seminar titled "Global Impacts of Pakistan's Military and Diplomatic Victories over India", organised by the Waris Mir Foundation at Aiwan-e-Iqbal on Sunday, the minister said that every move, decision, and plan of the enemy was intercepted in advance during the conflict.

Naqvi said it was a major challenge for the government to provide evidence to the world, including wreckage of Indian jet fighters shot down by Pakistani forces. He noted with pride that within minutes of the operation, not only images but also videos of the destroyed aircraft were available, strengthening Pakistan's stance globally.

Paying tribute to the "hidden soldiers", who worked in secrecy, the interior minister said the nation also witnessed divine help during the war. He cited the example of seven missiles fired by Indian forces towards a Pakistani military base, none of

which hit the target. Similarly, despite repeated attempts, Indian strikes failed to damage Pakistan's bases, except for one where Pakistani soldiers embraced martyrdom.

"Faith, belief, and determination are weapons that invite the help of Allah," he remarked, adding that Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal General Asim Munir responded to Indian aggression with courage and conviction. He informed the audience that Pakistan's forces successfully struck multiple targets inside India and achieved all their objectives.

Recalling a meeting with a Saudi delegation during the war, Naqvi said the Field Marshal had drawn a comparison, describing India as a "shining car" and Pakistan as a "loaded dumper", making it clear what happens when the two collide.

He highlighted the unity and coordination of Pakistan's civil and military leadership, in contrast to India's conflicting narratives during the conflict. He accused Indian leaders Ajit Doval and Amit Shah of being the real architects behind the "drama" staged by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, warning that they would even-

tually bring India to ruin.

The minister appreciated the unity demonstrated by all national political parties during the war and pointed out that PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's voice was heard globally, while the Indian delegation faced difficulties abroad. He further accused India of openly supporting terrorism in Pakistan, particularly in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, stressing that Pakistan possesses concrete evidence of Indian involvement.

Naqvi warned that Pakistan would continue to pursue India until the Kashmiris are granted their right to self-determination as pledged in UN resolutions once signed by India's former prime minister.

He said despite immense international pressure after Indian jets were downed, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Asim Munir stood firm and gave a strong response to India.

Concluding his address, the interior minister said that the current political and administrative setup in Pakistan should continue for the country's stability and progress.

Tamgha-e-Imtiaz for Dr Mansoor Memon



F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Government of Pakistan has announced the conferment of the Tamgha-e-Imtiaz upon renowned physician, humanitarian, and cultural ambassador Dr. Mansoor Memon in recognition of his long-standing services to the nation.

The announcement was made on Independence Day, August 14, 2025. The award will be formally presented to him on Pakistan Day, March 23, 2026.

Dr. Memon is widely regarded as Pakistan's "Ambassador-at-Large" across the globe, owing to his outstanding contributions in promoting the country's positive image internationally.

His journey reflects a steadfast commitment to visionary leadership and public service. A graduate of the Aga Khan University of Health Sciences (March 1992), he has earned international acclaim as a physician, researcher, philanthropist, and leader.

Dr. Mansoor Memon's life stands as a shining example of excellence, compassion, and patriotism. The Tamgha-e-Imtiaz is a fitting tribute to his services and serves as an inspiration for generations to come.

12 dead, 1,305 injured

LAHORE (APP): The Emergency Services Department (ESD) Punjab responded to 1,275 road traffic crashes (RTCs) across all 37 districts of the province during the last 24 hours, resulting in 12 fatalities and 1,305 injuries.

According to Rescue Punjab spokesperson, a total of 639 seriously injured persons were shifted to hospitals, while 857 victims with minor injuries were provided first aid by Rescue Medical Teams at the crash sites, reducing the burden on hospitals.

Sindh Governor, CM grieved

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori and Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah have expressed their grief and sorrow over the mysterious death of Dawn News Karachi based senior journalist Khawar Hussain, who was found dead in his car on Hyderabad road in Sanghar.

In their separate condolence messages, the Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori expressed heartfelt condolences and sympathies to the bereaved family of late Khawar Hussain.

He said, 'Khawar Hussain's murder is a great tragedy for journalism and society.'

He directed the relevant institutions for a complete and transparent investigation into the murder.

Tessori said, 'The accused will be brought to justice.'

Meanwhile, the Sindh chief minister while taking notice of the unnatural death of senior journalist Khawar Hussain in Sanghar, had sought a report from the IGP Police.

The chief minister had directed the IG Police to

hand over the investigation to the best police officer.

The real cause of death should be found out through investigation, he said adding that the administration should provide full support and cooperation to the bereaved family.

Provincial ministers, journalist community, friends and family members have also shocked over the incident and have prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved family to bear this irreparable loss.

DC reviews progress on LDP, orders timely

LAHORE (APP): Deputy Commissioner Syed Musa Raza on Sunday chaired an important meeting to review progress on the Lahore Development Programme. The meeting was attended by ADC Finance, Chief Officer Metropolitan Corporation Lahore (MCL), and all Assistant Commissioners.

The Deputy Commissioner directed officials to ensure timely completion of ongoing development projects in line with the vision of Chief Minister Punjab. He stressed that transparency,

quality, and adherence to timelines must be strictly maintained in every scheme. "No compromise will be tolerated on the quality of work. NESPAK must ensure strict monitoring and compliance with standards," he stated.

DC Syed Musa Raza instructed Assistant Commissioners to accelerate the pace of development during the coming week to achieve visible progress. He emphasized that projects under the Lahore Development Programme must be completed transparently, with durability

and sustainability kept in focus to provide long-term benefits to citizens.

The DC also directed the immediate removal of illegal platforms and sheds to improve the city's streetscape. He noted that significant progress has already been made in MCL's schemes, and further efforts are required to meet the set deadlines. "Citizens deserve development works that are sustainable, durable, and beneficial. All schemes must be completed strictly within the given timelines," he concluded.



LAHORE: A woman selecting old books from a roadside stall at Mall Road. —APP Photo

Pakistan defended sovereignty with courage, wisdom, unity: Gilani

LAHORE (APP): Senate Chairman Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani has said that Pakistan successfully defended its sovereignty with courage, wisdom, and national unity, while earning international recognition for its military and diplomatic achievements.

He was addressing a seminar titled "Global Impacts of Pakistan's Military and Diplomatic Victories over India" organized by the Waris Mir Foundation at Aiwan-e-Iqbal here on Sunday.

He said India's false propaganda regarding the Pahalgam incident had been fully exposed before the world, adding that Pakistan not only defended itself but also exercised restraint to prevent further escalation. He praised the Pakistan Armed Forces and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal General Syed Asim Munir for demonstrating outstanding professional capability and preparedness.

The Chairman Senate noted that

in the interest of peace, Pakistan had offered dialogue and impartial investigations to India. He said parliament, through unanimous resolutions, extended full support to the Armed Forces and reinforced the national stance. He also highlighted the success of global parliamentary outreach led by Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

Gilani appreciated the role of media in countering Indian propaganda and presenting facts to the international community. He said that brotherly Islamic countries, along with China, the UK, the European Union, and the United States, extended their support to Pakistan. Referring to international engagement, he said that positive statements by US President Donald Trump signaled a new era in Pakistan-US relations.

He further stated that Pakistan's election as a member of the UN

Security Council was proof of global confidence in the country. Stressing the importance of peace and stability as the foundation of prosperity, Gilani said that economic indicators were pointing towards improvement.

Announcing upcoming parliamentary initiatives, the Chairman Senate said Pakistan would host the Inter-Parliamentary Speakers Conference in Islamabad in November 2025, with the participation of more than 45 parliamentary speakers and international leaders.

"Democracy, justice, and the rule of law are the guarantees of sustainable peace," he said. He paid tribute to renowned journalist late Professor Waris Mir for his services for the nation.

Earlier, Federal Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi and Speaker Punjab Assembly Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan also spoke to the seminar.

Stay alert amid forecast of torrential rains, orders Punjab CM

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has directed all stakeholders, including the district administrations, PDMA, Police, and Rescue 1122, to remain on high alert and take timely precautionary measures in view of possible torrential rains across Punjab.

The CM instructed deputy commissioners and relevant officers to remain present in the field and ensure full implementation of PDMA's instructions. Special measures were ordered to deal with the risk of cloudbursts in upper Punjab, and advance arrangements were directed to prevent possible flood torrents in Koh-e-Sulaiman river valleys. Additional directives were issued for precautionary measures in Murree, Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Chakwal, and Koh-e-Sulaiman regions.

Railways minister orders inquiry

LAHORE (APP): Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi on Sunday ordered an inquiry into the Awam Express derailment and sought a report from the authorities concerned within seven days.

According to initial reports by the PR sources, two coaches derailed while three others, including the luggage van of Karachi bound Awam Express train overturned near Lodhran Railway station.

As a result, one passenger was killed while

21 others sustained injuries. Two of the critically injured were under treatment at Bahawalpur Hospital, while those with minor injuries were being treated at DHQ Hospital Lodhran.

Expressing grief over the loss of life, the Minister prayed for speedy recovery of the injured. He directed that all possible medical facilities be provided to the victims.

D i v i s i o n a l Superintendent (DS) Multan and medical teams

Anti-India protest demonstration held

LAHORE (INP): An anti-India protest demonstration was held in front of the Press Club in Lahore under the auspices of Kashmir Centre, Lahore.

A large number of leaders and activists of political and social parties, members of civil society and representatives of the Kashmiri community participated in the protest demonstration.

The participants were carrying black flags and placards on which slogans like "India should stop atrocities in occupied Kashmir" and "Give the Kashmiri people the right to self-determination".

"The international community should take notice of Indian atrocities in the occupied territory" and "The blood of the martyrs will not go waste".

Senior PPP leader Ghulam Abbas Mir, Central Joint Secretary of PML-N Azad Kashmir Raja Sherzaman Advocate, in

charge of Kashmir Centre, Lahore, Inam-ul-Hassan, Secretary of Kashmir Action Committee Farooq Azad, Hurriyat leader Nazir Mir, General Secretary of PML-N Azad Kashmir, Lahore Division, Bilal Butt, Vice President Chaudhry Muhammad Siddique, PML-N leader Amjad Rathore, Constituency President Atif Mir, renowned religious leader Allama Fida-ur-Rehman Haideri, Professor Mazhar Alam, Nazir Bhinder, renowned actors Aslam Mughal, Nisar Baig, Tariq Jafri and others addressed the demonstration.

They said India has been committing atrocities on unarmed Kashmiris for the past eight decades but it has failed to weaken their spirit of freedom. They said Kashmiris celebrate India's Independence Day as a black day every year, giving it a clear message that it is merely an aggressor in Kashmir.

They said the BJP-led Indian government has deprived Kashmiris of all their fundamental rights, including the right to freedom of expression, and is trying to mislead the international community through its false narrative of normalizing the situation in the territory.

The speakers said the international community is not ready to accept the Indian narrative regarding occupied Kashmir and it continues to consider Jammu and Kashmir as a disputed territory.

They said that the world powers should play their role for an immediate and lasting solution to the Kashmir dispute. During the protest, slogans like "Kashmir will become Pakistan", "India's Independence Day is a Black Day for Kashmiris", "Kashmiris have the right to freedom" and "Go India Go Back" were raised.

Punjab intensifies relief efforts

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Health Minister and Chairman Cabinet Committee on Disaster Management Khawaja Salman Rafique has said that relief activities have been intensified in flood-affected areas, and populations are being safely shifted to alternative safe locations.

He was presiding over a meeting at the PDMA head office here on Sunday, held on the direction of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif. The minister said the chief minister herself is reviewing the flood situation on a daily basis. The meeting also reviewed preparations for the seventh spell of monsoon, while the flow of water in rivers across the province is being continuously monitored. Relief camps have been established in affected areas, he added.

Khawaja Salman informed the meeting that an alert has been issued for the Pothohar region regarding heavy rains and possible cloudbursts. Commissioners, deputy commissioners, and all relevant departments across Punjab have been put on alert. Additional rescue and relief equipment has also been directed to be provided to the Rawalpindi region. He emphasized that all resources are being utilized to protect citizens and

that rescue, civil defense, and other departments are fully mobilized in the field.

Acting Chief Secretary Punjab Ahmed Raza Sarwar said evacuation of populations in river basin areas is being ensured, while Relief Commissioner Punjab Nabil Javed stated that Section 144 has been imposed along the rivers. DG PDMA Irfan Ali Kathia added that awareness campaigns are being run in populations near rivers and canals in view of possible danger. Citizens have been advised to avoid unnecessary travel to Murree and Galiyat, and people living in dilapidated houses are being shifted to safer places.

The Provincial Minister also visited the PDMA control room and reviewed the relief supplies being dispatched to the Pothohar region. The meeting also discussed measures to deal with possible torrential rains, flash floods, and riverine floods. Secretary Irrigation, Secretary Emergency Services, Commissioners of Rawalpindi, DG Khan and Sargodha divisions, and DG PDMA Irfan Ali Kathia briefed the meeting on the latest situation.

Secretary Emergency Services Punjab Dr. Rizwan Naseer, Secretary Irrigation, along with all commissioners and deputy commissioners, also participated in the meeting via video link.

Police arrests 4,836 for kite flying

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Police has intensified its crackdown on kite flying and the use of metallic string across the province, ensuring zero tolerance against violations of the Anti-Kite Flying Act.

According to a Punjab Police spokesperson, during the current year, police registered 4,758 cases and arrested 4,836 accused across Punjab, recovering more than 499,000 kites and 19,301 string spools. Challans were submitted in 4,368 cases.

In Lahore alone, 1,365 accused were arrested, 1,334 cases were registered, while 28,928 kites and 1,510 string spools were seized.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar directed RPOs, CPOs, and DPOs to accelerate operations against kite flyers, sellers, and manufacturers. He stressed that no permission would be given for this "deadly activity" and that a zero-tolerance policy is being adopted against those involved in this "bloody business."



PESHAWAR: Eye-catching view of dark clouds hovering over the sky after heavy downpour on Sunday morning. — PPI photo

Ihtisham visits Buner with medicines, ambulances, and medical teams

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Health Ihtisham Ali reached Buner along with emergency medicines, ambulances, and medical teams. During the visit, he inspected DHQ Daggar, THQ Pir Baba, the medical camp set up by Insaf Doctors Forum, and Pir Baba Bazaar. He was accompanied by Secretary Health Shahidullah Khan, Regional Director Health Malakand Dr. Daud, IDF President Dr. Nabi Jan Afridi, and other officials.

The Health Advisor visited patients in hospitals, met with attendants, and handed over emergency medicines, two mobile health clinics, and medical staff to the District Health Officer (DHO) Buner. With the support of the Insaf Doctors Forum, a medical camp has been established at THQ Pir Baba, while doctors are also engaged in providing treatment through field camps.

Talking to media representatives, Health Advisor Ihtisham Ali said: “I personally brought medicines, ambulances, and medical staff to Buner. From morning till evening, I visited every health facility and stayed on the ground. We are committed to provide maximum support to the affected population. All health facilities are operational 24/7. The resilient people of Buner have set an excellent example of government-public cooperation during this disaster.”

He added that the people are working shoulder to shoulder with the government machinery in the rescue operation, proving that resilient nations always support their governments in times of crisis.

The Health Advisor informed that emergency health operations are ongoing across Malakand Division, including Swat, Shangla, Dir, and Bajaur.

Medicines and medical staff have been deployed everywhere, while the government is considering establishing a Crisis Management Cell at the divisional level to ensure timely response to any natural calamity.

Furthermore, consignments of emergency medicines have already been dispatched from the provincial warehouse to the affected districts. Coordination with donor agencies has been established to enhance support.

Ihtisham Ali also announced that the Provincial Disaster Surveillance Unit and the Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response System (IDSR) have been activated to monitor potential outbreaks and ensure effective response.

Emergency Control room activated at Agriculture department

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: On the special directives of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Agriculture, Major (Retd.) Sajjad Barkwal, and Secretary Agriculture, Dr. Ambar Ali Khan, an Emergency Control Room has been activated at the Bureau of Agriculture Information, Peshawar, effective from August 15, to facilitate and guide farmers.

Recent rains and floods have caused severe damage to crops and farmlands across various districts of the province. In view of this situation, farmers can report any agricultural losses or problems to the Emergency Control Room. For this purpose, a dedicated helpline 0348-1117070 has been issued, where staff is available round-the-clock (24/7) to provide guidance and assistance.

Officials of the Agriculture Extension Department stated that in this difficult time, the department stands firmly with the farming community and will extend all possible support to resolve their issues. The control room will remain fully operational to ensure immediate redressal of farmers’ problems and to facilitate them effectively.

Sinking orchards of Swat Peaches, apples, and hopes washed away

PESHAWAR (APP): Just weeks ago, poor farmer Akbar Yousafzai (55) stood in his peach orchard with hope in his heart to complete his under construction house for family that was washed away by the 2022 floods.

Today, he walked through ankle-deep mud in gardens, staring helplessly at the waterlogged peach and apple trees that once promised a bountiful harvest these days.

“This monsoon season broke us,” he said quietly as his eyes tracing the battered fruit barely clinging to sodden branches. “The peaches and apples are small, tasteless and many trees didn’t even flower properly due to climate extremes this season.”

Poor Akbar is not alone in this losses but many farmers of Swat. Across the scenic Swat Valley from Bahrain to Malam Jabba and Barikot to Kalam, the farmers are reeling from the aftermath of yet another devastating flash flood, triggered by a violent cloudburst on August 15.

What should have been the peak of harvest season turned into a disaster, threatening livelihoods and shaking the foundation of Swat’s peach and apples industry.

Swat is home to nearly 80% of Pakistan’s peach production, with about 20,000 acres under cultivation. Its peaches, known for their juicy sweetness, fill fruit stalls from Lahore to Karachi every summer.

According to the Agriculture Department, yields have plummeted, with the usual output of 400,000 kilograms drastically reduced. Market prices have skyrocketed from Rs400 to Rs500 per kilogram, putting strain on both consumers and retailers.

“The monsoon rains came fast this season. Our orchards and apples weren’t prepared and neither were we,” said Abdullah Shah, a grower from Madain Swat. “This month’s floods caused by cloudbursts didn’t just drown local residents but it drowned our hopes too.”

Experts said climate change alone doesn’t bear the blame. Unchecked deforestation, illegal construction along riverbeds, and poor water management have all intensified the climate damage.

“These devastating floods are not just natural disasters but they’re seemed manmade,” said Gulzar Rehman, former Forest Conservator. “Orchards mismanagement, pesticide overuse, and lack of chilling hours due to climate change have disrupted entire fruit cycle in Swat.”

He also warned that extreme climate conditions causes adverse effects in peaches and apples, impairs photosynthesis, and results in lower-quality yields.

For Swat’s farmers, peaches and apples aren’t just a product but they’re a way of life, deeply rooted in culture, community, and economy.

“Our entire year economy largely depends on these cash crops,” said Akbar, wiping mud off his boots. “Without it, we can’t pay our workers, feed our families, or plan for education of children.”

Dr. Malik Riaz Khan, principal medical officer in Govt Hospital Pabbi Nowshera told APP that peaches and apples also carry public health value, particularly in diabetic diets.

Cloudbursts: A growing threat in the age of climate change

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

CLOUDBURSTS have long remained one of nature’s most mysterious and destructive phenomena. They are sudden and violent downpours, often releasing several centimeters of rain within an hour over a small geographical area. The very term suggests the bursting of clouds, as if the sky itself has cracked open to let loose an overwhelming torrent. But in reality, a cloudburst is caused when warm air currents force dense clouds upward, where they become super-saturated. Unable to hold the accumulated moisture any longer, the clouds release it all at once in the form of an extraordinary deluge. Unlike ordinary rain, a cloudburst does not last long, yet in that brief span, it can cause devastation greater than a week of monsoon showers.

The question of when and where the first cloudburst was ever recorded is difficult to answer precisely, for ancient communities had no scientific means to document weather in detail. Yet historical accounts from India, Tibet, and parts of the Middle East speak of sudden rainstorms that washed away villages centuries ago. In modern records, cloudbursts have been observed more consistently in mountainous regions such as the Himalayas, where geography and weather conditions combine to create the perfect stage for their occurrence. Their violence is such that when they strike valleys or steep slopes, flash floods and landslides follow, sweeping away lives, livestock, homes, and farmlands in moments.

Pakistan, lying in the shadow of the Himalayas and Karakoram, has not been spared from this wrath of nature. Several cloudbursts have occurred in its northern regions, particularly in Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Kashmir, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In 2010, a cloudburst in Hunza caused massive flooding that destroyed villages and left thousands displaced. Similar events have struck Chitral, Skardu, and the Neelum Valley, each time leaving behind stories of sorrow and resilience. These incidents, though sporadic, are reminders of how vulnerable mountainous communities are to sudden shifts in weather. Roads, bridges, and communication lines are often severed, complicating rescue efforts, while farmlands and orchards are swept away in the torrents, undermining local economies.

The destruction cloudbursts have caused in Pakistan, though not always documented with full accuracy, is immense. Entire communities have been washed away in minutes, and the loss of human life has been grievous. These disasters not only disrupt the lives of those directly affected but also place a heavy burden on the national exchequer in terms of rehabilitation, reconstruction, and emergency relief. The pattern suggests that cloudbursts, once rare, are becoming more frequent, pointing towards changes in the environment that demand serious reflection.

The causes of cloudbursts are both natural and aggravated by human action. Naturally, they occur in areas where monsoon winds meet high-altitude mountains. Warm moist air, rising rapidly, collides with cold air, leading to an explosive release of precipitation. However, scientists now argue that environmental pollution and climate change have intensified these phenomena. Rising global temperatures increase the capacity of the atmosphere to hold moisture, and when released, the rainfall is far heavier than in the past. Deforestation, unplanned urbanization, and the destruction of natural drainage systems further compound the problem, turning heavy rain into catastrophic floods. In this sense, humanity has become a partner in its own peril.

Can cloudbursts be predicted in advance? This remains one of the most pressing questions. Modern meteorology has advanced to the point where short-term forecasts can detect atmospheric instability, but predicting the exact time and place of a cloudburst is still beyond reach. The phenomenon occurs too suddenly, over too small an area, for traditional weather models to capture accurately. Yet research continues, and satellite monitoring, combined with artificial intelligence, offers some hope that the warning time may be improved in the future. For Pakistan, investing in such technology is essential, for even a few hours’ notice could mean the difference between life and death for hundreds.

It is clear, however, that prevention is as important as prediction. Cloudbursts cannot be stopped, but their impact can be reduced. The world, and Pakistan in particular, must take concrete steps. At the global level, reducing carbon emissions to slow climate change is vital, for it is the root cause of extreme weather. Nations must adhere to environmental agreements, transition towards renewable energy, and adopt sustainable patterns of living. At the national level, Pakistan must strengthen its disaster management institutions, improve forecasting systems, and ensure that vulnerable communities are trained and prepared for emergencies. Early warning systems, evacuation plans, and community awareness campaigns can save countless lives.

Equally important is the restoration of nature’s balance. Reforestation in mountain areas, the protection of watersheds, and the development of proper drainage systems are indispensable. Traditional wisdom, where villagers-built homes on higher ground and left floodplains for cultivation, must be revived and respected. Unchecked construction along riverbanks and in valleys prone to flooding only increases the toll of disaster. Good governance, strict regulation, and public cooperation are necessary to minimize risks.

Cloudbursts remind us of the fragile relationship between humankind and nature. While they are natural events, their increasing frequency and intensity are signals of a planet under stress. Pakistan, situated in a region prone to climatic extremes, cannot afford complacency. The lessons of past tragedies must not be ignored. To safeguard lives and livelihoods, the nation must invest in science, respect the environment, and cultivate resilience among its people. Only then can the damage of cloudbursts be lessened, if not entirely avoided.

Distribution of food and relief supplies overseen

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Following the directives of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs, Syed Fakhar Jehan, relief activities have been intensified in flood-affected districts of the province.

Under the supervision of Director Youth Affairs Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nauman Mujahid and District Youth Officers, youth volunteers are working round the clock to deliver essential food items, clean drinking water and mosquito nets to families hit hardest by the disaster in Swat, Buner, Battagram, Mansehra, and Shangla. Volunteer camps have also been set up to ensure uninterrupted supply of basic necessities.

In Shangla’s Puran tehsil, ration packs were distributed through the Jawan Markaz, including rice, flour, pulses, sugar, tea, milk, spices, cooking oil, salt, matchboxes, bottled water, mosquito nets, pain relief medicines and other daily-use items. In addition, arrangements are being made for the supply of 40 to 50 tents to accommodate displaced families.

Likewise, in Buner’s Peer Baba area, the District Youth Officer and his team, along with local youth volunteers, carried out the distribution of food and relief items among affected households.

Minister Syed Fakhar Jehan commended the dedication of youth volunteers, stressing that in remote and mountainous areas, ensuring a steady supply of food and essential commodities for at least one week is vital. He directed concerned officials and District Youth Officers to further strengthen the relief operations so that timely support reaches every affected family.

‘We lost everything’: Firewood sellers in Buner plead for help

PESHAWAR (APP): Under the open sky, beside a mound of broken timber and mud-soaked memories, 48-year-old Saad Ullah digs through debris with a hoe in same hands once bundled firewood for customers are now desperately clawing through the wreckage of his life.

Just two days ago, a sudden cloudburst over the scenic hills of Bishonai, a small village near Pir Baba in Buner district, unleashed a torrent of water and stones, sweeping away everything in its path.

More than 200 people perished, thousands have been rendered homeless, and the community’s modest economy has been shattered.

Among the hardest flood hit are owners of firewood “taals” which are traditional open storage yards where dry timber is kept for sale during winter months.

Looking for help? Saad Ullah said, “this taal was my only source of livelihood for family,” he said, wiping tears with the back of a mud-caked hand. “I had stored Rs500,000 worth of firewood here — all gone.”

That timber, mostly local hardwood from nearby forests, was painstakingly gathered over months for customers ranging from bakeries and tandoors to marriage halls.

Saad’s wood was known for its quality, selling at Rs700–800 per 50-kilo mound. With natural gas scarce in winters and LPG prices soaring, firewood is a lifeline for many in Buner.

Now, there is nothing left not even the bag of savings Saad had set aside to perform Umrah with his wife next month.

“I kept it hidden in cupboard in my stone made house. When I returned after the flood, there was no house luggage left,” he said with breaking voice.

Dozens of other taal owners in Bishonai and neighboring villages shared a similar fate as their stock washed away in minutes, livelihoods drowned in muddy torrents, thousands families left shelterless. The destruction was very swift, giving villagers no time to react.

“We heard a roaring sound from the mountains, and then it was over us,” recounted Zafar Khan, another wood seller. “All we could do was run for our lives.”

Now, with monsoon rains continuing and winter just months away, the community is staring down a bleak future such as jobless, homeless, and overlooked.

Environmental experts warned this is not just a freak event but it is the price of unchecked environmental neglect and rampant deforestation mainly due to unemployment and poverty.

“Climate change combined with deforestation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has made such flood disasters more frequent and more intense,” said Prof. Dr. Shafiqur Rehman, former Chairman of Environmental Sciences at the University of Peshawar.

He linked recent cloudbursts and flash floods in Malakand and Hazara divisions to the rapid loss of forest cover, especially in private and communal lands besides lack of small dams.

Pakistan’s total forest area, as per the National Forest Policy 2015, stands at a meager five percent, with nearly 27,000 hectares lost annually. In KP alone, forests have been under pressure due to logging, encroachments, and decades of conflict particularly during the Swat’s unrest during 2008-2009.

Niaz Ali, former Chief Conservator of Forests in KP, pointed to overpopulation, poverty, and timber smuggling as major drivers of deforestation and warned if not checked more such floods will occur in future.

“In 1947, our population was 37 million. Today it’s over 223 million and rising. If we don’t adapt alternative energy sources, we will lose what little green cover we have left,” he warned.

He also lamented the long-standing issue of Afghan refugee influx and lack of global support for forest restoration in Afghans inhabited areas in KP.

Meanwhile, enforcement efforts existed as the KP Forest Force has powers akin to police and can seize timber, arrest offenders, and even use weapons in self-defense.

However, former Environment Minister Wajid Ali Khan said the system is still plagued by political distractions and weak implementation of laws.

“Instead of focusing on timber mafia and regulating the firewood trade, the previous governments were more invested in political agitation,” he said.

Despite the scale of the flood disaster in Buner, residents said that no substantial relief has arrived yet.

“There’s been no compensation, no tents, not even drinking water. We’re burying our dead with borrowed shovels and business shattered,” said another flood affected Jamil Khan, a resident of Pir Baba Buner.

He said two of his wood stalls and marble stores shops were destroyed in the yesterday flood as no relief received from any quarter yet.

As the KP government scrambles to assess damages, many fear their plight will be forgotten in the news cycle and another community swallowed by nature’s fury and bureaucratic inertia.

Experts are calling for urgent measures such as construction of new dams, whooping plantation, operationalizing the UN’s COP29 climate fund, flood warnings systems and establishing special forest courts for fast-track prosecution of timber criminals.

But for poor Saad Ullah and others like him, the help can’t come fast enough. “We don’t want loans or tall promises,” he said, eyes scanning the flattened hillside.

“We just want to rebuild our lives with dignity before the winter comes.”



In brief

Mayor Sukkur expresses sorrow

SUKKUR (APP): Barrister Arsalan Islam Shaikh, Mayor of Sukkur and Spokesperson of the Sindh Government, on Sunday, has expressed deep sorrow and regret over the passing away of private TV reporter Khawar Hussain. In his statement, he said that Khawar Hussain was not only a competent and professional journalist but also a close friend and personal associate. His sudden demise is a personal loss for me, and this void will not be filled for a long time. Barrister Arsalan Islam Shaikh said that Khawar Hussain always performed his duties with honesty and responsibility, and he established his identity as a skilled member of the journalistic community. His absence will be difficult to fill. The Sindh Government Spokesperson further stated that Chief Minister Sindh, Syed Murad Ali Shah, has asked the IG Sindh for a detailed report on the incident, and under his orders, senior police officers are conducting an investigation. While it would be premature to say anything at this stage, the facts will be brought to light very soon. He expressed his heartfelt condolences to Khawar Hussain's family, friends, and colleagues, saying that he shares their grief in this difficult time. May Almighty Allah grant Khawar Hussain a high place in Jannah, forgive him, and give patience to his bereaved family.

Police foil grenade attack

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Police in the Maidan circle on Saturday night foiled a grenade attack on a security checkpoint in Gal Zaimdarah area, officials said. According to police, unidentified miscreants hurled a hand grenade at the Gal checkpoint of Zaimdarah police station. However, alert personnel of the Elite Force acted swiftly, forcing the attackers to flee. The grenade failed to hit the post and landed in nearby fields. The prompt response of the security personnel thwarted the militants' bid, police said, adding that no loss of life or property was reported in the incident. District Police Officer Abdul Salam Khalid, appreciated the bravery and professionalism of the deployed force. "Our jawans foiled the terrorists' designs without caring for their own lives. Such courageous officers and personnel are our pride," he said. Meanwhile, the Adenzai police on Sunday carried out a search and strike operation in Ouch police station limits, covering Laram Road, Kotigram, Khairabad and adjoining areas. The operation was supervised by SDPO Adenzai circle Fakhar Alam Khan and led by SHO Ouch police station Idrees Khan along with a contingent of police personnel. During the operation, security forces thoroughly searched suspected locations, checked vehicles and verified identities of individuals. Police also met with local residents to take them into confidence regarding efforts to maintain law and order in the area. Officials said such operations would continue as part of measures to curb criminal activities and ensure lasting peace in the district. They urged the public to promptly share information about any suspicious activities so timely action could be taken against anti-social elements in the area.

Kundi promises full support for flood affected families

MANSEHRA (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Sunday said that the province is passing through a difficult time and collective efforts are needed to overcome the challenges.

He expressed these views while addressing a public gathering in Kaghan on the occasion of former provincial minister Syed Ahmad Shah's joining of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). PPP's provincial president Muhammad Ali

Shah Bacha, general secretary Shazi Khan, and other leaders were also present.

The Governor said that the people who lost their lives in the devastating rains and floods would not be left alone, adding that he would personally visit their homes to extend support.

He assured that all possible assistance would be provided to the provincial government as required.

Kundi expressed gratitude to the governors of Sindh and Balochistan for assuring their support and

paid tribute to the Pakistan Army, saying, "Our brave forces defeated India in just four days, and it will not take long to eliminate terrorists."

During the ceremony, prayers were offered for those who lost their lives in the recent floods, and participants observed a one-minute silence in their memory.

Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Chairperson Senator Rubina Khalid also addressed the gathering.

Evacuation of over 2000 workers ordered

F.P. Report

KOHAT: Commissioner Kohat Division Syed Motasim Billah Shah has carried out an emergency visit to the different sites along the River Indus today to thoroughly review the flood situation.

During the visit, the Commissioner ordered the immediate evacuation of more than 2,000 workers employed at a gold mining company near the riverbanks, directing the authorities to immediately

shift them to safe locations.

Accompanied by the Officers of the district administration, Irrigation and Mines & Minerals Departments, and Rescue 1122, the Commissioner directed all the concerned departments to maintain round-the-clock monitoring of the river and enforce urgent safety measures.

"Human life is precious, workers are the real asset of our nation and their safety is our utmost priority," Mr. Shah said.

He added that illegal mining activities would not be allowed and any operation posing risk to human lives would immediately be stopped.

He further directed the authorities concerned to keep close coordination with the company officials and ensure strict vigilance so that timely response could be taken in case of any emergency. The timely action by the Commissioner Kohat is highly appreciated in the public circle.

Humayun Khan visits District Jail Mansehra

F.P. Report

MANSEHRA: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Prisons Humayun Khan visited District Jail Mansehra. Nagina Mehsud, the first female prison superintendent in the history of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, welcomed him upon his arrival at the prison.

Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Humayun Khan inspected various sections of the jail and carefully examined each and every thing. He saw the jail system, met the prisoners and reviewed the overall situation of the jail.

Had detailed discussions with the prisoners regarding the issues. Inspected the education system for the prisoners in the jail. Inspected the jail barracks built for the prisoners.

Humayun Khan reviewed the facilities provided to the prisoners.

He made a detailed visit to the anchorage and checked everything and also visited the hospital set up in the District Jail, Mansehra for prisoners.

The prison advisor also checked the facilities for women and children inside the prison.

While visiting the drug rehabilitation center established inside the prison, he expressed great

satisfaction.

On this occasion, he expressed satisfaction with the overall condition of the jail and described District Jail Mansehra as the best jail in the province. He praised the performance of Superintendent Jail Nagina Mehsud, saying that she is the only female prison administrator in Pakistan who is running a men's prison efficiently.

He said that wherever Nagina Mehsud has been posted, the jail is considered one of the best in the province. On this occasion, he also wrote a note of appreciation for Superintendent Jail Nagina Mehsud in the visitor's book.



MANSEHRA: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Prisons Humayun Khan talking to an inmate during his visit to Mahsehra Jail's rehabilitation center for drug addicts

Amir Muqam visits Shangla; assures relief and support in meeting with flood victims

F.P. Report

SHANGLA: Pakistan Muslim League (N) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa President and Federal Minister Engineer Amir Muqam visited Shangla to review the areas affected by recent heavy rains and floods and met with the victims. On this occasion, he conveyed complete sympathy and assurance of cooperation on behalf of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the federal government.

Engineer Amir Muqam said that both personally and on behalf of the Prime Minister of Pakistan, he stands with the people of Shangla in this difficult time. Expressing sorrow over the loss of lives and property, he said that the people of Shangla have

endured large-scale destruction; several villages in tehseils Puran and Alpuri have been completely cut off due to flood torrents and landslides.

He explained that due to blocked roads leading to Shangla, he could not arrive immediately, but even today he had to take a long and difficult route to reach the victims.

Engineer Amir Muqam criticized the performance of the provincial government and district administration, stating that even after three days, link roads and bridges could not be restored, which is clear evidence of incompetence.

He assured that the federal government will provide every possible assistance, and he himself will also support the victims

through personal resources.

Engineer Amir Muqam announced that for those areas where roads were washed away by floods, he would provide his personal machinery for temporary restoration so that movement could be made possible immediately.

He added that if the provincial government or district administration fails to restore the link roads, he will have them rebuilt at his own expense. Regarding power restoration, he stated that work is underway and electricity will soon be restored in the affected areas.

Referring to the statement of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister in which he promised full compensation for the flood victims'

losses, Amir Muqam said he hoped the Chief Minister would fulfill that promise.

He also demanded that the provincial government double the compensation amount (10 lakh rupees) for the deceased victims and said he would strive to get additional aid approved from the federal government as well.

In conclusion, Engineer Amir Muqam said this is not a time for politics but for service and sympathy. In this difficult time, the people of Shangla will not be left alone. On the directives of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, he has come to express full solidarity and cooperation with the victims, and he will also provide every possible assistance on a personal level.



SWAT: Provincial Minister for Rural Development Arshad Ayub talking to MPAs regarding a meeting about flood relief activities in Saidu Sharif.

89 truck loaded with essential items sent to flood-hit areas

F.P. Report

BUNER: On the special instructions of the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) has successfully completed the dispatch of relief goods to flood-affected districts including Buner, Bajaur, Swat, and Shangla.

A total of 89 trucks loaded with essential relief items have been sent to cater to the immediate needs of families impacted by the recent heavy rains and flash floods. This relief initiative aims to provide

urgent support for shelter, daily living, and early recovery of the affected population.

The relief consignment includes 1800 family tents, 1000 winterized tents, 3100 mattresses, 3500 pillows, 1500 hygiene kits, 3300 kitchen sets, 2100 tarpaulins, 3300 mats, 4400 mosquito nets, 3800 blankets, 1000 jerry cans, 1000 bedding sets, 1750 solar lamps, 10 dewatering pumps, 10 generators, 100 life jackets, and 500 gas cylinders.

These items have been selected based on the basic needs of the affected communities and are expected to play a crucial role in pro-

viding immediate shelter and daily life support.

In addition to the physical relief items, PDMA has disbursed a total of PKR 800 million to the affected districts to facilitate financial compensation for the victims.

Out of this amount, the most severely affected district, Buner, has been allocated PKR 500 million to ensure that no delays occur in the payment of compensation to the affected families.

Deputy Commissioners have been given clear instructions to expedite the provision of financial assistance to the victims.

To ensure smooth and uninterrupted relief operations, PDMA has deployed focal persons from all relevant departments at the Provincial Emergency Operations Center (PEOC). This step has been taken to facilitate timely information exchange and effective coordination among departments.

According to the Director General PDMA, the authority and all concerned departments are on high alert and fully prepared to respond to any further needs in the affected areas. Immediate assistance will continue to be provided as and when required.

Ikhtair Wali visits flood hit areas of Buner

BUNER (APP): Prime Minister's Coordinator for Information and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Affairs, Ikhtair Wali Khan visited flood hit areas of Buner district on the direction of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif to personally oversee rescue and relief operations in disaster hit Buner.

Ikhtair Wali visited flood hit Pir Baba, Chanar, Sowari, Baoshonai and other localities where he met with an affected population and inquired about their problems.

He directed the relevant authorities to take immedi-

ate measures and expedite relief operations in the affected areas.

Ikhtair Wali Khan said that he came here on the directives of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif to personally oversee rescue and relief operations in disaster hit Buner.

He said that all relevant Federal Government's departments and aid agencies including NDMA were mobilized for speedy help and assistance to flood victims irrespective to their political affiliations.

Ikhtair Wali who is also PMLN KP Information spokesman said that Federal Govt will continue efforts till rehabilitation of the last flood victim of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Ikhtair Wali Khan said that he came all along from Islamabad to Buner district where flash floods caused by cloudburst took maximum lives.

The PM aide said that devastation of floods in Buner was beyond of his imagination and the Federal Government will be informed accordingly for help and compensation.

Ikhtair Wali Khan met with families of deceased and prayed for eternal peace of all those who lost their lives and early recovery of the injured.

He said that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif will soon visit the flood affected areas of Malakand and Hazara divisions.

Ikhtair Wali also visited the shrine of Pir Baba where he offered special prayers for progress and prosperity of Pakistan and early recovery of injured flood victims.

Seven killed, one injured in Sheno Khel firing attack

KOHAT (APP): Seven people were killed and one injured in firing by unknown persons in Regi Sheno Khel area of Kohat.

According to Kohat Police and Rescue 1122, one person was injured in firing by unknown armed persons in Regi Sheno Khel while seven people died on the spot.

A heavy contingent of Rescue 1122 and police reached the spot and shifted the bodies and the

injured was shifted to hospital while injured was shifted to Peshawar district. The accused fled the spot and a search operation has been launched to find them.

According to initial reports from police, deceased were returning to their village Muhammad Zai after having a picnic from Tanda Dam when unknown persons opened fire on them on the way. All of them were friends.

The deceased identified as Abdul Samad, Noorur Rehman, Sajid, Yousuf, Ashfaq, Mustafa, Hamza, and Yasir, while Abdur Razaq received critical injuries. All the persons belong to Khara Ghari Muhammad Zai, of Kohat district.

Meanwhile Inspector General of Police (IGP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Zulfiqar Hameed has said that those involved in the incident cannot escape clutches of law, the first responsibility of police was to protect lives and property of people.

He said that no concession will be given to law-breakers, accused will be arrested soon and brought to court of justice.



Pakistan’s Ambassador to UAE expresses sorrow over recent floods



Asif Ali Yousafzai

ABU DHABI: The Ambassador of Pakistan to the UAE, Faisal Niaz Tirmizi, has expressed profound sorrow over the recent floods that have devastated many regions of Pakistan, including the districts of Buner, Bajaur, Shangla, Mansehra in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, as well as areas in Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

“This is a tragic time for the families affected and a stern test for our nation as a whole,” the Ambassador said.

He appealed to the Pakistani community in the UAE to stand in solidarity with their fellow citizens, extend support, and share in their grief. In respect for the victims, the Independence Day celebrations in the UAE have been postponed.

The Ambassador prayed for Allah’s mercy on the departed and patience and strength for their grieving families.



HERVAS, SPAIN: An amphibious aircraft drops water on the fire spreading through Hervás Mountain during the Jarilla forest fire on August 17, 2025 in Hervás, Spain. The Jarilla wildfire continues to blaze out of control in the Caceres province of western Spain's Extremadura autonomous region. The fire, which was believed to have been sparked by lightning, has scorched more than 9,000 hectares and forced residents to evacuate.

German foreign minister criticises China ahead of trip to Japan

BERLIN, Aug 17 (Reuters) - Germany's foreign minister on Sunday criticised what he called the "aggressive behaviour" of China in the Taiwan Strait ahead of a trip to Japan and Indonesia, and stressed the need to strengthen internationally binding rules.

Speaking to reporters, Foreign Minister Johann Wadepuhl praised Japan's solidarity with Europe over Ukraine as he prepared to board a plane, and highlighted the importance and economic potential of the two populous Asian countries.

His ministry also published a separate statement from Wadepuhl in which he expressed concern about China.

"China's increasingly aggressive behaviour in the Taiwan Strait and the East and South China Seas also affects us in Europe; fundamental principles of our global co-existence are at stake here," the minister

said.

"We are countering this together through our commitment to an international order, which is supported by the strength of the law and binding rules for all."

Tensions have simmered between China and other powers in the Asia-Pacific region over territorial claims.

Earlier this week the Chinese military said it

monitored and "drove away" a U.S. destroyer that sailed near the disputed Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea, while the U.S. Navy said its action was in line with international law.

Wadepuhl's criticism of China comes as Chancellor Friedrich Merz prepares to join Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at a meeting with U.S.

President Donald Trump in Washington that aims to work towards a peace settlement in Ukraine.

China, a major trading partner but also rival of Germany, has stood by Russia since its invasion of Ukraine, causing friction with Western powers over the conflict. Beijing says it is not helping Russia's military and is not a party to the war.



Actor Terence Stamp, star of Superman films, dies aged 87

LONDON, Aug 17 (Reuters) - Terence Stamp, who made his name as an actor in 1960s London and went on to play the arch-villain General Zod in the Hollywood hits "Superman" and "Superman II", has died aged 87, his family said on Sunday.

The Oscar-nominated actor starred in films ranging from Pier Paolo Pasolini's "Theorem" in 1968 and "A Season in Hell" in 1971 to "The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert" in 1994 in which he played a transgender woman.

The family said in a statement to Reuters that Stamp died on Sunday morning.

"He leaves behind an extraordinary body of work, both as an actor and as a writer that will continue to touch and inspire people for years to come," the family said. "We ask for privacy at this sad time."

Born in London's East End in 1938, the son of a tugboat stoker, he

endured the bombing of the city during World War Two before leaving school to work initially in advertising, eventually winning a scholarship to go to drama school.

Famous for his good looks and impeccable dress sense, he formed one of Britain's most glamorous couples with Julie Christie, with whom he starred in "Far From the Madding

Crowd" in 1967. He also dated the model Jean Shrimpton and was chosen as a muse by photographer David Bailey.

After failing to land the role of James Bond to succeed Sean Connery, he appeared in Italian films and worked with Federico Fellini in the late 1960s. He dropped out of the limelight and studied yoga in India before landing his most

high-profile role - as General Zod, the megalomaniacal leader of the Kryptonians, in "Superman" in 1978 and its sequel in 1980. He went on to appear in a string of other films, including "Valkyrie" with Tom Cruise in 2008, "The Adjustment Bureau" with Matt Damon in 2011 and movies directed by Tim Burton.



Trump administration halts visas for people from Gaza

WASHINGTON (AP): A day after conservative activist Laura Loomer posted videos on social media of children from Gaza arriving in the U.S. for medical treatment and questioning how they got visas, the State Department said it was halting all visitor visas for people from Gaza pending a review.

The State Department said Saturday the visas would be stopped while it looks into how "a small number of temporary medical-humanitarian visas" were issued in recent days.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Sunday told "Face the Nation" on CBS that the action came after "outreach from multiple congressional offices asking questions about it."

Rubio said there were "just a small number" of the visas issued to children in need of medical aid but that they were accompanied by adults. The congressional offices reached out with evidence that "some of the organizations bragging about and involved in acquiring these visas have strong links to terrorist groups like Hamas," he asserted, without providing evidence or naming those organizations.

As a result, he said, "we are going to pause this program and reevaluate how those visas are being vetted and what relationship, if any, has there been by these organizations to the process of acquiring those visas."

Loomer on Friday posted videos on X of children from Gaza arriving earlier this month in San Francisco and Houston for medical treatment with the aid of an organization called HEAL Palestine. "Despite the US saying we are not accepting Palestinian 'refugees' into the United States under the Trump administration," these people from Gaza were able to travel to the U.S., she said.

She called it a "national security threat" and asked who signed off on the visas, calling for the person to be fired. She tagged Rubio, President Donald Trump, Vice President JD Vance, GOP Texas Gov. Greg Abbott and California Gov. Gavin Newsom, a Democrat.

Trump has downplayed Loomer's influence on his administration, but several officials swiftly left or were removed shortly after she publicly criticized them.

The State Department on Sunday declined to com-

ment on how many of the visas had been granted and whether the decision to halt visas to people from Gaza had anything to do with Loomer's posts.

HEAL Palestine said in a statement Sunday that it was "distressed" by the State Department decision to stop halt visitor visas from Gaza. The group said it is "an American humanitarian nonprofit organization delivering urgent aid and medical care to children in Palestine."

A post on the organization's Facebook page Thursday shows a photo of a boy from Gaza leaving Egypt and headed to St. Louis for treatment and said he is "our 15th evacuated child arriving in the U.S. in the last two weeks."

The organization brings "severely injured children" to the U.S. on temporary visas for treatment they can't get at home, the statement said. Following treatment, the children and any family members who accompanied them return to the Middle East, the statement said.

"This is a medical treatment program, not a refugee resettlement program," it said.

The World Health

Organization has repeatedly called for more medical evacuations from Gaza, where Israel's over 22-month war against Hamas has heavily destroyed or damaged much of the territory's health system.

"More than 14,800 patients still need lifesaving medical care that is not available in Gaza," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said Wednesday on social media, and called on more countries to offer support.

A WHO description of the medical evacuation process from Gaza published last year explained that the WHO submits lists of patients to Israeli authorities for security clearance. It noted that before the war in Gaza began, 50 to 100 patients were leaving Gaza daily for medical treatment, and it called for a higher rate of approvals from Israeli authorities.

The U.N. and partners say medicines and even basic health care supplies are low in Gaza after Israel cut off all aid to the territory of over 2 million people for more than 10 weeks earlier this year.

"Ceasefire! Peace is the best medicine," Tedros added Wednesday.

Spain battles 20 major wildfires amid scorching heat

VILLARDEVÓS (Reuters): Scorching heat hampered efforts to contain 20 major wildfires across Spain on Sunday, prompting the government to deploy an additional 500 troops from the military emergency unit to support firefighting operations.

In the northwestern region of Galicia, several fires have converged to form a large blaze, forcing the closure of highways and rail services to the region.

Southern Europe is experiencing one of its

worst wildfire seasons in two decades, with Spain among the hardest-hit countries.

In the past week alone, fires there have claimed three lives and burned more than 115,000 hectares, while neighbouring Portugal also battles widespread blazes.

Temperatures are expected to reach up to 45 degrees Celsius (113 Fahrenheit) in some areas on Sunday, Spanish national weather agency AEMET said.

"There are still some challenging days ahead

and, unfortunately, the weather is not on our side," Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez told a news conference in Ourense, one of the most affected areas.

He announced an increase in military reinforcements, bringing the total number of troops deployed across Spain to 1,900.

Virginia Barcones, director general of emergency services, told Spanish public TV temperatures were expected to drop from Tuesday, but for now the weather condi-

tions were "very adverse".

"Today there are extremely high temperatures with an extreme risk of fires, which complicates the firefighting efforts," Barcones said.

In the village of Villardevós in Galicia, desperate neighbours have organised to fight the flames on their own with water buckets as the area was left without electricity to power water pumps.

"The fireplanes come in from all sides, but they don't come here," Basilio Rodriguez, a resident, told Reuters on Saturday.

Hungarian opposition leader demands Russia refrain from interference

BUDAPEST (Reuters): Hungarian opposition leader Peter Magyar has sought assurances from Russia that it will refrain from interference in his country's politics, saying there would be no scope for meaningful cooperation without respecting its sovereignty.

Earlier this week, Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) published a statement describing Magyar as being loyal to "globalist elites" and alleging that the European Commission was considering "regime change in Budapest."

Magyar, whose Tisza

Party is ahead of Prime Minister Viktor Orban's Fidesz in most polls ahead of parliamentary elections due next spring, published an open letter to Russia's ambassador in Hungary, asking what was the intended effect of the SVR statement.

"I demand clear assurances that the Russian Federation will refrain from any actions that could be deemed as interference in Hungary's domestic politics, including disinformation campaigns, cyber operations or the intimidation of politicians and citizens," Magyar said in the letter published on Facebook

on Sunday.

The Russian Embassy in Budapest did not immediately respond to emailed questions for comment.

In power since 2010, Orban has been criticised by some fellow EU leaders for his government's warm ties with Moscow and opposition to military aid for Ukraine. Orban has also accused EU leaders of plotting to topple him.

Magyar, a former government insider, has previously said he would strive for "pragmatic relations" with Russia, which supplies Hungary with most of its energy and is

also involved in an expansion of its Paks nuclear plant.

He said the SVR's statement showed Russia was trying to intervene directly to sway voters in Hungary, which is a member of the NATO military alliance but which under Orban has refused to send weapons to neighbouring Ukraine.

"Hungary's sovereignty and the inviolability of our democratic processes cannot be negotiable. Adherence to these principles is the minimum requirement for any meaningful bilateral cooperation between our countries," Magyar said.



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Hiding the homeless won't solve the problem

The White House has promised swift action on homelessness. It aims to dismantle encampments, force addicts and the mentally ill into treatment, and yank federal funds from cities that refuse to police tents and open-air drug use. For residents exasperated by sidewalk squalor, that sounds like overdue toughness.

In reality, casting the homeless as nothing more than a public nuisance understates the crisis and diverts money and attention from the broader solutions that are needed, according to the Tribune News Service.

Encampments are only the visible edge of a wider emergency. Roughly two-thirds of unhoused Americans spend nights in cars, motels or overcrowded shelters. From 2023 to 2024, the number of people experiencing homelessness nationally jumped 18%, with the fastest growth among families. Behind those numbers is a structural shortage of low-rent homes - over 7 million units by the latest count - while Medicaid and mental-health systems remain threadbare and under attack from the administration.

There are no quick fixes, but progress is possible. Since 2009, veteran homelessness has fallen 55% because Congress paired long-term rent subsidies with case management and health care through a single, accountable system. Houston used the same "housing first" formula, with placement in permanent housing plus voluntary services, to cut its homeless count by over 60%. Similar methods have worked well in cities abroad. For example, Helsinki used them to push street homelessness to near zero (until recent cuts to support let it reappear).

All successful programs recognize that stable shelter is essential. A settled address is a place to sleep in safety, use medicines as directed, and store important documents and belongings. Randomized trials have shown that housing-first approaches, especially when linked with health and other services, work better for many of the homeless - and far less expensively - than rotating people through emergency wards and county jails.

Short-term rental aid, emergency cash after a job loss and legal help in preventing evictions all reduce entries into shelters. States and cities should reform the zoning rules that throttle construction of small, inexpensive apartments. Federal housing vouchers - which help offset housing costs for some 2 million low-income households - are effective, but demand dwarfs supply and most eligible families never get them. Studies show vouchers don't deter work, and the cost is less than what would otherwise be spent on recurring emergency-room visits, police interventions and stays in jail.

Granted, these approaches are most likely to succeed with those in shelters; tackling chronic street homelessness is harder, because mental illness and drug addiction play a bigger role. The White House's plan concentrates on this second group. It seeks to bar federal housing help from anyone who cannot pass a sobriety test and funnels dollars from prevention to policing. It urges states to expand "civil commitments" without saying where the subjects will be sent, how they will be treated or how they'll eventually exit.

The focus on street homelessness, which amounts to a breakdown of public order, is understandable, and more civil commitments to medical facilities are necessary. But residential treatments for addiction and mental illness aren't cheap. More funding is needed. Short of compulsory removal, mobile health teams that pair clinicians with outreach workers can reduce street homelessness cost-effectively, reducing both 911 calls and arrests.

The public's impatience with homelessness and the disorder that goes with it is justified, but simply hiding the homeless isn't the answer. The right kind of help - housing plus treatment and other services - isn't just more humane. Anything less is bound to fail.

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The Frontier Post will not be responsible for the comments in the articles and letters. The Frontier Post requests the writers of articles and letters to please make sure that they write their email addresses and mention the names of the cities, towns, districts or tehsil of their residences at the bottom of their articles and letters.



Gen. Zia ul Haq's enduring contributions to Pakistan

Abdul Basit Alvi

General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq remains one of the most remarkable figures in Pakistan's history. His legacy, spanning from 1977 to 1988, marked a transformative period in which Pakistan underwent sweeping changes in its political, religious, economic, and geopolitical fabric. Born in 1924 in Jalandhar, British India, Zia-ul-Haq was a career military officer who rose through the ranks of the Pakistan Army to become its Chief of Army Staff in 1976. Just a year later, on July 5, 1977, he seized power in a military coup, overthrowing Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto amid widespread civil unrest and allegations of electoral rigging.

During his tenure, he did many remarkable things for Pakistan. One of Zia-ul-Haq's most enduring contributions was his systematic Islamization of the country's legal and educational systems. Believing that Pakistan's identity was fundamentally rooted in Islam, Zia sought to align the state more closely with Islamic principles. He introduced the Hudood Ordinances in 1979, which implemented punishments for certain crimes in accordance with Islamic jurisprudence. The Federal Shariat Court was established to ensure that laws conformed with Islamic injunctions, and religious scholars gained increasing influence in policymaking. These measures laid the foundation for a more overtly Islamic public and legal culture that persists in varying degrees to this day. In education, Zia promoted the inclusion of Islamic content in textbooks and encouraged the expansion of madrasahs, or religious schools, across the country. This effort was driven by his desire to nurture a generation of Pakistanis grounded in Islamic values. Many of these institutions received state patronage and foreign funding, particularly from Gulf countries like Saudi Arabia.

Zia also placed significant emphasis on morality and public behavior, using state-controlled media to

propagate Islamic values and introduce codes of conduct. Television and radio programs were censored to promote modesty and piety. Women were required to adhere to stricter dress codes in public spaces and on state media. People viewed these steps as necessary for preserving cultural identity. In terms of foreign policy beyond Afghanistan, Zia-ul-Haq cultivated strong ties with Muslim-majority countries, particularly in the Middle East. His policies strengthened the Pakistan-Saudi Arabia relationship, which included significant financial aid, employment opportunities for Pakistani workers, and ideological alignment. He also supported pan-Islamic initiatives and presented Pakistan as a leader of the Muslim world. This strategic alignment elevated Pakistan's standing in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and helped shape its identity as an Islamic republic engaged in global Muslim affairs.

In the turbulent landscape of South Asian geopolitics, where tensions between India and Pakistan have often teetered on the brink of war, few events stand out as moments of spontaneous diplomacy quite like General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq's unprecedented cricket diplomacy in 1987. Zia used the unifying passion of cricket to de-escalate one of the most serious military stand-offs in the subcontinent since the 1971 war. His visit to India to watch a cricket match in Jaipur, under the pretext of personal interest in the game, was in fact a masterstroke of informal diplomacy that significantly reduced immediate tensions and momentarily rekindled hopes for peaceful engagement between the two rival nations.

The context in which this act of cricket diplomacy unfolded was extremely volatile. In early 1987, India launched Operation Brasstacks, the largest military exercise ever conducted on its soil since independence. Although officially framed

as a military readiness drill, the sheer scale and proximity of the exercise raised alarm bells in Islamabad. Pakistan perceived it as a possible prelude to an Indian invasion. Amidst this dangerous impasse, Zia-ul-Haq made an unexpected announcement—he would be traveling to India to watch the second day of the India-Pakistan Test match being played in Jaipur. At face value, this appeared to be a mere personal gesture by a cricket enthusiast. However, beneath the surface, it was a calculated diplomatic move. Zia understood the cultural significance of cricket in both India and Pakistan, where the sport is nothing short of a shared national obsession. By choosing to attend the match, he cleverly sidestepped formal diplomatic procedures that were effectively frozen and instead used the popular sport as a neutral platform for engagement.

Upon his arrival in Jaipur on February 21, 1987, Zia's presence was met with both curiosity and apprehension. During the match, he sat in the stands alongside Indian officials and delivered a brief but impactful message: "Cricket for peace." Those three words would come to define the visit and symbolize a momentary thaw in the frosty relations between the two nations. Though not part of the official itinerary, Zia managed to secure a brief but crucial private meeting with Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Their conversation reportedly conveyed Pakistan's intentions to avoid war and signaled a willingness to de-escalate tensions. The message landed. In the weeks that followed, both countries began to slowly pull back troops and the threat of imminent war dissipated.

The visit was lauded internationally as a rare example of creative diplomacy. Zia's use of cricket as a tool of diplomacy showcased a different dimension of leadership. It was a gesture of goodwill masked in the casual garb of sportsman-

ship, allowing both countries to save face while stepping away from confrontation. It was also a strategic move. At the time, Pakistan was heavily involved in supporting the Afghan Mujahideen in their war against Soviet occupation. Opening a second military front with India would have stretched Pakistan's resources dangerously thin. Zia's visit bought Pakistan time and strategic space, while simultaneously diffusing international concerns over an Indo-Pak war. Zia-ul-Haq's cricket diplomacy occupies a unique place in the annals of South Asian history. It demonstrated that even in a region marked by entrenched hostilities and military rivalries, symbolic gestures could create space for dialogue and reduce the risk of catastrophic escalation.

General Zia's death in a mysterious plane crash on August 17, 1988, along with several senior military officials and the US ambassador, brought an abrupt end to his rule. The circumstances of the crash remain a subject of speculation and conspiracy theories to this day. His departure marked the beginning of a new chapter in Pakistan's democratic experiment, yet the systems, ideologies, and institutional arrangements he put in place continued to influence the country long after his demise.

General Zia-ul-Haq's enduring contributions to Pakistan lie not only in the laws he enacted or the institutions he shaped, but in the cultural, ideological, and geopolitical shifts he set in motion. Whether viewed through a lens of admiration or critique, his rule irrevocably altered the trajectory of the nation. The legacy of his Islamization drive, his foreign alliances, and his reshaping of Pakistan's political and military landscape remains deeply embedded in the country's identity and institutions. Zia-ul-Haq's era was one of profound transformation, the consequences of which continue to echo through the corridors of power and the conscience of the nation.

Alaska summit a spectacular distraction

Belén Fernández

Say you are the president of the United States and the relationship with a significant chunk of your political base has become less than blissfully harmonious. What do you do? Well, one option is to stage a summit, accompanied by much fanfare, with the president of Russia, ostensibly in order to end that country's war in Ukraine.

And this is precisely the manoeuvre that was pulled by US President Donald Trump, who on Friday rolled out the red carpet in Alaska for his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin. The short-lived encounter was ultimately anticlimactic, with Trump offering the incisive assessment that "There's no deal until there's a deal."

Fox News reported that Trump had rated the much-anticipated meeting with Putin a "10" out of 10 and that he particularly "appreciated the Russian president's comments when he claimed he would not have invaded Ukraine had Trump won the 2020 presidency".

Fox went on to add that neither head of state had bothered to specify the "reasoning behind these comments".

At any rate, the no-deal talks constituted a convenient distraction from current intra-MAGA strife, which owes to a couple of factors. There is, for example, the matter of the files relating to the late Jeffrey Epstein, the financier and convicted sex offender who died in prison in 2019.

When US Attorney General Pam Bondi briefed Trump in May on the Justice Department's review of the content of the so-called "Epstein files", she reportedly informed the president that his name appeared therein.

Despite having pledged while on the campaign trail to declassify the Epstein files, Trump changed tack earlier this year and angrily dismissed the investigation as a "hoax". He went as far as to insult many of his Republican followers as "stupid" and "foolish" for continuing to insist that the Epstein details be released.

On July 12, the president took to social media with his signature preference for manic capitalisation to berate those demanding declassification: "We have a PERFECT Administration, THE TALK OF THE WORLD, and 'selfish people' are trying to hurt it, all over a guy who never dies, Jeffrey Epstein."

And yet this is not the only headache facing the "PERFECT Administration" from within Trump's own MAGA base, many of whose prominent members have become vocally critical of Israel's genocide in the Gaza Strip, which Trump persists in aiding and abetting.

The genocide, which will mark its two-year anniversary in October, has officially killed nearly 62,000 Palestinians thus far — although the true death toll is

undoubtedly many times higher. Apparently, Israel's behaviour was entirely palatable to much of the US political establishment when it simply consisted of unending massacres, slaughtered and mutilated babies, bombed hospitals, and razed neighbourhoods.

Now that mass starvation has been visibly added to the genocidal mix, however, Israel seems to have crossed a red line even among formerly staunch devotees. As per Gaza's Ministry of Health, the death toll from malnutrition has hit 251, including 108 children. Images of skeletal Palestinians have flooded the internet, and the United Nations World Food Programme has categorised food shortage in Gaza as "catastrophic".

Furthermore, according to the UN, the Israeli military has killed at least 1,760 Palestinians since late May alone, as they sought aid, including at sites run by the nefarious so-called Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF). Backed by the US and Israel, the GHF has not only served Israel's plans for mass displacement and forced eviction of Palestinians; the aid distribution hubs have also functioned as a sort of one-stop shop for indiscriminate killing — which, after all, is the whole point of genocide.

And while Trump has intermittently chided Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on the disagree-

able optics of the whole spectacle, it has not been sufficient to appease the scrutiny of the likes of right-wing US Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene, a traditional ally of the president known for such antics as wearing a hat imprinted with the words "Trump Was Right About Everything!"

In a social media post last month, Greene — a leading figure in Trump's MAGA movement — was unexpectedly explicit in her condemnation of "the genocide, humanitarian crisis, and starvation happening in Gaza". Other MAGA fixtures like far-right influencer Laura Loomer — a self-defined "proud Islamophobe" and general bona fide sociopath — wasted no time in responding to Greene's post: "There is no genocide in Gaza."

Anyway, political tensions and infighting were at least temporarily removed from the spotlight by the Trump-Putin extravaganza in Alaska. It's hardly the first time the old art of distraction has come in handy — Trump's pal, Netanyahu, is the master of this trade. His commitment to waging genocide in Gaza has more than a little to do with his desire to stave off domestic opposition and avoid dealing with the assorted corruption charges in which he is presently embroiled.

And while the Alaskan red-carpet stunt provided little to write home about, distraction may yet prevail as folks ponder what the hell that was all about.

Tech leaders should focus on job creation, not worker displacement

Arnab Neil Sengupta

When ChatGPT stormed onto the scene in late 2022, the alarm bells rang loud. Philosophers and futurists demanded new rules to prevent humanity from sliding into chaos, wars and disorder.

Since then, a string of large language models and apps — Gemini, Grok, Perplexity, Meta AI — have caused fresh anxieties. Two years on, true artificial general intelligence is still a distant goal but the mixed results of widespread adoption of AI are already plain to see.

Change that was happening gradually is now happening swiftly. As veteran Wall Street Journal commentator Peggy Noonan wrote in a recent column, "The story is no longer 'AI in coming decades will take a lot of jobs' or 'AI will take jobs sooner than we think.' It is 'AI is here and a quiet havoc has begun.'"

Yet, for America's AI titans, the motivation today seems less about building tools that create new jobs and more about accelerating human displacement while envisioning a vast social safety net as compensation.

A recent article in the Wall Street Journal titled "What Musk, Altman and Others Say About AI-Funded 'Universal Basic Income'" stated: "Suddenly, an idea once seen as a socialist policy that would reward idleness is one of the AI boom's hottest acronyms."

According to the article, the consensus in Silicon Valley is that automation driven by AI is going to replace a lot of factory jobs and white-collar roles while generating billions in profits for AI companies. What tech leaders and gurus seem divided over is whether AI-funded universal basic income is the answer to the challenge of mass unemployment.

Of course, as the popular 1956 Doris Day song "Que Sera, Sera (Whatever Will Be, Will Be)" reminds us: "The future's not ours to see ... what will be, will be."

Perhaps there is no need to worry excessively, as many a bleak prophecy in the past (for example, "The Population Bomb," a book by Paul R. Ehrlich about the looming danger of overpopulation) failed to come to pass.

Perhaps the "quiet havoc" of which Noonan spoke is a temporary phenomenon and US employment numbers will pick up, similar to the way in which the development of mainframe computers in the 1950s created entirely new occupations. In any case, AI tycoons such as Elon Musk, Sam Altman and Marc Benioff ought to be thinking of ways in which AI can be used to create plentiful, professionally rewarding jobs instead of touting the introduction of universal basic income as inevitable.

Not only would such income for Americans made redundant by AI be of little use to the rest of the world, it could be a recipe for trouble in the long term.

Jobs do not just pay wages, as the Silicon Valley titans surely know. Jobs circulate money throughout the economy, creating demand for goods and services, generating tax revenues and nurturing communities. A purely passive income scheme will not spur the same level of productive economic activity.

For many people, especially young adults, meaningful work is a core part of their identity. For young people in the Arab world, it is not an exaggeration to say a job equals purpose, self-worth and hope.

Employment in challenging roles builds skills, creativity and problem-solving capacities that are essential for adapting to future changes.

High-quality jobs in particular give educated young people a sense of

fulfillment and progress in their lives.

This satisfaction would be at risk of being lost in an idle society.

The workplace is a powerful training ground. Before the advent of remote working, conversation and competition made busy offices incubators of great ideas. In his memoir "City Room," Arthur Gelb, the late American journalist, described the New York Times newsroom of the 1940s this way: "There was an overwhelming sense of purpose, fire and life: the clacking rhythm of typewriters, the throbbing of great machines in the composing room on the floor above, reporters shouting for copy boys to pick up their stories."

Employment creates networks, encourages teamwork and accountability, and strengthens civic engagement. On the other hand, large-scale joblessness, especially among young people, produces social drift, weakens bonds, increases division, feeds unrest and erodes hope.

No matter what term tech tycoons choose to apply to it — "universal extreme wealth," "universal high income" or "universal basic income" — the dangers of financially rewarding idleness can scarcely be overstated.

In addition to the erosion of motivation and the work ethic, a guaranteed income without the expectation of contribution might lead to disconnection from skills-building and long-term planning.

There is also the risk of social fragmentation and alienation. Without shared daily activities like work, people living off AI profits could become more isolated, lose touch with community norms, and fall into destructive habits or radicalized echo chambers.

None of this is an argument for a Luddite agenda resisting the adoption of a technology whose time has come. Even California socialists do not advocate turning back the clock — although, ultimately, robots rather than American workers might end up doing the heavy lifting of President Trump's planned manufacturing renaissance.

If the technological displacement of human workers proves unstoppable, the pace and scale of AI-driven automation will undoubtedly make job creation in some sectors unviable.

A universal basic income could at least ensure that people's basic needs are met in a fully automated economy.

A guaranteed supplemental income could also reduce some of the economic insecurity and stress. It could provide a safety net that allows people to take entrepreneurial risks, retrain or transition to new industries without fear of destitution, potentially prompting innovation from the ground up.

In theory, the recipients of universal basic income would have the freedom to pursue non-market value creation.

Thus, with their basic needs covered, people could focus on care-giving, volunteering, education, the creative arts or environmental projects that existing markets do not adequately reward, even though the wider society still benefits from them.

If the pros and cons of an AI-funded "universal high income" make it sound like a quixotic experiment in wealth generation — lowering costs for companies and then handing out part of the profits in a post-work future — that is because it indeed would be if tried.

Job-loss fears are real, but the remedy should not be worse than the disease. Ultimately, the responsibility of tech leaders is not to make mass idleness the new normal, but to harness AI in ways that expand human opportunity.

From preventing harm to maximization of suffering: How Europe fumbled migration

Europe's hastily constructed migration frameworks have evolved from mere bureaucratic missteps into the calibrated engine of devastation that we see today.

What began as fatally misguided attempts at containment, fixated on hardened borders and out-sourced deterrence at a cost of billions, has mutated into a self-perpetuating source of misery, amplifying human suffering to gain an edge in the face of the ever-changing winds of domestic politics.

Naysayers will argue that the crisis that emerged as migrant arrivals increased, and the death tolls from unsuccessful attempts mounted, forced Brussels into what proved to be such a sloppy response and so there was bound to be some "policy drift" — unfortunate mishaps to be temporarily endured until future interventions corrected them.

However, the reality of the situation is rather different, because the sum total of Europe's failures is now a measurable, accelerating retreat from its proclaimed values, which is being executed using a cold political calculus.

Humanitarian obligations are being discarded not through neglect but as conscious strategy. The driving imperative? Electoral survival at any cost, even if it means dismantling the very principles and ideals Europe projects globally. The initial failures have hardened into a purposeful architecture in which harm is not a byproduct but the main output.

Consider the numbers: Brussels channels more than \$5.2 billion into out-sourcing its border enforcement, transforming Libya, Tunisia and Morocco into de facto migration buffer zones that inevitably become markets for cruelty in which payment hinges on suppression of arrival numbers, regardless of the methods used.

The result? A 59 percent reduction in Mediterranean crossings in 2024. However, this

masks woeful operational realities in the strategic abandonment of tens of thousands of people in desert expulsion zones, including surging death tolls, many of which go undocumented, and the identification of mass graves near the border between Libya and Tunisia.

That is without even taking account of the domino effects of illicit economies and networks that thrive on "double-dipping." In Libya, for example, non-state armed groups easily obtain EU funding for containment efforts while simultaneously actively trafficking desperate people via "safe route taxes," boat fees and even "auctions."

The fault for this lies primarily with programs, initiatives and sources of funding such as the EU's Neighborhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument, which financially rewards autocrats for migrant suppression while omitting any binding safeguards on human rights.

Naturally, such myopic policies allow, inadvertently or not, evil to metastasize through impunity: regimes that often score the lowest on human rights indices face zero consequences for systemic abuses, precisely because they deliver the required reduction in arrival numbers.

In Tunisia, for instance, EU-funded operations enable the regime of President Kais Saïed to detain, extort and forcibly abandon sub-Saharan migrants in the desert, a policy explicitly designed to "make life difficult" until refugees "ask for voluntary return." It is a chilling calculus that reduces human lives to the level of deterrence metrics, all underwritten by funding and tacit endorsement from Europe.

Clearly, this externalization machinery is not a passive drift, or the handiwork of overzealous actors with a blank check empowered by Europe's tilt toward far-right pop-

Hafed Al-Ghwel

ulism. Europeans are now actively fortifying authoritarian governance abroad while simultaneously feeding political radicalization domestically.

By providing funding and technical support, Europe is empowering its "partners" to enact violent crackdowns and forced displacements, actions that in turn validate and intensify the nativist rhetoric within European capitals.

This cycle is mutually reinforcing: electoral anxieties drive the funding, the funding manufactures containment "successes" at the cost of human suffering, and these manufactured results further entrench the political forces demanding increasingly harsh action.

Humanitarian principles are not eroded by accident, they are traded for a "59 percent" statistic.

Simultaneously, the political landscape in Europe has been irrevocably poisoned by the very xenophobia its policies help to cultivate. Political corrosion now manifests as a self-inflicted contagion, wherein the mainstream parties that adopt increasingly nativist rhetoric inevitably accelerate their own irrelevance while empowering the very extremism they claim to combat.

Germany's center-right Christian Democrats promised intensified border theatrics and mass deportations of Syrians while hemorrhaging support to extremists despite initial leads in polls, ultimately resulting in the far-right Alternative for Germany party securing 21 percent of the vote at the federal election in February.

Meanwhile, the suspension of asylum rights in Poland, a move rubber-stamped by Brussels, failed to act as an electoral shield and instead merely paved the way for anti-migrant populists to secure executive and veto authority.

These far-right parties now wield ministerial authority that is normal-

izing the dismantling of international protection frameworks. Their playbook is consistent: manufacture consent through spectacle, in the calculated normalization of cruelty and abandonment.

Germany's Interior Ministry, for example, illegally rejected 330 asylum seekers within two months of performative border operations, a spectacle divorced from efficacy yet potent in terms of political messaging.

Similarly, Poland concealed the documented deaths of dozens of migrants in the Białowieża exclusion zone since 2021, a direct consequence of systemic pushbacks.

Beyond the Mediterranean, other countries historically remote from front-line arrivals are also actively pursuing regressive policies, as European values capitulate to misguided reactionism. The human toll of this is both immediate and intergenerational.

Germany's suspension of family reunification rights for subsidiary protection holders (individuals who do not meet the criteria for refugee status but have been granted international protection because of the risk of serious harm in home countries), primarily Syrians, will result in fractured households for years to come, severing integration pathways.

Moreover, Germany now processes a mere 2.8 asylum claims per 100,000 people. The rate in Poland has plummeted to a negligible 0.4. These figures are dwarfed by the 8,900 in Jordan.

This deliberate institutional collapse facilitates the next regression: the targeted erosion of protections for even Ukrainian refugees. Once deemed "acceptable," and initially welcomed as "European kin," they now face punitive means-testing, reduced child benefits in Poland, and the denial of social provisions in Germany under Merz's spurious "social tourism"

libel.

Solidarity, it seems, expires when usefulness diminishes.

The capitulation of the more moderate center-right has failed to contain the surge in anti-migrant populism or reduce its appeal to enterprising politicians seeking office or reelection. It has succeeded only in commodifying human suffering as electoral currency, and entrenching the dismantling of protection frameworks as standard operating procedure.

Worse still, Europe is even criminalizing compassion. The "Hajnowka 5" face five-year prison sentences in Poland for providing water and clothing to an Iraqi family. In Belgium, police colluded with far-right militants to violently dismantle solidarity vigils.

The EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, set for implementation in 2026, codifies this moral collapse by incentivizing "remigration," a euphemism for coercive strategies of attrition that effectively abandon migrants in a lethal state of limbo.

The conclusion to draw from all this is inescapable: Europe has engineered a self-sustaining machinery of harm. By outsourcing brutality, legitimizing xenophobic rhetoric, and criminalizing humanitarian acts, it has rendered its own asylum norms obsolete.

The 16.6 million forcibly displaced persons in the Middle East and North Africa are confronted not only by razor wire but a continent that is actively investing in their suffering.

With far-right parties now entrenched in governments from Warsaw to Berlin — for now — and the EU institutionalization of deterrence-as-doctrine, any return to protection-based policies is politically foreclosed.

Europe has not merely failed to manage migration, it has weaponized despair. The ruins of its values are now scattered in deserts, forests and voting booths alike.

mation, they seek to sharpen conflicts and divide constituencies into friends and enemies, and this has led them to target the center right's weak point. Feeling pressure from the far right, Christian Democrats think they must prove to their constituents that they are still genuinely conservative — unlike the supposedly uber-liberal Merkel.

While the archbishop of Bamberg was willing to speak with the nominee directly, CDU members of parliament apparently refused to do so. Such behavior represents a stark deviation from the culture of compromise and moderation that has prevented the US-style politicization of Germany's highest court. The CDU's norm-breaking is analogous to US Republicans' refusal to even consider Barack Obama's Supreme Court nominee in 2016.

Despite CDU leaders' claims to be democracy's last defense against the rising far right, the party is falling into the culture war traps the far right has set for them. It is not inevitable that the last major country with a firewall to contain the far right will go the way so many other European democracies have gone already. But that scenario is becoming more realistic.

Israel is moving one (big) step closer to annexing Gaza

Yossi Mekelberg

It would be an understatement to suggest that the current Israeli government has lost the plot. What it is plotting can only bring disaster to the Palestinians in Gaza, probably on Israel as well, and on the chances of bringing this horrific war to an end any time soon.

After an all-night meeting last week, the Cabinet decided, in a symbolic move, that by Oct. 7 this year, the Israeli army will take over the entire Gaza Strip. This includes taking control of Gaza City, where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have been trapped for many months, suffering from acute shortages of food, drinking water and medical aid, and living in constant fear of the next Israeli military assault.

The many hours it took the Israeli Cabinet to reach this decision might suggest to some that there were deep divisions among the decision makers. This is hardly the case. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was determined to gain approval for the proposal, come what may. The only robust resistance came from Eyal Zamir, chief of staff of the Israel Defense Forces, who tried to talk some sense into those around the table regarding the horrendous implications of such a decision for the military, the hostages still held by Hamas, and the country's standing in the world.

But in a Cabinet stuffed with extremists, sycophants who would have no political existence without Netanyahu, and those who are too afraid to challenge him, the go-ahead for the plan was a formality. The Cabinet set out what it called five principles for expanding the military campaign in Gaza: disarming Hamas; the return of all hostages, both living and deceased; the demilitarization of the Gaza Strip; Israeli security control of the Gaza Strip; and the establishment of an alternative civilian government that involves neither Hamas nor the Palestinian Authority.

In reality, these can hardly be described as "principles" but instead simply repeat the Cabinet's existing objectives; some of which were set early in this war, others added as it became apparent that the level of destruction Israeli authorities were inflicting on Gaza required that they do at least pretend that they do not intend to remain in Gaza for the long term.

So far, Israel might have reduced the military capabilities of Hamas but it has not eliminated the organization. Instead, it has simply inflicted immense misery and suffering upon the Palestinian people and deepened the divisions within Israel itself, while compromising the reputation of the country to the extent that it will now take a very long time for it to be salvaged. And for this Israeli government, any mention of efforts to secure the release of the remaining hostages is mere lip service.

Why Netanyahu should continue to believe that what Israel has failed to achieve in more than 22 months of war, despite infinitely superior military capabilities operating with little-to-no consideration for the lives or well-being of civilians, will nonetheless eventually lead to ultimate victory over Hamas beggars belief.

The obvious ulterior motives of Israel's prime minister are becoming ever more apparent as he not only ignores the recom-

mendations of the head of his army but, astonishingly, also a letter signed by some 600 retired senior security officials, including former army and intelligence agency chiefs, who wrote to US President Donald Trump urging him to put pressure on Israeli authorities to end the war in Gaza immediately.

It is also telling that in their despair, these people, all of whom served their country loyally for decades, should send their plea to the American president and not their own prime minister, in whose integrity and judgment they have completely lost trust.

Those who signed that letter are not wrong to have lost faith in Netanyahu's conduct of this war; his latest decision, which to all intents and purposes means occupation of the Gaza Strip in its entirety, was

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The former scenario is pure, cynical opportunism. The latter reflects cynicism and delusion in equal measure. Regardless of the motivation, the outcome will be yet more suffering and bloodshed.

Moreover, it was reported that during last week's Cabinet meeting, Gen. Zamir warned that this course of action was as good as giving up on those hostages still thought to be alive. In light of the fact that it was mainly diplomacy that achieved the prior release of some hostages, it is impossible to contradict his warning.

In an effort to cool the inevitable roasting his country would receive from the international community upon learning of his plan, Netanyahu refrained from describing the objective of the military operation as an "occupation" and opted instead to use the word "takeover."

After more than 22 months of mass killings and destruction inflicted by Israel in Gaza, however, his decision was still viewed as a step too far by countries around the globe, including close friends and allies, who condemned it in no uncertain terms.

The UK's prime minister, Keir Starmer, instantly condemned the Israeli security Cabinet's decision as "wrong" and urged its members to immediately reconsider as "it will only bring more bloodshed."

In an unprecedented move, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz announced that his government would no longer approve the sale of military equipment to Israel if it might be used in Gaza.

It would be naive not to believe that one of the calculations made by the Israeli government in for-

Right-wing culture warfare comes to Germany

Jan-Werner Mueller

Something just broke in Germany. A highly respected jurist whom the governing Social Democratic Party nominated to sit on the country's constitutional court has withdrawn herself from consideration after a relentless smear campaign by right-wing journalists and politicians. Worse, it was the party's own coalition partner, the center-right Christian Democratic Union, that suddenly shifted from supporting Frauke Brosius-Gersdorf's candidacy to deeming her unacceptable.

This sabotage of a hitherto consensual procedure is a test run for bringing US-style culture war politics to Germany. The goal is to peel away ever more members of the center right that former Chancellor Angela Merkel once led and to move toward an arrangement that has already been put in place in some other European democracies: an alliance of the center right and the populist far right.

True, Germany's constitutional court, though one of the world's most respected and influential, has not always been above controversy. In the mid-1990s, it drew conservatives' ire when it ruled that Bavarian nondenominational schools may not display crucifixes

on their walls. But the process of appointing judges has always been spared from the spectacle that is all too familiar from the US. Rather than holding highly publicized, televised and reliably polarizing hearings, parties meet behind closed doors to propose a balanced ticket of nominees, each of whom then must win supermajority support in the lower house.

As with so much else in European politics, this process has been complicated by the success of far-right populists. The Alternative for Germany, now the second-largest group in parliament, has been demanding its "own judge," objecting to the fact that smaller German parties — the pro-market Free Democrats and the Greens — hold the right to nominate members of the court. In one federal state, Thuringia, where the Alternative for Germany won the last elections, the party has effectively blocked the appointment of new judges as a protest against what it sees as its unjustified exclusion.

But it was not primarily the far right that brought down Brosius-Gersdorf. Rather, she faced a wider campaign of criticism that

sought to paint her as a left-wing radical who supposedly wants to liberalize abortion completely and introduce mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations. Not only did a fellow law professor alter her Wikipedia entry to make her look like an "activist," but the archbishop of Bamberg attacked her in a sermon — only to admit, after a personal conversation with the candidate, that he had been "misinformed."

Germany has never had the equivalent of Fox News (whereas France now has CNews, one of whose leading journalists even stood as a prominent candidate for the French presidency in 2022). However, relatively small far-right startups — claiming to be "the voice of the majority" — have increasingly gained influence within the CDU. One CDU member recently declared, in effect, that anyone not subscribing to natural law doctrines cannot serve as a judge. Suddenly, the supposed mainstream is echoing the populist talking point that courts should primarily "represent the people" (as opposed to upholding the constitution).

The CDU has been in an intellectual crisis for some time. Hardly anyone can

today articulate the party's core principles. True, like the Conservatives in the UK, German Christian Democrats long prided themselves on their pragmatism, cultivating an image as the competent default party of government. Moreover, natural law thinking was indeed prominent among Christian Democrats in the postwar period.

But precisely because they were interested in power, Christian Democrats — like British Tories — carefully adapted to a changing society. The ironic result is that they are now maligning as "radical" a jurist who actually does seem to represent "the people" — insofar as she generally holds views that command majority support.

Christian Democrats traditionally pursued a political strategy of seeking to mediate among different groups and interests, pursuing what Catholic social doctrine had long held out as a vision of social harmony. In this sense, Merkel — always eager to balance and compromise — was still practicing the traditional model.

But today's right-wing culture warriors are polarization entrepreneurs. Often armed with disinfor-

Ray Hanania

mation, they seek to sharpen conflicts and divide constituencies into friends and enemies, and this has led them to target the center right's weak point. Feeling pressure from the far right, Christian Democrats think they must prove to their constituents that they are still genuinely conservative — unlike the supposedly uber-liberal Merkel.

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Despite CDU leaders' claims to be democracy's last defense against the rising far right, the party is falling into the culture war traps the far right has set for them. It is not inevitable that the last major country with a firewall to contain the far right will go the way so many other European democracies have gone already. But that scenario is becoming more realistic.

property taxes have also risen dramatically. Many Americans are now struggling financially.

The US also has a record national debt of more than \$37 trillion, which is driving inflation and pushing the cost of products to unaffordable new heights. That economic reality is trumping America's love affair with Israel, causing many Americans to ask: "Why?"

One of the strongest voices leading the backlash is a core member of President Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again" movement: Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene. The Republican from Georgia has started to question why America sacrifices so much for Israel.

Greene, a staunch,

Has Israel's government finally gone too far? Ever since it was founded in 1948, Israel has engaged in violence against Palestinians and used its support in America as a shield to prevent it from being punished at the UN.

To ensure that America's support never wavers, pro-Israel groups have poured hundreds of millions of dollars into manipulating the American political system, influencing election results and ensuring members of Congress shy away from questioning its misconduct.

But ever since Israel's government launched its war of vengeance against the Palestinians in Gaza in response to the Hamas attacks of Oct. 7, 2023, its excessive violence, war crimes, genocide and even the murder of a handful of

Americans have seemed to tilt the balance of support in the US.

Recent polling shows that the American public has started to react to Israel's excesses, with 60 percent now opposing Tel Aviv's military action in Gaza. Israel's violence, pushed by the influence of far-right religious extremists who control the government of right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, has pushed open a door of judgment that it might not be able to close.

Even worse for Israel is that its excessive military response has sparked a seismic political tremor that has started to reverberate among some Republican conservatives and mainstream Democrats, who for generations could be count-

ed on to close their eyes to Israel's extrajudicial killings, collective punishment and contempt for the international rule of law.

We are starting to see the powerful chokehold that Israel has long had over American politics start to loosen.

We have always seen the Democratic Party mildly slap Israel on the wrist for its violent excesses, but mainstream Democrats like Rep. Mike Quigley are now questioning Israel's military actions and even calling for the establishment of a Palestinian state.

We have long heard those on the far left in the Democratic Party scream and stamp their feet with no impact on American society. They have excoriated Israel's government for its hypocritical discriminatory

unapologetic champion of Trump, is the face of the new movement that is challenging Israel's dominion over America and directly challenging Israel's political powerbase in the US, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. This group has spent hundreds of millions of dollars on donations to the campaign coffers of hundreds of US politicians in order to ensure their subordination and subservience to Israel's needs and demands.

Greene is demanding that America stop giving Israel foreign aid. The US sends \$4 billion in aid to Israel every year and it has also provided \$18 billion in military assistance for Tel Aviv's war on Gaza. She has the audacity to ask why. Why is America giving Israel so much money,

which could instead be given to Americans who are suffering financially?

She posted on X this week: "AIPAC is trying to paint my America First message as 'antisemitic' because I don't want to keep sending billions to the secular government of nuclear-armed Israel."

Greene has expanded her call to end all foreign aid — a call to arms that is being embraced by other mainstream MAGA Republicans like Rep. Thomas Massie. What is happening is a political revolution being driven by a worsening economy and by Israeli arrogance.

In her post this week, Green concluded: "With \$37 TRILLION in debt, I'm unapologetically America ONLY at this point. My loyalty is to the American people and my

children's generation. The people I was elected to represent. NOT ANY FOREIGN COUNTRY."

The growing criticism of Israel's policies, combined with the financial pain many Americans are experiencing and the arrogance of foreign lobbyists who believe they can politically suffocate mainstream congressional antagonists, is undermining Israel's grip over the American people.

The changes may look small, but with the criticisms gaining momentum, at some point they will become unstoppable.

There is an American idiom often used in politics that says, "give someone enough rope and they will hang themselves." Israel is today tightening the noose around its own moral profligacy.



Johannesburg hosts 2nd Pak-Africa Trade Summit 2025:

Officials call for stronger bilateral trade

F.P. Report

JOHANNESBURG: The 2nd Pak-Africa Trade Summit was successfully held in Johannesburg followed by B2B meetings in Pretoria, Durban, and Cape Town, bringing together business leaders and government representatives for meaningful dialogue on trade and investment opportunities between Pakistan and Africa. On this occasion, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Pakistan SADC Chamber Trade Federation (PSCTF) and the Minara Chamber of Commerce, further strengthening institutional ties.

Following the Johannesburg conference, the Pakistani delegation visited Durban and met with local business leaders. A luncheon was hosted in their honor, where delegates underscored the need for stronger trade cooperation. Durban's business community welcomed the initiative and pledged support for deeper commercial ties between Pakistan and South Africa.

The two-day summit, held on 12-13 August 2025 at LalQila, Sandton, was organized by PSCTF in collaboration with the Pakistan High Commission, GGDA, the Department of Trade, Industry, and Competition (DTIC), South Africa Chamber

of Commerce, Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce, Minara Chamber of Commerce, CBE, and other partner organizations.

The summit was attended by high-level dignitaries including South African Deputy Minister for Social Development Ganief Hendricks, Qaiser Ahmed Shaikh, Pakistan's Federal Minister for Board of Investment, Malik Farooq, Pakistan's High Commissioner in Pretoria, South African Minister of Small Business Development Stella Ndabeni Abrahams, Neil Pollock, Vice President, SACCI, Charles Manuel, Director Investment Promotion, Farah Khan, Trade & Investment Attaché, Pakistan High Commission, Marcus Baliso, Head of Invest SA Gauteng, Donald Mabusela, Director, DTIC along with more than 40 Pakistani delegates, senior government officials and industry leaders.

Muhammad Rafiq Memon, Chairman of PSCTF and Chief Organizer of the Summit, welcomed delegates, called this an honor for him and his team to host the second part of this record trade summit in partnership with the Pakistan High Commission and our valued South African stakeholders. For the first time in over three decades, so many key organizations

have come together to support Pakistan-Southern Africa economic ties. This is a milestone in our journey to strengthen trade and investment linkages. He reaffirmed PSCTF's role as the premier representative body of Pakistani entrepreneurs in Southern Africa, with the vision of building robust bilateral trade between the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Pakistan.

Malik Farooq, High Commissioner of Pakistan, emphasized the summit's importance. He said that this gathering reflects the strong will of our nations to explore opportunities, deepen partnerships, and chart a new course for economic cooperation. Qaiser Ahmed Shaikh, Pakistan's Federal Minister for Board of Investment, described South Africa as a "gateway to Africa" while positioning Pakistan as a gateway to Central Asia and China. He stressed the untapped trade potential, noting current bilateral trade stands at \$200 million in Pakistani exports to South Africa and \$400 million in South African exports to Pakistan. Delivering the keynote, Stella Tembisa Ndabeni Abrahams, South Africa's Minister for Small Business Development, highlighted opportunities in agriculture, livestock, technology,

power, and manufacturing. She said that "the halal market, engineering capabilities, and technological expertise of Pakistan present significant opportunities for collaboration. Our countries not only share business interests but also have strong cultural and historical ties, and this summit reflects our shared commitment to growth."

Ganief Hendricks, Deputy Minister for Social Development, praised PSCTF's role in fostering closer relations, even suggesting that its Chairman, Mr. Rafiq Memon, could represent South Africa in Parliament for his dedication to strengthening bilateral trade. He further relayed offers from South African traditional leaders willing to provide land for Pakistani investors to establish factories.

Other notable speakers included Neil Pollock (SACCI), Rhoda Masupye (NRCS), Ngadiman Ramela (Gauteng Tourism Authority), Thabile Nkunjana (NAMC), Dr. Kenny S. Hlela (Gemini Advisory), and Donnee Kruger (TIKZN). They collectively emphasized that the summit's success lies in PSCTF's leadership and commitment, which brought together government ministers, business leaders, and community representatives under one platform.



JOHANNESBURG: Distinguished guests and delegates listening to national anthem in inaugural ceremony of 2nd Pak-Africa Trade Summit 2025.

LCCI setup Rs3m Fund

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) here Sunday announced an emergency relief fund worth Rs. 3 million for the flood-stricken people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa KPK. Out of this amount, Rs. 2.5 million has been contributed by the Chamber, while Rs. 0.5 million has been donated personally by LCCI President Mian Abuzar Shad.

LCCI President Mian Abuzar Shad made a heartfelt appeal to Pakistan's business community, philanthropists and welfare organizations to rise above all differences and extend maximum cooperation in this critical hour. "The devastation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is one of the worst human tragedies in recent history. Entire villages have been washed away, thousands of families have been rendered homeless and our brothers, sisters and innocent children are bearing unimaginable pain," he said.

He added that hundreds of lives have already been lost while countless people are still missing. Those who survived have lost their houses, belongings, livestock and sources of livelihood. They are not only deprived of shelter and food but also facing a severe shortage of medicines, clean drinking water and clothing. Their cries for help cannot be ignored," he stressed.

Govt committed to boosting exports: Rana Ehsan Afzal

FAISALABAD (APP): Prime Minister's Coordinator to Commerce & Industries Rana Ehsan Afzal has said that the federal government is committed to promoting exports and strengthening national economy.

He expressed these views while talking to the media during his visit to Pakistan Lifestyle Furniture Expo on its concluding day, organised at a local marquee on West Canal Road Faisalabad.

He said that practical steps are being taken under dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to provide ease of doing business facilities to the business community which would help in flourishing domestic trade in addition to promoting Pakistani products in international markets.

He said that around 60 to 70 suppliers and manufacturers from across the country participated in the expo and showcased high-quality furniture and export-oriented products. Such exhibitions would not only provide an excellent opportunity for industrialists and businessmen to directly connect with consumers but

also allow buyers to interact and make purchases from multiple suppliers under one-roof, he added.

He said that these initiatives would prove to be a milestone in promoting local industry while simultaneously paving the way for Pakistani products to make inroads into global markets.

He further said that the government in collaboration with Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Industries and other stakeholders would ensure maximum cooperation in introducing exportable products internationally. He said that the government has set its priorities to strengthen national economy by simplifying trade procedures and providing facilities to the manufacturers, retailers and business community.

Responding to a question regarding Pakistan's economy, Rana Ehsan Afzal said that although in the past the country did not progress as swiftly as it should have but now under visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, comprehensive economic reforms have been undertaken to put Pakistan

on a sustainable path of stability and growth.

He said that the government is striving hard to enhance exports and remittances and these goals would be achieved with concerted efforts.

He said that government is committed to extend full support for boosting exports in the furniture sector as well as other industries to secure Pakistan a stronger position in global trade.

Former MPA Begum Najma Afzal, CEO Pakistan Lifestyle Furniture Expo Faisal Mohsin, MD Pakistan Lifestyle Export Zahra Faisal and other dignitaries were also present on the occasion.

More than 40 furniture brands were displayed at the exhibition with discounts ranging between 30 to 40 percent which attracted significant consumer interest.

Rana Ehsan Afzal congratulated the organizers of Pakistan Lifestyle Expo and expressed confidence that this platform would not only strengthen local businesses but also enable Pakistan's quality products to capture markets across the world.

PIAF urges govt to launch industrial revival plan

— without private sector engagement manufacturing base may face stagnation

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) has expressed serious concern over the continued contraction in the country's large-scale manufacturing (LSM) sector, urging the government to implement a comprehensive National Industrial Growth Strategy to revive industrial activity and strengthen economic recovery. PIAF leaders emphasized that without coordinated policy action and private sector engagement, Pakistan's manufacturing base could face prolonged stagnation, jeopardizing employment and export potential.

PIAF chairman Faheemur Rehman Saigol highlighted that the LSM sector's performance remains weak, pointing to recent data showing a decline in key industrial segments despite modest gains in some consumer-driven industries. "Our industrial sector is at a critical juncture. While some sectors like automobiles and garments have managed to show resilience, heavy manufacturing, machinery, and construction-linked industries are under severe pressure," Saigol said. He stressed that targeted measures and sustained policy support are essential to reverse the negative trends and ensure long-term industrial growth.

Senior Vice Chairman Tahir Mazoor Chaudhry warned that the high cost of production and rising input expenses are limiting the private sector's ability to drive economic expansion.

"Even with the government's planned reforms, the burden of energy shortages, financing challenges, and weak investor confidence is weighing heavily on industrial activity. Without urgent intervention, these structural weaknesses will continue to suppress growth," he noted. Chaudhry called for practical incentives, particularly in energy and export sectors, to encourage private investment and stimulate industrial output.

Vice Chairman Nasrullah Mughl pointed to the mixed performance across Pakistan's manufacturing landscape, emphasizing the uneven recovery and structural vulnerabilities. "Automobiles, apparel, and pharmaceuticals are performing well, reflecting demand-driven growth. However, machinery, minerals, cement, and furniture industries are contracting sharply, highlighting systemic constraints that need policy attention," Mughl said. He added that the LSM sector's weak performance could undermine broader economic recovery unless the government acts decisively with a national strategy that prioritizes industrial sustainability.

Faheemur Rehman Saigol underscored that the decline in LSM is not a recent phenomenon. The sector had been struggling even before global shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which further disrupted supply chains and domestic demand. "The pandemic intensified the challenges but did not create them. The underlying issues of high production

costs, inconsistent energy supply, and structural inefficiencies have been persistent," Saigol remarked.

Highlighting recent statistics, PIAF noted that several industrial segments experienced significant contraction over the past fiscal year. Cement, iron and steel products, and non-metallic minerals recorded steep declines, while machinery output fell sharply. Despite some growth in automobiles, garments, and petroleum products, overall industrial momentum remained subdued, raising concerns about employment generation and export competitiveness.

PIAF reiterated that a well-coordinated National Industrial Growth Strategy with full government ownership is critical to restoring confidence and providing a clear roadmap for industrial expansion. "Private sector-led revival can only succeed if complemented by supportive policy measures, energy reforms, and financial incentives. It is time for decisive action at the highest level to stabilize and grow our manufacturing base," Saigol concluded.

The front's leadership called for immediate consultations between the government and industry stakeholders to identify bottlenecks, align regulatory frameworks, and create conditions conducive to sustainable industrial growth. They emphasized that achieving broad-based industrial recovery would boost exports, generate jobs, and strengthen the country's economic resilience in the face of domestic and global challenges.

Pakistan must tap US export opportunity

LAHORE (APP): Founder Chairman of the US-Pakistan Business Council Iftikhar Ali Malik has called for urgent measures to fully exploit the immense export potential available to Pakistan in light of the recently announced 19 percent tariff by United States.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, he said that while the development poses new challenges for global trade, it also presents Pakistan with a unique opportunity to expand its footprint in the lucrative US market. "This is a moment to strengthen our position in sectors where Pakistan already enjoys a competitive advantage," he noted.

He urged the government, in collaboration with the business community, to formulate a proactive and targeted strategy to diversify the export basket, improve product quality, and ensure strict compliance with international standards. He particularly highlighted textiles, leather goods, surgical instruments, sports equipment, and agro-based products as sectors that could achieve greater penetration in the US market if supported through aggressive marketing, trade fairs, and business-to-business linkages.

He stressed that while higher tariffs may discourage certain competitors, Pakistan's exporters must act swiftly to negotiate favorable terms, secure long-term supply contracts, and build trust with American buyers. "This is not the time for complacency; it is the time for innovation, value addition, and bold initiatives," he emphasized.

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh Business One Stop Shop (SBOSS) platform is undergoing a comprehensive enhancement process, with full rollout and integration targeted for completion by April next year.

Special Assistant to Sindh Chief Minister Qasim Naveed said efforts are underway to resolve technical and operational challenges identified during the earlier implementation phases, Waves 1 and 2, making the system more robust, efficient, and user-friendly for all stakeholders.

He said this timeline encompasses the phased onboarding of various government departments, ensuring a smooth transition for each one into the digital ecosystem. Critical legal reforms are also in progress to support and streamline operations within the platform.

The project involves a significant legal roadmap, including the proposal of over 250 legal amendments to modernise regulatory systems and fully integrate SBOSS's online application and e-payment func-

tionalities into the legal framework.

Breaking new ground in Pakistan's business landscape, the provincial government recently launched SBOSS, an innovative digital platform set to revolutionise business registration and licensing across the province.

Powered by advanced integration with national databases and pioneering blockchain technology, SBOSS was launched by Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah.

SBOSS offers entrepreneurs and small business owners an intuitive, round-the-clock online gateway to navigate complex regulatory procedures with unprecedented simplicity and transparency.

The platform has been developed with financial support from the World Bank under the Competitive and Livable City of Karachi (CLICK) project. For long-term sustainability, the government of Sindh has taken institutional steps, including the cabinet's approval on May 30, 2024, to establish the

Sindh Investment Authority, which will oversee and sustain SBOSS operations and reform implementation.

The initiative marks a major step towards improving Sindh's — and the country's — rankings on the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index by making the regulatory environment more efficient and transparent.

Naveed said to ensure seamless coordination, SBOSS is designed to integrate with the Pakistan Business One Stop Shop (PBOSS), which is currently under development.

He said Sindh is leading as the first province to launch such a system. Once PBOSS is live, this integration will allow real-time data sharing and synchronised approvals across federal and provincial levels for a truly unified business facilitation experience.

Highlighting the Sindh government's commitment to digitalisation, he said the provincial government, through CLICK, has conducted stakeholder engagement meetings at every

stage of SBOSS development.

He told Wealth Pakistan that these sessions were held with representatives of small and medium enterprises, chambers of commerce, startup communities, private sector players, line departments, and other potential users. He remarked that continuous engagement with stakeholders ensures the platform evolves with user needs and sector-specific feedback.

The platform initially offers 32 e-licensing services across nine key departments, with plans to expand to over 130 regulatory services from 16 departments.

He said the next phase of SBOSS includes establishing business facilitation centres across the province and launching a 24/7 digital contact centre to support users.

SBOSS promises to transform the business environment for entrepreneurs and investors in the province by offering a consolidated digital platform that significantly reduces the time and cost associated with regulatory processes.

BMP warns of economic strain as rising energy costs drive inflation higher

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has raised serious concerns over the persistent rise in inflation, warning that increasing utility charges and escalating food prices are creating severe economic pressures for both households and industries across Pakistan.

The FPCCI former President and BMP Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar quoting the latest data from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) indicated that the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI) for the week ending August 13, 2025, rose by 0.31 percent week-on-week and recorded a year-on-year increase of 2.21 percent. These figures

point to a gradual but noticeable inflationary trend affecting essential commodities and household necessities.

Mian Anjum Nisar expressed grave concern over the rising inflationary trend, describing it as unsustainable for both consumers and producers. He emphasized that the government's policy approach has shifted the burden of fiscal reforms and energy adjustments onto the public and private sectors without implementing protective measures.

Nisar highlighted that the removal of energy subsidies and subsequent tariff increases have exacerbated living costs for households while simultaneously increasing production costs for industries, creating a dual challenge for the econ-

omy.

On an annual basis, the SPI's 2.21 percent rise reflects steep increases in key non-perishable items and services. Gas charges for the first quarter rose by nearly 30 percent, sugar prices surged 22.83 percent, and footwear, particularly ladies' sandals, jumped 55.62 percent. Other items witnessing significant year-on-year increases included beef, pulses, vegetable ghee, gur, firewood, cooked beef, cooked daal, and diesel. While some relief was noted in other essential food items, such as onions, tomatoes, garlic, wheat flour, potatoes, and select pulses, the moderation was not sufficient to offset the broader inflationary trend.

Anjum Nisar noted that the pressure of rising prices

is being felt across all income groups. Weekly SPI changes affected households uniformly, with a marginal difference across consumption quintiles. The lowest-income group (Q1) faced a year-on-year price increase of 2.22 percent, while the highest quintile (Q5) experienced a smaller rise of 1.46 percent. Despite the relatively contained headline inflation compared to previous years, he warned that persistent price increases in protein-rich items, condiments, and utilities could erode household purchasing power if the trend continues.

Highlighting the structural challenges underlying these developments, Nisar attributed the surge in inflation to international energy price movements, domestic utility tariff adjustments,

and ongoing disruptions in the food supply chain. He emphasized the urgent need for comprehensive agricultural reforms to stabilize food availability, greater investment in storage and logistics infrastructure, and improved coordination between federal and provincial authorities to manage market fluctuations. Without such measures, he cautioned, households would face mounting financial stress and industries would struggle with rising operational costs.

According to the PBS report, the week-on-week rise was mainly driven by sharp increases in perishable and protein-rich items. Tomatoes led the surge with a staggering 12.62 percent jump, followed by chicken, which rose 4.68 percent, and eggs with an increase

of 2.11 percent. Household energy costs were not spared as firewood prices edged up by 0.17 percent, reflecting the broader inflationary pressure on day-to-day living expenses.

Conversely, Liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) dropped slightly by 0.36 percent, while other items such as 1kg vegetable ghee, powdered salt, and Irri-6/9 rice registered minimal dips.

Overall, of the 51 items tracked in the SPI basket, 17 items increased, nine decreased, and 25 remained unchanged, signaling a mixed yet modestly inflationary pattern in consumer prices.

The BMP chairman also highlighted the broader economic implications, noting that rising prices, coupled with declining

industrial output and exports, could slow economic momentum. He pointed to shrinking private sector borrowing, reduced foreign direct investment, and declining manufacturing activity as indicators of growing economic fragility. Anjum Nisar stressed that unless corrective steps are taken, Pakistan risks entering a prolonged period of stagflation characterized by slow growth and sustained inflation.

While acknowledging the importance of fiscal reforms, Anjum Nisar urged policymakers to adopt a balanced approach that protects vulnerable households and supports industrial growth. He called for targeted subsidies for low-income families, special energy pricing for export-oriented industries,

and measures to improve supply chains for essential commodities. The BMP warned that ignoring these steps could deepen inequalities, further erode consumer confidence, and constrain the country's economic recovery.

As Pakistan faces the combined challenges of rising utility costs and persistent food price increases, the SPI data serves as a reminder of the economic pressures confronting households and industries alike.

The BMP's warnings underscore the urgency of coordinated policy interventions to address inflation while fostering conditions that allow both consumers and producers to navigate the evolving economic landscape without undue hardship.



In brief

Kamran wants Babar in team

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Former Pakistan wicketkeeper-batter Kamran Akmal has criticised the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) for not selecting senior players such as Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan in the national squad for the upcoming Asia Cup 2025. Speaking to the media after the PCB unveiled the 17-member team for the UAE tri-series and the Asia Cup, Akmal stressed that while the chosen squad may be suitable for the tri-nation series, it is “not the right combination for the Asia Cup.” He argued that the Asia Cup required a carefully thought-out selection strategy, especially keeping in mind Pakistan’s high-stakes clash against India. “The squad should have been finalized after considering the team’s recent performances and the importance of the India match,” Akmal said. The former cricketer expressed disappointment that senior players had been overlooked at a time when their experience could have been vital. “For the Asia Cup, senior players should have been retained. Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan deserved a place in the team,” he remarked.

Robertson claims title

JEDDAH (Agencies): Neil Robertson beat Ronnie O’Sullivan 10-9 in a classic encounter to claim the Saudi Arabia Masters title in Jeddah. The Australian takes home £500,000 for the 26th ranking title of his career and climbs to third in the world rankings. It represents another huge step forward in Robertson’s return towards the top of the game. The 2010 world champion started last season outside the top 16 with his career seemingly spiralling, before he enjoyed success at the English Open and World Grand Prix. “Can’t explain what this means in words,” said Robertson. “I am really glad I could be part of something special. Coming into this tournament last year I was 28th in the world looking at provisionally being 40-something. Hopefully my story can inspire younger generations to never give up. “You get ups and downs in sport and it is not about how far you fall, it is about how far you bounce. I think this probably surpasses the World Championship because I have had to answer a lot of questions. “To beat Ronnie here with so much on the line is definitely my best ever.” O’Sullivan’s consolation is a runners-up cheque of £200,000 plus £180,333, which amounts to a two-thirds share of a £50,000 147 bonus and £147,000 for compiling two maximum breaks across snooker’s big four tournaments. Robertson edges classic contest However, it was a tale of what might have been for seven-time Crucible winner O’Sullivan, and relief for Robertson who appeared in complete control after establishing a 6-2 lead in the opening session. A break of 97 in the first frame in the evening extended Robertson’s advantage but from there O’Sullivan, who was chasing a record-extending 42nd ranking title and his first for 19 months, looked irresistible. O’Sullivan rattled in the 1,300th century of his career with a 139 and made breaks of 97 and 89 in 36 minutes to get back to 7-5. And with the momentum firmly with the Englishman he enjoyed runs of 57 and 80 to level the match at 7-7.

Pakistan exclude Babar, Rizwan from T20 squad for UAE tri-series, Asia Cup



LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Sunday announced the 17-member squad for the upcoming tri-nation series and Asia Cup scheduled to be held in the UAE from Aug. 29-Sept. 28, with Salman Ali Agha set to lead the squad in the short-format of the game. Pakistan will play a tri-nation series featuring Afghanistan and the UAE at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium from Aug. 29 to Sept. 7. The series will serve as preparation for the Green Shirts ahead of the Asia Cup tournament in September, which will also include Asian giants India and Sri Lanka. “The eight-team ACC Asia Cup T20I tournament will be staged in Abu

Dhabi and Dubai from 9 to 28 September,” the PCB said on its website. “Pakistan are placed in Group ‘A’ alongside India, Oman and UAE.” Pakistan’s former opening T20 batting duo Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan have been dropped from the squad again while pacer Naseem Shah will also not feature in the limited-overs series and tournament. Pakistan have selected two full-time spinners in the form of Abrar Ahmed and Sufyan Moqim while left-arm pacer Salman Mirza has also been included in the squad. SQUAD: Salman Ali Agha (captain) Abrar Ahmed, Faheem Ashraf, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Hasan Ali,

Hasan Nawaz, Hussain Talat, Khushdil Shah, Mohammad Harris (wicket-keeper), Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Waseem Jr., Sahibzada Farhan, Saim Ayub, Salman Mirza, Shaheen Shah Afridi and Sufyan Moqim. TRI-NATION SERIES SCHEDULE Aug. 29: Afghanistan v Pakistan Aug. 30: UAE v Pakistan Sept. 1: UAE v Afghanistan Sept. 2: Pakistan v Afghanistan Sept. 4: Pakistan v UAE Sept. 5: Afghanistan v UAE Sept. 7: Final ACC Asia Cup T20 2025 Sept. 12: Oman v Pakistan Sept. 14: India v Pakistan Sept. 17: UAE v Pakistan Sept. 20-26: Super Fours fixtures Sept. 28: Final

Rising Stars White wins Independence Day hockey match

ISLAMABAD (APP): Rising Stars Hockey Club White defeated Rising Stars Green 3-1 in the Independence Day Exhibition Hockey Match, played at the Shehnaz Sheikh Hockey Stadium, Rawalpindi. Organised by the Rising Stars Hockey Club, the exhibition match marked Pakistan’s 78th Independence Day with a spirited display of sportsmanship and international friendship. The event carried special charm as it featured diplomats, young players, and budding female athletes on the same field. Neil Hawkins, High Commissioner of Australia to Pakistan, donned the Rising Stars Green jersey, while Kamal Ahmed, High Commissioner of Brunei Darussalam, represented Rising Stars White. Their

participation not only energized the crowd but also highlighted the growing role of sports diplomacy in strengthening people-to-people ties. The match began with fast-paced action, with Rising Stars Green pressing hard in the opening minutes. However, Rising Stars White quickly found their rhythm and took the lead midway through the first half. Despite a strong fightback from the Green side, including a penalty corner conversion, the White side proved too strong, scoring twice more to seal a 3-1 victory. A highlight of the Independence Day Cup was the participation of female players from the Rising Stars Girls Hockey Academy, who showcased their skills alongside senior players. Their involvement drew wide appreciation

from the spectators, who praised the club’s efforts to encourage women’s participation in hockey. Following the match, both high commissioners and Eduard Preda, Deputy Head of Mission of the Romanian Embassy, joined the players in cutting a cake to mark the Independence Day celebrations. In their remarks, Neil Hawkins and Kamal Ahmed lauded the Rising Stars Hockey Club for organizing the event with such enthusiasm and inclusivity. They commended the management for creating a platform where youth, diplomats, and female players could come together in the spirit of sportsmanship. “This was more than just a match; it was an occasion to celebrate Pakistan’s independence, promote hockey, and build bridges of friendship,” said Kamal Ahmed.

Marc Marquez wins sixth consecutive Moto GP race



SPIELBERG (AFP): Marc Marquez was “super happy” to claim his first ever win at the Red Bull Ring as he raced to victory in the Austrian MotoGP on Sunday. It was his ninth win of the season and stretches his lead at the top of the championship standings. The Ducati rider, who started fourth on the grid, swept past pole-sitter Marco Bezzecchi on lap 20, and pulled away for his sixth successive victory. Rookie Fermin Aldeguer closed on him in the final laps but had to settle for second, the best result of his fledgling career, with Bezzecchi completing the podium. “Yes, super, super happy to finally take the first victory here in Austria,

I’m wearing the red bike (Ducati) and it was working super good,” said Marquez. Victory in the 1000th MotoGP race completed a perfect weekend for the Spaniard who, after a poor qualifying that saw him slide off the track, also won his 12th sprint of the season on Saturday. It also moves the 32-year-old one step closer to a seventh world title, his first since 2019. After 13 rounds of the 22-race season, Marquez is now 142 points clear of his brother Alex Marquez (Ducati-Gresini) in the standings. Patience pays off Marc Marquez made an excellent start, passing his brother on the first turn and sweeping past teammate Francesco Bagnaia, unbeat-

en here since 2022, on the second lap. That then set up a cat-and-mouse battle with Bezzecchi (Aprilia). Marquez had to wait until eight laps from the end before he could make the decisive move. Bezzecchi was then caught by the flying Aldeguer (BK8 Gresini) who briefly threatened to press Marquez for the chequered flag. In the end the 20-year-old dropped off to secure second. “In the first part he (Bezzecchi) was super strong but then I just waited,” said Marquez. “I tried in the beginning but it was too risky, I preferred to wait and attack near the end. “But a new outsider arrived and it was Aldeguer this time and he

Chelsea draw blank in Palace stalemate

LONDON (AFP): Chelsea suffered a Club World Cup hangover as they were lucky to escape with a 0-0 draw against Crystal Palace to open their Premier League campaign on Sunday. Palace were denied an early opener when Eberechi Eze’s free-kick was ruled out by a VAR review for Marc Guehi obstructing the Chelsea wall. New Chelsea signing Estevao came closest to snatching a winner, but the newly-crowned world champions were blunt in attack against a well-organised Palace defence. The Eagles key duo Guehi and Eze started despite mounting speculation the England internationals are set to join Liverpool and Tottenham respectively. Eze thought he had opened the scoring with a blistering free-kick that had too much power for Robert Sanchez. The goal was disallowed for Guehi’s role in creating a gap by manhandling Moises Caicedo into the Chelsea wall. Chelsea’s demolition of European champions Paris Saint-Germain to win the Club World Cup last month had raised the Blues hopes they can chal-



lenge for a first Premier League title since 2017. Cole Palmer and Joao Pedro shone in the 3-0 win over PSG in New York 35 days ago, but were anonymous as Enzo Maresca had to turn to his bench for inspiration. Estevao scored against Chelsea at the Club World Cup in his final game for Palmeiras. The Brazilian has been hyped as one of the world’s brightest young talents but lacked the composure to finish when he sliced high and wide from

the middle of the box. Nottingham Forest made light of manager Nuno Espirito Santo’s pre-season fears with a dominant 3-1 win over a much-changed Brentford. Chris Wood struck twice either side of Dan Ndoye’s debut goal for Forest on a nightmare afternoon for new Brentford boss Keith Andrews. The Bees have lost their manager, captain and top scorer in the off-season. Thomas Frank left to take charge of

Tottenham, Mbeumo got his dream move to United and Arsenal secured Christian Norgaard. Yoane Wissa was also missing from the Brentford squad ahead of an expected move to Newcastle. Igor Thiago’s first goal for the club from the penalty spot late on was the only consolation for the visitors. Arsenal, runners-up for the last three seasons, begin their quest for a first title in 22 years later away at a revamped Manchester United.

Karate competition held

SARGODHA (APP): In connection with the Independence Day Muarka Haq celebrations, the District Sports Department organized an Inter-District Club Karate Championship at the Sports Gymnasium. The event showcased impressive talent from across the region and aimed to promote physical fitness and competitive spirit among youth. Karate University Sargodha Club secured first position, winning 5 gold, 3 silver, and 2 bronze medals, while Adventure Life Karate Academy claimed second position with strong performances across various categories. Medals and certificates were distributed by CEO Burhan City Malik Ashraf Burhan, District Sports Officer Sargodha Madam Saima Manzoor, and national karate player Naem Khan. Madam Saima Manzoor congratulated all the winners and encouraged them to continue working hard to bring further honor to Pakistan. She emphasized that the objective of organizing such events is to identify and nurture local talent at the grassroots level. Malik Ashraf Burhan highlighted the importance of balancing education with sports, stating: “A healthy body supports a sharp mind. It was inspiring to see girls participating in a demanding sport like karate. They have truly proven their strength and determination.”

Coach Naem Khan of Karate University Sargodha expressed his gratitude to the District Sports Officer for facilitating the event and providing young athletes with a platform to showcase their skills. He also expressed hope for more such competitions in the future. Ali Murtaza, Afsha, Ramsha, Mahnoor, and Iqra served as referees during the championship, ensuring smooth and fair competition throughout.

was arriving super fast. But yes, I’m very happy for six victories in a row.” In spite of starting second, Alex Marquez was always an outsider for the race win as he needed to serve a long-lap penalty for wiping out Honda’s Joan Mir in an accident last time at the Czech MotoGP. He took it on lap three which saw him drop from fourth to 11th and he never recovered, finishing 10th. Reigning champion Jorge Martin’s nightmare season continued when he crashed out in last place on turn 7 on lap 15. The Spaniard, who has said he will stay at Aprilia next season, sat out the first three races following two pre-season crashes. When he returned at Qatar in April, he crashed heavily again and missed the next seven races, only returning to the track in the last round in Brno.

Spirit claim record 88-run win over Phoenix



E D G B A S T O N (Agencies): Birmingham Phoenix fell to the biggest defeat in terms of runs in the history of The Hundred women’s competition as they lost by 88 runs to London Spirit. Opener Kira Chathli hit 69 from 35 balls, while the big-hitting Grace Harris made 34 from 15 as Spirit posted 164-6. Phoenix offered no challenge in their chase, with only Emma Lamb (23) passing 10 as they were bowled out for 76 with 21 balls remaining. Spirit captain Charlie Dean chose to bat after

winning the toss, but her side lost Georgia Redmayne and Cordelia Griffith for nought and nine respectively, reaching 25-2 at the end of the powerplay. Chathli steadied the ship, striking 13 fours, and put on a partnership of 47 from 21 with Harris. She was caught behind ramping off Ellyse Perry, while Harris became Em Arlott’s third victim as she took 3-25, but Spirit finished on a strong 164-6. Phoenix opener Georgia Voll was caught by Chathli off Issy Wong from the 10th ball of the

innings and the home side lost regular wickets from that point, with six batters dismissed for single figures. Megan Schutt and Hannah Baker were dismissed from successive balls to leave Phoenix 76-9, and with debutant Phoebe Brett absent with a thumb injury that completed a comprehensive Spirit victory. The win takes defending champions Spirit from fourth to top, ahead of Southern Brave on net run-rate, while Phoenix remain seventh with one win from five games.

Alcaraz to face defending champ Sinner



CINCINNATI (AFP): World number one Jannik Sinner and hot rival Carlos Alcaraz will face off in a major final for the fourth time this season after both booked straight-set wins into the title match at the ATP-WTA Cincinnati Open on Saturday. Defending champion Sinner ruthlessly subdued 136th-ranked qualifier Terence Atmane 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 while Spanish second seed Alcaraz defeated an ailing Alexander Zverev, who was suffering badly from the 32 Celsius heat and humidity, by 6-4, 6-3. Alcaraz and Sinner have played for trophies this season in Rome, Roland Garros and Wimbledon, with the Italian winning their most recent at the All England Club last month. Sinner, celebrating his 24th birthday, ended Frenchman Atmane’s dream run and will now try to become the first man

since Roger Federer in 2014-15 to win back-to-back titles in Cincinnati. Sinner, tuning up for the US Open in his first tournament since winning Wimbledon, hasn’t dropped a set en route to the final. “It’s a very, very tough challenge every time you play a new opponent,” Sinner said. “In the later stages of the tournament, the pressure is on, they deserve to be there.” Alcaraz will also be playing in his second Cincy final after losing to Novak Djokovic in 2023. The Spaniard increased his ATP season match win lead to 53 in a year of five titles. Alcaraz broke Zverev once in the opening set to claim it before the German, who is diabetic, began feeling poorly and took a medical timeout off court after the third game of the second set. Zverev, who has retired in only two matches since

2014, came back out to finish what was a patchy match from Alcaraz, who double-faulted for times in the second game of the second set but won the last 12 points with Zverev running on fumes. “We started well with good rallies, a good level,” Alcaraz said. “All of a sudden, he felt bad and I was thinking more about how he was feeling instead of playing good tennis. “It was tough and I just wish him all the best.” Alcaraz said he is keen to try and take his Wimbledon revenge on Sinner in the unorthodox Monday final. “We always bring our best tennis. We raise each other’s level. I’m ready to take the challenge,” Alcaraz said. “I will try and adjust my game better and correct what I did wrong in our last match. I want to be ready with my 100 percent. Mentally I’ll be ready – I’m excited for Monday.” Atmane gave birthday boy Sinner a Pokemon card shortly before they went on court, but he was in a less giving mood once they were underway. But Sinner surrendered just three points in his first six service games as they went to the tiebreaker with neither man facing a break point. Atmane double faulted on the first point of the decider and Sinner was away, powering to a 5-2 lead and pocketing the set at his second opportunity.



In brief

Section 144 imposed

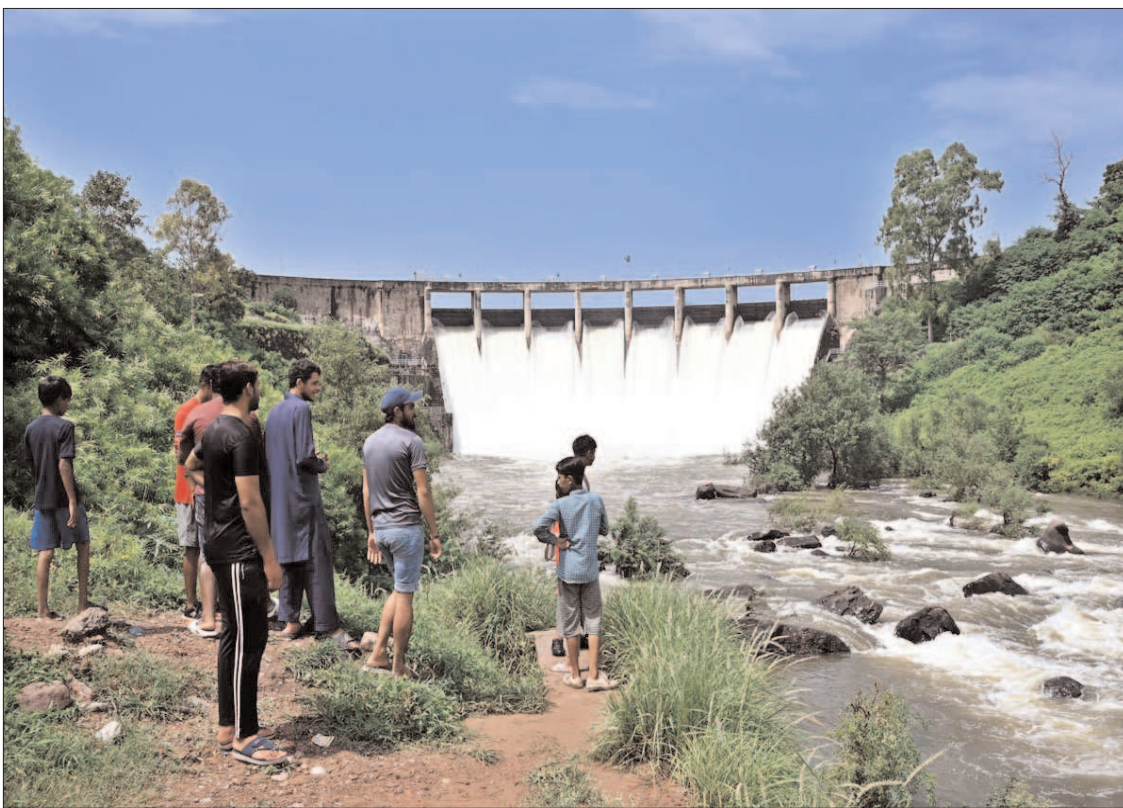
RAWALPINDI (APP): The District Administration Rawalpindi, in compliance with the directives of the Home Department Punjab, has imposed Section 144 of the PPC for 45 days to safeguard the lives and properties of citizens during the ongoing monsoon rains. According to the notification issued in this regard, Public gatherings, bathing, or any recreational activities near rivers, streams, nullahs, and dams are strictly prohibited. Entry of the general public at flood-prone or hazardous water flow points has been completely banned. Strict and immediate legal action will be taken against violators of Section 144. A spokesperson of the District Administration stated that this preventive measure has been taken to ensure the safety of citizens and to avert any untoward incident. The public has been urged to strictly comply with the regulations and fully cooperate with the administration to prevent accidents during the monsoon season.

250 beggars netted

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Police have intensified their crackdown and detained 250 professional beggars during the last 35 days. According to police, special squads have been deployed to arrest professional beggars operating in markets, intersections, and along major roads and highways. Police said that many professional beggars are linked to criminal activities, including theft and drug trafficking. City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Mehmood Hamdani stated that strict surveillance is being maintained, particularly in high-traffic areas, to discourage begging and ensure public safety. He added that the campaign is in line with the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, and operations against professional beggars will continue throughout the city. Police have urged the public to cooperate and avoid giving money to street beggars, encouraging citizens to support legitimate welfare initiatives instead.

ICT Police net 380 criminals

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police over the past two weeks arrested 380 suspects, including 213 proclaimed offenders wanted in heinous crimes, recovering more than 37 kilograms of narcotics and over 110 illegal weapons during targeted operations. An official told APP on Sunday that police teams registered cases against the arrested suspects, which included 108 involved in illegal possession of arms. He said police seized 18 kilograms of heroin, 19 kilograms of Ice, two kilograms of hashish, and 108 liquor bottles from drug traffickers. He said in separate actions against illegal arms, police recovered 95 pistols of different bores, 15 guns along with ammunition, and 13 daggers. The official said that 213 proclaimed offenders involved in murder, robbery and other heinous crimes were also apprehended during the ongoing campaign. He said under the special directions of DIG Muhammad Jiwat Muhammad Jiwat, multiple targeted operations were conducted against drug peddlers, illegal arms holders, and hardened criminals. DIG Tariq reaffirmed that Islamabad Police remained fully committed to protecting the lives and properties of citizens. "Special police teams are actively engaged in robust actions against narcotics dealers, arms smugglers, and proclaimed offenders to ensure peace in the federal capital," DIG Tariq added.



ISLAMABAD: Rawal Dam authorities have opened the spillway after the water level rose due to heavy rainfall. —APP Photo

Muqam appeals for 'national unity'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir Affairs Engineer Amir Muqam on Sunday called on the nation, institutions, political parties, and private organizations to unite on a common platform and work collectively for the restoration of flood-hit infrastructure in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa other areas. In an exclusive interview with state-news run channel, Engineer Amir Muqam emphasized the need to set aside all political and ideological differences in the face of natural disasters. He urged the nation to unite in the spirit of solidarity and collective responsibility, highlighting that national interest must come before all divisions during times of crisis.

He further stated that, on behalf of Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif and PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif, he personally visited the flood-affected areas of Buner and Swat in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

During his visit, he extended full

support and solidarity to the people of the province, assuring them that the federal government stands firmly with KPK and will provide all possible assistance to aid in the recovery and restoration efforts.

He also commended the tireless efforts of the rescue teams and law enforcement agencies, stating that relevant bodies are actively operating under the debris to recover victims and provide relief.

He strongly praised the armed forces for playing a vital and heroic role just as they did during the 2005 earthquake and previous flood crises demonstrating unmatched commitment, discipline and courage in the face of adversity.

He stated that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government must prioritize the rehabilitation and strengthening of its infrastructure, as the current state is severely hindering rescue and relief efforts.

He emphasized that without proper

roads, bridges and communication systems, timely assistance becomes nearly impossible, putting lives at greater risk during emergencies like the ongoing floods.

He affirmed that the federal government is fully prepared to extend all possible support, even if it means paying out of their own pockets to assist fellow citizens in the provinces during this critical time. He stressed that serving the people in their hour of need is a national duty that goes beyond politics or jurisdiction.

The Minister expressed deep grief over the loss of lives and injuries caused by the devastating floods, extending heartfelt condolences to the affected families.

He said the federal government stands shoulder to shoulder with the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in this difficult time and assured that every possible effort will be made to support and assist them in their recovery and rehabilitation.

Human Rights Council forms 9-member committee

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Human Rights Council of Pakistan has established a nine-member City Committee to address and advocate for human rights issues in the twin cities.

According to a notification issued here on Sunday, the initiative aims to strengthen the Council's efforts at the local level and ensure a more direct response to community concerns. The members appointed to the committee include Murad Ali, Hammad Abbasi, Kashif Kamal, Mian

Nisar Abid, Bilquis Advocate, Zaron Ali, Syed Shahab Gillani, Umair Anas Satti and Nasir Khan.

Talking to APP, committee member Kashif Kamal said the newly formed body would work tirelessly to highlight human rights concerns of ordinary citizens, particularly marginalized groups who often go unheard. "Our goal is to bridge the gap between communities and institutions by ensuring that grievances related to rights, justice and equality are not

only heard but also acted upon," he added.

The notification said the committee has been charged with the immediate responsibility of engaging with local issues and serving as a dedicated voice for human rights in the Twin Cities.

Chairman Human Rights Council of Pakistan, Jamshaid Hussain, stated that the body would actively liaise with communities to highlight grievances and promote solutions in line with human rights principles.

NPC suspends two members over harassment charges

ISLAMABAD (APP): In the light of recommendations of anti harassment committee report, National Press Club's (NPC) governance body suspended the basic membership of its two members (former husband and wife) over harassment allegations.

The decision was taken during the governance body meeting of NPC held under the chairmanship of President Azhar Jatoti, said a press release on Sunday.

After detail review and discussion on the committee report, the body unanimously decided to suspend the basic membership of both Nasir Khattak and Salmi Malik in accordance with club's constitution. Both were also barred from entering NPC premises.

The meeting also emphasized that all female members of the Club are honorable and highly respected and no member will be allowed to adopt any kind of inappropriate behavior towards any female member or make accusations against them.

The meeting approved the establishment of a committee headed by former President NPC, Shakeel Anjum, to look into the matter.

DC orders preventive measures

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rawalpindi has directed immediate precautionary measures given the forecast of heavy rains and flash floods starting from 17th August.

According to reports of concerned departments, multi-storey buildings in the city are vulnerable to collapse due to continuous rainfall. Cantonment areas, particularly Jan Colony, have been identified as urban flooding hotspots where poor drainage has previously resulted in loss of life and property.

The Deputy

Commissioner has instructed all Assistant Commissioners of respective Tehsils to ensure timely evacuation of residents from low-lying and flood-prone areas, especially along Nullah Lai.

Private housing societies and commercial centers have been directed to immediately clean drainage channels, install dewatering pumps, strengthen protective embankments, and deploy staff for round-the-clock monitoring.

Municipal and Cantonment authorities have been ordered to identify and vacate structurally

unsafe buildings and to launch public awareness campaigns for citizen safety.

The Cantonment Boards, in particular, have been directed to remove encroachments and prioritize desilting of primary and secondary drains to prevent urban flooding and potential losses.

On the directions of DC, Rescue 1122 has chalked out an emergency deployment plan under which ambulances, fire vehicles, boats, dewatering pumps, and trained personnel have been strategically deployed at vulnerable points across Rawalpindi.

NHA chairman visits KP, oversees rehabilitation of roads

ISLAMABAD (APP): On the instructions of the Federal Minister for Communications, the National Highway Authority (NHA) has mobilized all resources for the rehabilitation of national highways damaged by recent rains in the country's northern regions.

As part of this effort, NHA Chairman Shehryar Sultan has been personally present in the field over the past three days, leading relief and restoration operations, said a press release issued on Sunday.

The Chairman is overseeing rehabilitation activities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where multiple roads have been affected by rain and flooding.

The Chairman of NHA on Sunday visited Bonair and held a meeting with the Deputy Commissioner Bonair in his office along with sen-

ior NHA officers.

The Chairman extended full support of NHA in restoration work and directed NHA officers to mobilize more machinery to accelerate the pace of work.

During his visit, he inspected the Nowshera-Chitral Highway (N-45) and issued on-site directives for its swift and complete restoration.

He also visited the Chakdara-Khwazakhela Highway (N-95), assessed the flood-affected sections, and instructed teams to expedite repair work.

In addition, he toured the Khwazakhela-Bisham Highway (N-90), reviewed the extent of damage, and issued immediate instructions for its full restoration.

During his visit, the Chairman directed NHA teams to work day and night to ensure the timely reha-

bilitation of roads across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He remained in close coordination with the Chief Secretary of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and local administration officials throughout the visit.

Beyond national highways, the Chairman also offered NHA's assistance in restoring roads managed by the provincial government.

To facilitate this, he formed a special committee, led by an NHA Member, to coordinate support for the rehabilitation of provincial roads.

As per the Chairman's directive, the designated NHA Member will remain on-site in Buner and other affected areas until the restoration work is completed.

The Chairman is also continuously monitoring road rehabilitation efforts in other parts of the country.

NA Speaker calls for nationwide tree plantation

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Assembly (NA) Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, on Sunday, emphasized the urgent need to embrace tree plantation as a national responsibility to counter the escalating challenges of environmental pollution and climate change.

In his message on Tree Plantation Day, Speaker Ayaz Sadiq noted that unchecked deforestation has led to increasingly severe environmental consequences, including torrential rains, soil erosion, floods, air pollution, and unpredictable weather patterns. These challenges, he stressed, demand immediate and coordinated action to ensure a cleaner, safer environment for the generations to come.

Highlighting the multifaceted benefits of trees, Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq stated that trees not only supply oxygen but also serve as a cornerstone for ecological stability. They play a critical role in miti-

gating the adverse effects of climate change and preserving the natural beauty of our planet.

He called upon the nation to transform tree plantation into a continuous and collective movement, urging every citizen to contribute actively. "A green and thriving Pakistan requires joint efforts from both the government and the public," he said. "We must launch large-scale plantation drives across schools, colleges, villages, and urban areas to move toward environmental self-sufficiency."

Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq further emphasized that planting saplings is only the first step; ensuring their survival through regular care and monitoring is equally important. Only then can these saplings grow into strong trees that support the ecological system. He concluded that sustainable development and a healthy society are achievable only when individuals acknowledge tree

plantation as a shared responsibility and actively participate in preserving the environment.

Deputy Speaker National Assembly, Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah, in his message marking Tree Plantation Day, highlighted that tree plantation is not merely an environmental necessity, but also an integral part of our religious teachings and cultural values.

He stressed the importance of raising public awareness about the need to green both urban and rural landscapes, stating that environmental consciousness is essential in today's world. Appealing to the public, educational institutions, and civil society organizations, Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah urged all stakeholders to take an active part in plantation campaigns. "Through collective efforts," he said, "we can build a greener, more prosperous, and peaceful Pakistan."

Over 500 patients gets free treatment

RAWALPINDI (APP): More than 500 patients

suffering from post-flood health issues, including waterborne diseases, diarrhoea, cholera, dysentery, typhoid, hepatitis A and E, as well as skin and eye infections, received free treatment at a medical camp on Sunday.

The camp was set up at Jinnah Iqbal Education School, Asghar Mall, by the Jinnah Iqbal South Asian Thinkers Forum (JISAF) Rawalpindi.

A team of specialists from Holy Family Hospital (HFH), private hospitals, City Lab, and homeopathic doctors pro-

vided free diagnostic and medical services.

Former Punjab Health Minister Dr. Jamal Nasir inaugurated the camp. JISAF Chairman Rana Abdul Baqi, Secretary General Thinkers Forum of Pakistan Col (R) Bakhtiar Hakeem and several volunteers were also present.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Jamal Nasir said climate change has serious effects on human health and praised JISAF's initiative for delivering immediate healthcare to vulnerable communities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

He appreciated Rana Abdul Baqi's commitment

to serving humanity, adding that JISAF not only helps people in need but also highlights social issues for national awareness.

Rana Abdul Baqi said the camp was aimed at providing urgent relief while also giving people hope and resilience. "We are always ready to respond to community needs in times of crisis," he added.

Dr. Nasir later visited all eight medical counters where patients were examined, given expert consultations, ultrasound facilities, medicines, and other services free of cost.

PMYP revolutionizes laptop access

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a major initiative on Sunday,

the Prime Minister's Youth Program has announced a paradigm shift in its laptop distribution policy, making these essential devices accessible to all on an interest-free loan basis.

This bold move is set to empower a wider segment of the youth, bridging the digital divide and fostering a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship.

Earlier, laptops were distributed on a merit basis to students, often limiting access to those who excelled academically. However, the new policy aims to democratize access to technology, recognizing that talent and potential are not confined to academic alone.

According to chairman of PMYP Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, by providing laptops on an interest-free loan basis, the program seeks to level the playing field, enabling young people from diverse backgrounds to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to

thrive in the digital age.

The Prime Minister's Youth Program has been designed to harness the potential of Pakistan's youth, equipping them with the tools and resources needed to succeed in an increasingly competitive world.

By making laptops more accessible, the program aims to stimulate creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship, ultimately contributing to the country's economic growth and development.

This policy shift is expected to have a significant impact on the lives of young Pakistanis, particularly those from underprivileged backgrounds who may not have had access to such opportunities. By providing interest-free loans, the program ensures that financial constraints will no longer be a barrier to acquiring the technology needed to succeed.

The move has been widely welcomed, with many hailing it as a visionary step towards creating a

digitally empowered generation.

As Pakistan strives to join the ranks of the developed world, initiatives like the Prime Minister's Youth Program are crucial in unlocking the potential of its most valuable resource, its youth.

By providing laptops on an interest-free loan basis, the government is not only bridging the digital divide but also investing in the future of the country.

This forward-thinking approach is expected to yield long-term benefits, as the youth of today become the leaders and innovators of tomorrow.

The Prime Minister's Youth Program is a testament to the government's commitment to empowering the next generation of Pakistanis. As the program continues to evolve and expand, it is likely to have a lasting impact on the country's socio-economic landscape, fostering a culture of innovation, entrepreneurship, and digital literacy.



ISLAMABAD: An elderly vendor selling shopping bags outside Aabpara Sunday Bazaar in the Federal Capital. —APP Photo

EU envoy met Haqqani

KABUL (Amu TV): Taliban Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani met with Veronica Bos-covic Pohar, the EU chargé d'affaires in Afghanistan, to discuss the situation of Afghan migrants abroad, according to Interior Ministry. The Taliban ministry said the talks also covered continued humanitarian and health assistance, preventing human and drug trafficking, creating job opportunities, and ensuring security. Cooperation on treatment and rehabilitation for drug addicts was also discussed.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Safar 22, 1447 — Monday, August 18, 2025

4 convicts punished publicly

KABUL (Pajhwok): Four people, including two women, were lashed and sentenced to jail terms for various crimes in Kabul, the Supreme Court (SC) said on Sunday. In a statement, the apex court said the four people, including two women, were punished over crimes of theft, adultery and illicit relations based on decisions of the Criminal Court of Kabul City, Primary Court and Chahar Asiab District Primary Court.

Hospital worth \$40m in Herat inaugurated



KABUL (TOLOnews): A hospital worth \$40 million was inaugurated in Herat in the presence of the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs and other senior officials of the Islamic Emirate. This hospital, with a capacity of 500 beds, has been funded by the private sector at a cost exceeding \$40 million. Officials of the Islamic Emirate consider the establishment of such hospitals effective for providing standard treatment to patients and for reducing

the prevalence of diseases in the country.

The spokesperson of the Islamic Emirate, Zabihullah Mujahid, stated: "Our country has immense needs in the health sector. We must have standard and quality hospitals so that patients do not have to repeatedly travel abroad. Unfortunately, many of our citizens travel to other countries even for the treatment of minor illnesses, which causes great difficulties for the people."

According to Herat's

local authorities, the hospital is now providing treatment for a number of illnesses that were previously not treated inside the country.

The hospital director, Farid Ahmad Ejaz, added: "According to the Ministry of Public Health's estimates, Afghans were annually spending \$570 million in neighboring countries for medical treatment, with this money flowing out of the country. In a short time, our young and committed specialists have taken respon-

sible steps to prevent the outflow of capital from Afghanistan."

Several residents of Herat have called on the government and the private sector to pay greater attention to the health sector. They said many patients still travel to neighboring countries for treatment, which is very costly.

A doctor, Abdul Hadi Bedar, remarked: "This is considered a valuable and historic step in Afghanistan's healthcare sector."

Another Herat resident, Naveed Ahmad Wafa, said: "We need such large hospitals in the health sector so that our people are no longer dependent on neighboring countries."

Local officials in Herat added that alongside public hospitals, the quality of healthcare services provided by private hospitals in the province has also improved. They further noted that in recent years, complex brain surgeries, tumor removals, cancer gland surgeries, open-heart operations, kidney transplants, and other sensitive and advanced procedures have also been successfully performed in Herat.

UN warns of funding shortages

KABUL (Khaama Press): UNHCR warns its funds are depleting as 2.2 million Afghans are expelled from Iran and Pakistan, urging urgent aid amid worsening poverty and dire humanitarian crisis.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has warned that its budget is running out as the mass expulsion of Afghan refugees from Iran and Pakistan continues.

In a statement on Sunday, the agency appealed for urgent international assistance to sustain its operations supporting Afghan returnees.

According to UNHCR figures, since the start of this year, more than 2.2 million Afghans have been deported from Iran and Pakistan. The UN highlighted that poverty and unemployment in Afghanistan are rising sharply, with more than half of the population dependent on humanitarian aid for survival.

Other UN bodies have also voiced concern over the collective expulsions, stressing that many returnees face restrictions and threats under Taliban rule upon their return.

Humanitarian groups warn that without immediate funding, assistance programs for returning Afghans could collapse, leaving millions without access to food, shelter, and basic services. The crisis underscores the urgent need for a coordinated international response, as both the expulsion of Afghan migrants and the worsening humanitarian conditions in Afghanistan continue to escalate.

12-year-old boy killed in Paktia

PAKTIA (Amu TV): A 12-year-old boy was killed in what local sources described as a "brutal" attack in Paktia province. The incident took place in the Ghurki area of Wazi Zadrán district, the sources told Amu.

They said the child was killed with a stone by a member of another family after a dispute with a young girl from that family.

The killing occurred two days ago. Local Taliban authorities have not yet commented on the incident.

170,000 people engaged in 204 mines

KABUL (Pajhwok): IEA says that 29 large-scale and 175 small-scale mines are being explored and extracted across the country, providing job opportunities for around 170,000 people.

In a statement, the office of the deputy prime minister for economic affairs said on Saturday that work is underway at 29 large-scale and 175 small-scale mines nationwide.

According to the source, these mines include serpentine, chromite, talc, gold, gypsum, lime, nephrite, marble, salt, lead, zinc, celestite, travertine, coal, ruby, raw materials for cement, barite, iron, copper and other minerals.

Private firm to bear Usman's education expenses

KABUL (Pajhwok): The National Olympic Committee (NOC) and a private firm have inked an agreement to support young footballer Mohammad Usman Atif from western Badghis province. As per the agreement, the company would cover all his educational expenses.

The 14-year-old, a resident of Badghis, recently went viral on social media after a video showed his impressive football skills.

Following this, NOC invited him to Kabul and praised his talent.

National Olympic Committee Director Maulvi Ahmadullah Wasiq, addressing the signing ceremony, said Afghanistan has suffered greatly from last four decades of war and discovering talents and personalities was vital for the coun-

try's reconstruction.

He added: "Our effort is to identify and nurture personalities and talents for Afghanistan's development and reconstruction. Their potential must be strengthened so they can serve their homeland."

Wasiq further stressed that raising Mohammad Usman's educational level was the most important priority: "When his academic level improves, he can grow into a well-rounded personality. Football is his secondary interest – it is his personal passion, and we will also support him in this and take him forward."

According to Wasiq, Millat Steel Company has committed to funding all of Usman's educational expenses. Under the agreement signed today with the Sports Authority, his educa-

tion will be systematically supported. He will be enrolled in a private school, continuing his studies alongside football training.

At the event, Naqibullah Nazari, head of Millat Steel Company, expressed happiness that talents like Usman were emerging in Afghanistan's sports sector. He said the company was ready to fund Usman's studies from Grade 7 to 12 in one of Afghanistan's top private schools and also support his higher education afterwards.

Meanwhile, young footballer Mohammad Usman Atif said he was delighted to receive such educational support from a businessman.

Currently a Grade 7 student, Usman said he wishes to continue his studies along with pursuing his passion for football.

DABS signs contracts for electricity projects



KABUL (BNA): Da Afghan Breshna Sherkat (DABS) has officially signed joint contracts valued at nearly \$41 million with two domestic firms, ZAZU Afghanistan and Kabul Milli, to enhance electricity stability in Herat province of Afghanistan.

The agreements were finalized by Abdul Bari

Omar, CEO of DABS, in a ceremony attended by officials from both companies.

The projects outlined in the contracts include: Transmission of 220-kilovolt power lines from the Noor al-Jihad substation to Pul Hashemi, and from Pul Hashemi to the 24th Hoot Martyrs substation.

Construction of new substations at Pul Hashemi and the 24th Hoot Martyrs.

Expansion of the second line at the Noor al-Jihad substation.

The projects are expected to be completed within the next two years, aiming to provide Herat province with reliable and sustainable electricity.

Are refrigerated cold drinks harmful to health?

KABUL (Pajhwok): During the hot summer days, many people drink cold water and refrigerated soft drinks to quench their thirst.

However, health specialists warn that such drinks can worsen stomach problems, tooth sensitivity and migraines and trigger related symptoms.

Dr. Mohammad Hanif Hashimi, an internal medicine specialist, told Pajhwok Afghan News that drinking every cold water and soft drinks generally did not cause health problems for healthy individuals. However, for those suffering from stomach aches or toothache, such drinks could cause complications.

According to him, people with stomach issues may experience muscle stiffness in the stomach, delayed digestion, bloating and gas when consuming refrigerated drinks.

He added that those whose tooth enamel was damaged may develop tooth sensitivity, leading to increased pain when drinking cold water or soft drinks.

The doctor further explained that cold drinks were also harmful for people who suffer from headaches or migraines, as they may intensify the pain.

Dr. Hashimi noted that drinking cold water and refrigerated soft drinks after exercise could also cause muscle pain and stiffness.

Similarly, Dr. Haseebullah Najib, a general internal medicine specialist in Kabul, said drinking cold water and refrigerated beverages after exercise could lead to muscle pain and stiffness and harmful for those with migraines, stomach problems and toothache.

He added: "There are a number of illnesses which can worsen if a person already suffers from them and then drinks cold water or soft drinks – for exam-

ple, respiratory diseases, stomach infections, sinusitis and others."

He advised people with health conditions to drink normal or room-temperature water instead.

Meanwhile, Dr. Obaidullah Qiyam, a general internal medicine specialist at Basit Private Hospital in Kabul, said drinking cold water, especially from the fridge, may cause health problems for some individuals in certain circumstances.

He explained that refrigerated cold water could

reduce digestion efficiency, increase bloating and gas in the stomach and in some cases cause nausea.

He further noted that cold water may also lead to headaches, joint pain, bone pain and tooth sensitivity.

He recommended: "Those who are used to drinking cold water should consume it slowly and in small amounts at shorter intervals, so that the body does not experience shock. Children and the elderly should be given lukewarm water."

Speaking 8 languages: Governor pledges to support boy



HERAT CITY (Pajhwok): The governor of Herat province met with a nine-year-old boy who can speak eight languages and praised his abilities and talent.

In a statement, the provincial press office wrote the boy whose extraordinary talent has placed him among the geniuses called on Governor Sheikh Maulana Islamjar.

At the meeting, the governor praised the abilities of the child and called him a valuable asset for the future of Afghanistan and also promised to continue the scientific path of this

genius.

"Mohammad Amiri has an extraordinary talent that he has been able to learn eight living languages of the world, including Dari, Pashto, English, Arabic, French, German, Turkish, and Urdu, on his own, without attending school. The amazing thing is that he learns a new language every two months."

Additionally, Amiri has an unparalleled talent in mathematics and has demonstrated abilities beyond imagination in multiplication, addition, and subtraction.

Afghanistan possesses around 400 kilometers of active railway lines

KABUL (TOLOnews): Afghanistan currently possesses around 400 kilometers of main and subsidiary railway lines, which connect four key border ports – Hairatan, Aqina, Torgundi, and the Herat–Khaf railway – with Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Iran.

According to the Ministry of Public Works, in order to further expand this network, construction work is underway on the first phase of the fourth section of the Herat–Khaf railway, as well as the reconstruction of the Hairatan–Mazar-i-Sharif line.

The ministry also stated that a memorandum of understanding, worth 500 million dollars, has been signed with Kazakhstan for the construction of the Torgundi–Herat and Herat–Kandahar railways.

The ministry's spoke-

sperson, Mohammad Ashraf Haqshinas, said: "For the further development of the country's railway networks, construction work is ongoing on the first phase of the fourth section of the Herat–Khaf railway, and the repair of the Hairatan–Mazar-i-Sharif line. At the same time, agreements worth 500 million dollars have been signed with Kazakhstan for the construction of the Torgundi–Herat and Herat–Kandahar railways."

The ministry added that in the field of port infrastructure, an agreement worth 5 million dollars has been signed with Turkmenistan for the expansion of the Torgundi port, with practical work expected to begin soon.

Haqshinas further explained that the contract for the detailed survey and des-

ign of the Herat–Kandahar railway – with a total length of 737 kilometers and a value of 264 million dollars – has been finalized with the private sector, and work is currently underway. He noted that the survey and design of the 737-kilometer route has been divided into five sections under a contract worth 264 million Afghanis between the Ministry of Public Works and the private sector, and practical work has already started.

Economic experts believe that once the railway network is completed, Afghanistan will emerge as a transit hub of the region.

Economic analyst Mohammad Nabi Afghan added: "In trade and economy, the most important sector is transport, as without it, exchange cannot take place. Among these impor-

tant sectors, after maritime shipping, railways come next. However, since Afghanistan cannot connect to sea routes, we must prioritize railways. If we simultaneously work on three to four sections quickly, we will be able to build them, maintain them, and even achieve self-sufficiency in this field – because Afghanistan lies at the heart of Asia."

It is noteworthy that the survey of the 561-kilometer railway line from Balkh to Herat has been completed by Uzbekistan. According to the Ministry of Public Works, if these projects and transit agreements such as "Afghan Trans" are implemented, Afghanistan will become a key regional transportation hub, providing fast and easy transfer of goods between Central and South Asia.

Boxers team depart for China



KABUL(BNA): Nine of the country's top boxing cham-

pions, accompanied by three coaches, have embarked on

a journey to Urumqi, China. They will represent

Afghanistan in the prestigious 2025 Asian Boxing Championships, set to unfold from August 15 to 30.

Organized by the Afghanistan National Boxing Federation, this championship will feature competitors from 26 Asian countries. The competition not only provides a platform for Afghan boxers to demonstrate their skills but also serves as a vital opportunity for them to gain international experience and recognition.

The federation highlighted the importance of these championships, emphasizing that they are crucial for showcasing the talents and potential of Afghan athletes on a global stage.

Jaghathu farmers struggle amid drought and water crisis

MAIDAN SHAHR (Pajhwok): Some residents and farmers in Jaghatu district of central Maidan Wardak province say severe drought has destroyed their crops and left them struggling for water. They are urging the government to build dams to address the crisis.

A farmer from Batawaki village told Pajhwok Afghan News that areas including Gandqol, Gul Dara, Didani, Sorsang, Ozbah, and surrounding villages have been hit hard by the drought.

"In Jaghatu, water sources have dried up, even ponds have run dry. This year, our green wheat withered due to lack of water," he said, adding that residents are also facing difficulty accessing drinking

water. Haji Abdullah Gul, a farmer from Akhtar Babakhel village, said their wheat fields, orchards and other crops have completely failed this year due to water shortages.

He noted that Jaghatu has been affected more severely than other districts in Maidan Wardak, with groundwater levels dropping up to 150 meters.

"Wells dug to a small extent only yield a little trickle of water, enough for drinking but insufficient for farming," he explained.

Mohammad Anwar, a resident of Obatali village, said the canal irrigation systems have dried up, pond levels have fallen and crops have been destroyed.

Farmers warn that if the drought continues, thou-

sands of households may be forced to leave the area. They are calling on the Islamic Emirate to construct dams in Gandqol and Gorbati, where surveys have already been conducted.

They say that building these dams would not only prevent floods but also raise groundwater levels and support farming and livestock.

Dr. Masood Pashtun, a university professor and environmental expert, emphasized Afghanistan's reliance on agriculture, which provides livelihoods for many citizens.

He said that water shortages have affected multiple provinces for years, but solutions exist, and the government must act urgently.

Dr. Pashtun recommended constructing the previ-

ously surveyed dams and seeking assistance from charitable organizations and international communities, noting that dam construction can mitigate the effects of drought.

Local officials acknowledged the water shortage and farmers' concerns, confirming that the issues have been communicated to the central government.

Mawlawi Mohammad Halim, head of Maidan Wardak's Department of Water and Energy, said, "People in Jaghatu have been severely affected by drought. We have discussed the matter with the Ministry of Energy and Water. While it is not possible to fully address the problem this year, there is hope for next year."

He also urged interna-

tional aid organizations to provide assistance to the district.

Climate change, its impacts on Afghanistan

The climate situation is changing rapidly. In some regions, this causes drought, while in others, it triggers severe storms, rainfall, and floods.

Afghanistan emits very little (0.19%) of global greenhouse gases, yet reports rank it fourth among countries most affected by the climate crisis.

The situation has severely impacted the agricultural sector, which remains the primary source of livelihood for nearly 80% of Afghans. Untimely rains and floods related to climate change continue to cause crop losses and reduced yields.

KP Govt mobilizing all available resources for flood affectees: Dr. Saif

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, Barrister Dr. Muhammad Ali Saif has lauded the role of the Provincial Relief and Rehabilitation Department, stating that the provincial government was making every possible effort to provide relief to flood affectees in various districts of the province.

Flanked by Secretary Information Dr. Bakhtiar, DG Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Asfandyar Khan Khattak, and DG Rescue 1122 Tayyab Abdullah, the Advisor to CM addressed a press conference here on Sunday.

Barrister Saif praised the tireless efforts of rescue teams, describing them as "our real heroes who need to be held in high esteem." "The helicopter crew embraced Shahadat after their aircraft went down in adverse weather conditions while carrying relief supplies for the flood-affected people.

These brave individuals laid down their lives in the line of duty, and their heroic service and ultimate sacrifice will always be remembered with deep respect and gratitude."

He emphasized that the provincial government was utilizing all available resources and assured that "no stone will be left unturned to assist and compensate the victims of cloud-bursts across the province."

He further noted that the Pakistan Army was proactively engaged in rescue operations, particularly in the restoration of damaged infrastructure. He informed that five army helicopters had also been placed at the disposal of the provincial government to ensure swift and effective rescue operations.

While appreciating the goodwill gestures of the federal and other

provincial governments, Barrister Saif said this was a national crisis and called for collective efforts: "All should come forward and extend a helping hand to the provincial government."

He also acknowledged that even political opponents refrained from exploiting the calamity for political gains. In addition, he appreciated the contributions of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) present in the flood-hit areas, remarking that "anyone contributing is worthy of appreciation."

Meanwhile, DG PDMA and DG Rescue shared updated data regarding the damages and the assistance being provided to the flood affectees.

Director General Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), Asfandyar Khattak, said that an emergency has been imposed in the flood-hit districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the aftermath of the devastating flash floods which caused large-scale destruction and loss of lives. He stated that rescue, relief, and search operations had been started at full scale, with all available technical resources, manpower, machinery, and funds mobilized to the affected areas.

"The Pakistan Army has deployed five helicopters, in addition to a provincial government helicopter, to ensure timely evacuation, aerial surveys, and delivery of relief goods," He remarked.

He added that All connectivity routes to the affected districts have been restored, and no community remained inaccessible. Search operations are on in Buner where 100 to 150 individuals are still feared missing after being washed away. An aerial damage assessment survey has also been planned for high-altitude areas of Shangla to determine the full scale of devastation. To provide immediate relief, trucks carrying essential food and non-food items

have been dispatched to Buner, Swat, Bajaur and Shangla. The Provincial Government has released PKR 1.5 billion to PDMA, including PKR 500 million for District Buner, the worst-hit area. Medical camps have been set up in all affected locations, equipped with medicines and essential supplies to prevent potential outbreaks of waterborne and vector-borne diseases.

The DG confirmed that all injured persons have been discharged from hospitals after receiving proper medical treatment. Providing updated figures, the DG PDMA said that the floods have claimed 313 lives across the province, including 208 in Buner, 36 in Shangla, 24 in Mansehra, 16 in Swat, 21 in Bajaur, 5 in Lower Dir, and 3 in Battagram, while 156 individuals were injured.

Tragically, the fatalities include 29 women and 21 children, while 23 women and 10 children were among the injured. Furthermore, 159 houses, 57 schools, and 22 other facilities have been damaged. The floods also caused severe agricultural losses, with 157 cattle perished, mainly in Dir Lower and Shangla.

Meanwhile, Director General Rescue 1122, Tayyab Abdullah, confirmed that 6,000 rescuers, 1,026 ambulances, 246 emergency rescue divers, and an 80-member elite rescue squad have been actively engaged since the beginning of the disaster. In addition, 60 water rescue points have been established to help in emergencies, and 176 rescue stations remain operational across the province. To support affected communities, 10,668 rescue items have been made available at key points. During the recent emergency, more than 5000 individuals were rescued. He stressed the need for speedy restoration of electricity and cellular services in the remote areas for effective coordination.



JEDDAH: The secretary-general of the Muslim World League and chairman of the association of Muslim scholars on Sunday visited the headquarters of the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition in Riyadh.

European leaders to join Ukraine talks with Trump

BRUSSELS (AFP): European leaders will join Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky during his visit to Washington on Monday seeking an end to Moscow's invasion, after President Donald Trump dropped his push for a ceasefire following his Alaska summit with Russian leader Vladimir Putin.

Securing a ceasefire in Ukraine, more than three years after the Kremlin ordered the invasion, had been one of Trump's core demands before the summit, to which Ukraine and its European allies were not invited.

But after a meeting that yielded no clear breakthrough, Trump ruled out an immediate ceasefire in Ukraine — a move that would appear to favor Putin, who has long argued for negotiations on a final peace deal.

Ukraine and its European allies have criticized it as a way to buy time and press Russia's battlefield advances, with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, French President Emmanuel Macron and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen among the leaders set to try and bend Trump's ear on the matter.

Ahead of the Washington visit on Monday, von der Leyen said on X she would welcome Zelensky for a meeting in Brussels on Sunday which other European

leaders would join by video call, before accompanying the Ukrainian leader on his US trip at his "request" with "other European leaders."

The German government confirmed Merz was among those other European leaders, and would try to emphasize "interest in a swift peace agreement in Ukraine."

Finland said its president, Alexander Stubb, would also travel to Washington.

Trump briefed Zelensky and European leaders on his flight back from Alaska to Washington, saying afterwards that "it was determined by all that the best way to end the horrific war between Russia and Ukraine is to go directly to a peace agreement which would end the war."

Ceasefire agreements "often times do not hold up," Trump added on his Truth Social platform.

But Zelensky has appeared unconvinced by the change of tack, saying on Saturday that it "complicates the situation."

If Moscow lacks "the will to carry out a simple order to stop the strikes, it may take a lot of effort to get Russia to have the will to implement far greater — peaceful coexistence with its neighbors for decades," he said on social media.

Trump expressed support during his call with Zelensky and European leaders for a proposal by

Putin to take full control of two largely Russian-held Ukrainian regions in exchange for freezing the frontline in two others, an official briefed on the talks told AFP.

Putin "de facto demands that Ukraine leave Donbas," an area consisting of the Donetsk and Lugansk regions in eastern Ukraine, the source said.

In exchange, Russian forces would halt their offensive in the Black Sea port region of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia in southern Ukraine, where the main cities are still under Ukrainian control.

Several months into its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russia in September 2022 claimed to have annexed all four Ukrainian regions even though its troops still do not fully control any of them.

"The Ukrainian president refused to leave Donbas," the source said.

Trump notably also said the United States was prepared to provide Ukraine security guarantees, an assurance Merz hailed as "significant progress."

But there was a scathing assessment of the summit outcome from the European Union's top diplomat Kaja Kallas, who accused Putin of seeking to "drag out negotiations" with no commitment to end the bloodshed.

"The harsh reality is that Russia has no intention of ending this war any

time soon," Kallas said.

The main diplomatic focus now switches to Zelensky's talks at the White House on Monday.

The Ukrainian president's last Oval Office visit in February ended in an extraordinary shouting match, with Trump and Vice President JD Vance publicly berating Zelensky for not showing enough gratitude for US aid.

In an interview with broadcaster Fox News after his sit-down with Putin, Trump had suggested that the onus was now on Zelensky to secure a peace deal as they work toward an eventual trilateral summit with Putin.

"It's really up to President Zelensky to get it done," Trump said.

In an earlier statement, European leaders welcomed the plan for a Trump-Putin-Zelensky summit but added that they would maintain pressure on Russia in the absence of a ceasefire.

Meanwhile, the conflict in Ukraine raged on, with both Kyiv and Moscow launching attack drones at each other Sunday.

Back in Moscow, Putin said his summit talks with Trump had been "timely" and "very useful."

In his post-summit statement in Alaska, Putin had warned Ukraine and European countries not to engage in any "behind-the-scenes intrigues" that could disrupt what he called "this emerging progress."

MWL, Islamic coalition to combat extremism and terrorism

JEDDAH (Arab News): The secretary-general of the Muslim World League and chairman of the association of Muslim scholars on Sunday visited the headquarters of the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition in Riyadh.

Dr. Mohammed bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa delivered a lecture, titled "A Reading into the Transformations of Contemporary Intellectual Ideology."

He highlighted the evolution of extremist ideologies in today's world, their diverse forms in terms of religion, politics, and intellect, and the tactical shifts they have undergone.

Al-Issa outlined the importance of dialogue and debate in confronting extremist narratives, particularly in addressing misconceptions in and beyond the Islamic world.

He said the missing link in many international efforts remains the quality of content and delivery in counter-extremism messaging.

The MWL chief also addressed Islamophobia, discussing its causes and offering practical approaches to tackling the phenomenon.

He was welcomed by the coalition's secretary-general, Maj. Gen. Mohammed bin Saeed Al-Moghedi, who attended the lecture alongside member state representatives and coalition personnel.

Both sides explored ways to boost cooperation between the coalition and the Muslim World League to strengthen joint efforts in combating extremism and terrorism.

Al-Moghedi praised Al-Issa's visit affirming the coalition's commitment

to expanding constructive collaboration and unifying efforts in addressing terrorism, which poses a threat to global peace and security.

Al-Issa was also briefed on the coalition's initiatives in four key domains — intellectual, media, counter-terror financing, and military — in addition to its specialized strategic programs.

He praised the Kingdom's leadership for its support in fighting terrorism and extremism in all forms, stressing that the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition plays a pivotal role in addressing extremist ideologies and fostering international cooperation.

Al-Issa commended the coalition's efforts at the Islamic and global levels to combat terrorism and violence.

Journalist Khawar Hussain dies mysteriously in Sanghar

F.P. Report

SANGHAR: The journalism community is in mourning after a local journalist Khawar Hussain was found dead under mysterious circumstances in Sanghar a day ago.

His body was found inside his car, parked outside a private hotel on Hyderabad Road, with a gunshot wound to his temple. Police said the pistol recovered from the vehicle belonged to Khawar, who kept it for self-protection.

DIG Police Faisal Bashir Memon told the media that before the incident, Khawar's car had been parked outside the hotel for a considerable amount of time. The surveillance camera footage showed that he was alone as no other person was seen with him.

The DIG stated that the footage shows Khawar entering the hotel and twice asking for the washroom. After the first inquiry with the hotel manager, he returned to his car. He then exited the car a

second time to ask the watchman the same question before returning to his vehicle.

Police said the hotel manager instructed the watchman to go and ask the journalist if he needed to order anything, as his car had been parked for a long time. When the watchman approached the vehicle, he found him dead.

Police officials stated that it appears Khawar was suffering from severe mental stress and depression, but a final conclusion has not yet been reached. Investigations are underway, and all evidence is being carefully reviewed before a definitive cause of death is determined.

DIG Faisal added that the journalist had moved his parents to the United States in May. He was travelling to Sanghar to attend a mourning gathering [majlis] at his brother-in-law's house.

Khawar had a long and active career in journalism, having worked with several prominent news channels, including Aaj News.

His sudden and mysterious death has not only devastated his family but has also raised questions within the media industry.

In response, the Sindh Home Department has formed a high-level committee to investigate the death. The committee will be headed by a Grade 21 officer, with two DIGs and the SSP of Sanghar serving as members.

Meanwhile, taking notice of Khawar's unnatural death in Sanghar, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has sought a report from the inspector general of police Sindh.

The chief minister has directed the IG to assign the investigation to the best police officer. "The real cause of death must be determined through a thorough investigation," he said.

On the other hand, the Karachi Press Club has also demanded a transparent and impartial investigation of the Dawn News reporter's death and condemned terming it a suicide.

Gandapur praises administration

Continued from Front Page

This is the people's money, and in line with Imran Khan's vision, it will be spent on the people."

Later, the Chief Minister distributed relief cheques among Swat's flood victims.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur on Sunday visited flood-affected areas of Pir Baba and Bashonai in district Buner to assess damages and review ongoing relief efforts. He was accompanied by provincial cabinet members, MNA Barrister Gohar, Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah, and other senior officials.

During the visit, the Chief Minister met with affected families, consoled with the relatives of those who lost their lives in the floods, and offered prayers for the deceased. Expressing deep grief, he said the loss of precious human lives was an irreparable tragedy, and assured that the provincial government stood shoulder to shoulder with the victims in this difficult hour.

"Human lives cannot be replaced, but the government will not leave the victims alone," Gandapur said, pledging maximum assistance. He assured that all financial losses would be fully compensated and that government infrastructure damaged by the floods would be restored without delay.

The Chief Minister added that while rescue and relief operations were underway, a comprehensive damage assessment would soon be completed to ensure timely rehabilitation and disbursement of compensation.

He reaffirmed that every affected individual would receive 100 percent compensation and that no one would be left out.

Hajj 2026 applications can be submitted until Aug 18

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Religious Affairs has extended the deadline for receiving Hajj applications by one day. According to a ministry spokesperson, designated banks will continue accepting applications on Monday, August 18. The spokesperson said more than 110,000 applications have been received in the past 12 days.

determination of the Serbian state. We will use everything at our disposal to restore law, peace and order," Vucic said.

He added that the government needed a few days to prepare "the legal and formal framework" for the response.

"It will be very different from what you have seen so far," he added, without disclosing details, but said that declaring a state of emergency was not being considered.

One dead, 21 injured as train derails near Lodhran

F.P. Report

LODHRAN : One person was killed while 21 others were injured when four bogies of a Karachi-bound passenger train derailed near Lodhran city in eastern Pakistan on Sunday, the railways ministry said.

The accident happened after the brakes of the Karachi-bound Awam Express, which operates from the southern port city to the northwestern Peshawar, failed near the Lodhran Railway station in Punjab province on Sunday.

"According to reports,

one passenger died and 21 passengers were injured," the railways ministry said in a statement.

It added that two passengers were critically injured and were being provided treatment at the Bahawalpur Hospital. The statement said passengers who suffered minor injuries are being treated at the District Headquarters Hospital in Lodhran.

The divisional superintendent of the nearby Multan city and medical teams reached the accident site immediately and are engaged in rescue opera-

tions, the ministry added.

Railways Minister Muhammad Hanif Abbasi took notice of the incident, directing authorities to ensure all possible treatment is provided to the injured passengers and submit a report regarding the incident within seven days.

"Railway staff have been instructed to complete rescue work quickly and restore the down track," the statement said. "Passengers of the affected train have been dispatched to their destinations by an alternative train."

Serbia's president vows 'strong response'

BELGRADE (AFP): Serbia's president on Sunday vowed a "strong" response to anti-government protests, after nearly a week of violent clashes involving his supporters, police and demonstrators across the country.

Clashes have erupted in the capital, Belgrade and other cities for five nights in a row, with fire-works, stones, stun grenades and tear gas used.

More than 130 police

officers have been injured so far, the right-wing President Aleksandar Vucic said at a press conference in Belgrade, with dozens of citizens also reporting injuries and seeking medical assistance.

On Saturday, violence flared in Belgrade, Novi Sad and Valjevo, where a small group of masked men attacked and set fire to the empty offices of Vucic's ruling Serbian Progressive Party.

"You will see the full