

Elite Force cop martyred
F.P. Report

MIR ALI: An Elite Force official was martyred in a terrorist attack in Mir Ali, North Waziristan. Police informed on Thursday, the martyred cop was identified as Mohammad Shoaib, a resident of Dosli. He was targeted and killed by terrorists while performing his duty in Mir Ali. Security forces have cordoned off the area and launched a search operation to trace the attackers.

15 terrorists killed in IBO
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WANA: Security forces clashed with militants at Karamzi Stop in the Azam Warsak area of Lower Waziristan on Thursday, killing at least 15 terrorists, including a suicide bomber, according to military sources. The sources added that four security personnel and five civilians were also injured during the hours-long gun battle. However, the claims could not be independently verified.



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Beijing to continue support for peace: FM

Shehbaz reaffirms resolve to deepen Pakistan-China 'Ironclad' partnership

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthening its "All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership" with China, describing the bond between the two countries as a cornerstone of regional peace, stability, and development.

He was speaking during a meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who called on him at the Prime Minister House here, a Prime Minister's Office news release said. Welcoming Wang Yi, the Prime Minister expressed deep appreciation for China's steadfast support in safeguarding Pakistan's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national development. He lauded President Xi Jinping's "visionary leadership" and recalled his productive meeting with the Chinese President during his visit to Beijing last year.

The Prime Minister said he looked forward to his upcoming visit to Tianjin and Beijing, where he would attend the SCO Heads of State meeting and the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance and the World Anti-Fascist War. He added that he was keenly anticipating meetings with President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Qiang, and other senior Chinese leaders.

Highlighting the importance of economic cooperation, Prime Minister Shehbaz stressed Pakistan's desire to expand collaboration with China in trade, investment, ICT, agriculture, industrialization, mines, and minerals. He particularly underscored the significance of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) for Pakistan's socio-economic development and regional connectivity, expressing satisfaction with the steady progress of CPEC Phase-II.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi, in his remarks, reaffirmed China's commitment to Pakistan, describing the two nations as "ironclad friends" and "all-weather strategic partners." He commended Pakistan's resolve in safe-

guarding sovereignty and pledged Beijing's continued support to promote regional peace, development, and stability. The meeting was also attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Chief of the Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, and senior cabinet members.

Premier reaches out to political leaders; assures support to handle flood situation: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reached out to the leaders of different political parties and assured them of the cooperation and support of the federal government and its institutions to handle the situation caused by the heavy monsoon rains and consequent floods.

The prime minister telephoned Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and expressed grief over the loss of lives caused by the torrential rains and urban flooding in Southern Sindh, particularly Karachi. He offered full support from the federal government to assist the Sindh government in addressing the emergency situation.

Prime Minister Shehbaz directed the National Disaster Management Authority Chairman to stay in close coordination with the Sindh government, provide all possible assistance to the Provincial Disaster Management Authority, and ensure the early warnings to the people about potential risks. The prime minister also spoke with Jamaat-e-Islami Amir Hafiz Naem ur Rehman and Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui.

Discussing with the Jamaat-e-Islami chief the damages caused by recent rains in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and ongoing relief activities, Prime Minister Shehbaz appreciated Al-Khidmat Foundation's proactive role in rescue and relief operations. He also discussed with Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui the recent rains and flood situation in Sindh, as well as potential risks from expected rainfall, assuring full cooperation from NDMA and other federal institutions

to address any emergency situation.

Meanwhile, the British Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer expressed deep condolences and solidarity with Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and the people of Pakistan following the recent monsoon rains and ensuing floods that have caused significant loss of life and property across the country.

In his letter addressed to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the British Prime Minister conveyed his sorrow over the human and financial losses, stating: "I extend my heartfelt condolences to you and the people of Pakistan on the tragic loss of lives caused by the recent monsoon-related disasters." Sir Keir Starmer underscored that both the British government and its people are deeply saddened by the widespread devastation brought by the extreme weather events.

"My thoughts are with all those affected by this tragedy," he wrote, noting that the disaster is particularly distressing for many British families with ties to Pakistan. Highlighting the shared concern within the UK, he added: "The entire British public stands in solidarity with the people of Pakistan during this difficult time."

He also paid tribute to emergency responders and volunteers in Pakistan who, despite severe challenges, continue to assist affected communities. "I commend the emergency response teams and volunteers who are helping people under such difficult conditions," the letter read. Prime Minister Starmer appreciated the ongoing collaboration between the UK and Pakistan and reaffirmed Britain's commitment to assist in the recovery and rebuilding phases.

"It is reassuring that the UK government has already extended support, and we stand ready to provide further assistance in Pakistan's recovery and reconstruction efforts," he assured. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has welcomed the message of solidarity and thanked the UK for its continued support during times of national crisis.

Pak-China reaffirm commitment to enhance high-quality CPEC coop

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and China on Thursday reaffirmed their unwavering commitment to the high-quality development of the upgraded China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) during the 6th Strategic Dialogue held here between Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed the entire gamut of Pakistan-China relations and discussed important regional and global issues. They also exchanged in-depth views on multiple facets of bilateral cooperation, including CPEC 2.0, trade and economic relations, multilateral cooperation, and people-to-people ties.

Addressing the joint press stakeout alongside Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Senator Ishaq Dar emphasized that the two countries enjoy complete unanimity and consensus on all major bilateral, regional, and global matters. "We are heartened by Wang Yi's vision for advancing our bilateral cooperation, especially upgrading CPEC to its next phase," Dar noted. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi described CPEC as the cornerstone of Pakistan-China strategic partnership, stating that the current priority is to advance high-quality development of the Corridor.

He said that during the 6th strategic dialogues, the two sides agreed to upgrade CPEC into "a growth corridor, livelihood-enhancing corridor, green corridor, and open corridor". "We will work hard to deepen our industrial agriculture and mining cooperation to improve the Pakistani people's welfare and accelerate the Pakistan capability for self sustained development and increase Pakistan's economic resilience," he said adding that China also supports development and operation of the Gwadar port and promote the KKH realignment project. Furthermore, the Chinese foreign minister also welcomed the third party participation in the ML-1 (Main Line Railway) project.

Ishaq Dar said during the dialogues, the two sides held the strategic dialogues on the heels of Pakistan-China-Afghanistan Foreign Ministers' trilateral meeting in Kabul. "These mechanisms signify our joint resolve to promote regional peace, stability and prosperity and to share the dividends of Pakistan-China freindship with other counties in region and beyond. He also expressed gratitude to the Chinese foreign minister for China's firm support to

President reaffirms Islamabad-Beijing 'Iron Brotherhood'

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday reaffirmed that Pakistan and China are iron brothers, time tested friends and all-weather strategic partners and friendship with China is the cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy, which enjoys unanimous public, political, and institutional support in Pakistan. The President said this in a meeting with Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, Minister for Foreign Affairs of China, Wang Yi, here at Aiwan-e-Sadr. Vice Foreign Minister of China, Sun Weidong and Ambassador of China, Jiang Zaidong were also present during the meeting, a Presidency's news release said. The President thanked China for its consistent support for Pakistan's sovereignty, territorial integrity, national development, and its principled and just stance on the Jammu and Kashmir dispute.

The President also conveyed his condolences on the loss of precious lives in the recent floods in Beijing and Gansu province of China. The President recalled his visit to China earlier this year, during which he had successful meetings with President, Xi Jinping and senior leadership of China. "The visit underscored my confidence in the steadfastness of the Pakistan-China iron brotherhood," he added. The President mentioned that during his previous tenure, he visited China 14 times to gain deeper understanding of the development and progress of the country which proved to be a precursor to the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). He said that 2026 marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China and Pakistan is planning to celebrate this important milestone in a befitting manner. He said both the countries can use this opportunity to pass on the finest traditions of Pakistan China friendship to our younger generations. The President regarded CPEC, which is part of President Xi's flagship Belt and Road Initiative, as having immense strategic significance for both Pakistan and China.

Pakistan for safeguarding its sovereignty, territorial integrity and national dignity.

The deputy PM said the two sides also agreed to continue close cooperation at the multilateral fora particularly at the United Nation Security Council (UNSC) where Pakistan is currently serving its two years-term as a non permanent member. "We also discussed preparation for PM Shehbaz's forthcoming visit o China to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Council of Heads of State Summit. Further he said next year Pakistan and China would celebrate 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. "We agreed that the two countries will organize a series of event in this regard." Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said China warmly welcomes PM shehbaz to China for the SCO summit. "The two sides will jointly prepare and ensure the success of the series of activities for the 75th anniversary of China-Pakistan diplomatic relations next year." He also expressed sympathies with Pakistan in the wake of the heavy rains, assuring that China will immediately provide emergency humanitarian assistance.

As regards terrorism in the coun-

try, Wang Yi said China highly commences Pakistan's tireless efforts in combating terrorism as it firmly believes that Pakistan's counter-terrorism operation will secure victory. He said Pakistan is effectively protecting the safety of Chinese personal and institutions in Pakistan. Replying to a question, Ishaq Dar said Pakistan's foreign policy will not change which is to establish friendly ties with all countries in the world based on shared values, mutual respect and equality and for global peace and stability. "China is mainstay and cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy and we are committed to further strengthen bilateral relations," he emphasized. Wang Yi, responding to a question said that China's partnership with India is not targeted at any third party and that no other country will affect from these relations.

Later, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi presented a framed picture to DPM/FM Ishaq Dar marking the completion of solarization of the Pakistan Foreign Office project. Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs presented a gift of 2 million RMB to Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs which was utilized for the solarization of the foreign office.



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister of China, Wang Yi called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

PTI suspends Achakzai's nomination as Opp leader

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf on Thursday suspended nomination of the leader of the opposition in the National Assembly and Senate.

The party's political committee has said that the nomination of Mehmood Khan Achakzai and Azam Swati as leaders of opposition in the NA and the Senate has been halted. "No new nominations will be made until the appeals of Omar Ayub and Shibli Faraz being decided," PTI committee said.

PTI Secretary General Salman Akram Raja said that the party leadership is standing by the side of present opposition leaders. "PTI's founder has proposed new names as opposition leaders," Salman Akram said. "We hope that the court will decide the matter in our favour," Raja said.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) reportedly facing internal divisions over party founder Imran Khan's decision to nominate Mahmood Achakzai as the Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly. According to sources, several PTI leaders have raised objections to the proposal, suggesting that the party already has several capable members who could assume the role.

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The issue was discussed in PTI's political and parliamentary committees, where a number of members voiced reservations. Some lawmakers, however, maintained that the decision taken by PTI's incarcerated founder, Imran Khan, should be considered final and binding.

Six killed in mishap

F.P. Report

RAHIM YAR KHAN: A collision between a bus and a rescue ambulance on Thursday killed six people, including four rescue personnel, and injured two others in Punjab's Rahim Yar Khan district, according to officials.

A statement issued by Punjab Rescue Spokesperson Farouk Ahmed said the accident occurred on the Rahim Yar Khan Road in the Kot Samaba area. "Six people, including four rescue personnel, died in the accident," he said. According to Rescue 1122 spokesperson Adnan Shabbir, the incident took place at 3:21pm. He said the two injured people were taken to Sheikh Zayed Medical College Hospital for treatment.

Rahim Yar Khan District Police Officer Irfan Ali Sammon had reached the spot to monitor the relief activities. DC Khuram Javed condoled the families of the deceased rescue officials and sought a report from concerned officers. The Rescue 1122 statement added that the emergency services secretary instructed the district rescue officer to provide an immediate report of the accident. "Provincial Minister for Emergency Services Khawaja Salman Rafique and Secretary Emergency Services Dr Rizwan Naseer expressed their regret over the loss of six lives in the Rahim Yar Khan accident," it said.

SC grants Imran bail in May 9 cases

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan granted bail to former Prime Minister Imran Khan in eight cases related to the May 9 disturbances. A three-judge panel, led by Chief Justice Yahya Afridi, heard appeals challenging prior Lahore High Court rulings and subsequently approved the bail requests. Despite this legal victory, Khan remains incarcerated due to a 14-year sentence in a separate corruption case and his arrest in the Toshakhana-II case. His legal team has challenged the corruption verdict in the Islamabad High Court, hoping for further reprieve.

During the proceedings, Special Prosecutor Zulfikar Naqvi contended that the May 9 events were orchestrated under Khan's directives. He highlighted that these cases are pending before anti-terrorism courts and that Khan's previous bail applications had been denied over the past two years. The bench questioned the prosecution's evidence directly implicating Khan, with Naqvi presenting three witness accounts. Chief Justice Afridi clarified that the court's focus was solely on bail, not the trial's merits, emphasizing that definitive proof would be evaluated by the trial courts.

Justice Azhar Hasan Rizvi inquired about the difference between Khan's situation and that of former Senator Ejaz Chaudhry, who had received bail in a similar May 9 case. The prosecutor failed to provide a clear distinction, arguing only

that Khan's lack of a polygraph test disqualified him from bail. The bench identified weaknesses in the prosecution's arguments, with Justice Rizvi noting that police should have completed their investigation during the two months Khan was previously out on bail.

The court also recognized that Khan hadn't undergone voice matching, photogrammetric, and polygraphic tests despite court authorization. Chief Justice Afridi acknowledged that non-compliance would have legal repercussions but reiterated that trial courts would determine the evidence's significance. The bench composition changed before the hearing, with Justice Hasan Azhar Rizvi replacing Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb. The May 9, 2023 incidents involved widespread unrest following Khan's apprehension at the Islamabad High Court in a corruption inquiry. During these protests, government and military facilities, including the Corps Commander's House in Lahore and the General Headquarters in Rawalpindi, were targeted. While some PTI members secured bail after their arrests, others remain imprisoned. The former prime minister, removed from office through a no-confidence vote in April 2022, has been detained since August 2023, facing numerous charges ranging from corruption to terrorism.

Meanwhile, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders have welcomed the Supreme Court decision in favour of jailed party chairman Imran Khan, declaring it a clear sign that the May 9 case was built on a false narrative.

Bail granted to Imran does not mean acquittal: Tarar

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Speaking to media while commenting on the Supreme Court judgments, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar strongly criticized Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for portraying the recent bail granted to its founder in the May 9 cases as a political triumph.

The party was "fooling itself," emphasizing that the PTI founder remains convicted in the £190 million Al-Qadir Trust corruption case, with a 14-year prison sentence still in place. He underscored that bail is a procedural relief, not an exoneration, and lamented against misrepresenting legal developments as vindication.

Tarar criticised senior PTI lawyers for presenting the bail granted to the party's founder as a vindication, clarifying that bail is merely a procedural

relief-not a declaration of innocence. He further alleged that PTI-affiliated lawyers are intentionally prolonging legal proceedings through various pretexts to obstruct accountability.

Commenting on recent bail celebrations, Tarar said the distribution of sweets was "tasteless" and symbolic of a party lacking a meaningful public agenda. "These sham celebrations cannot fool the nation," he stated, adding that such gestures reflect PTI's desperation to remain relevant despite waning public support.

"Even individuals accused of serious crimes such as murder and robbery are often granted bail on technical grounds," Tarar stated, adding that the true measure lies in the final adjudication of the charges. He further remarked that PTI appears to confuse bail with exoneration, ignoring the fundamental legal dis-

inction between the two. The minister also took aim at PTI leaders for invoking religious narratives, calling it a deliberate attempt to distract from the legal facts of the Al-Qadir Trust case. He asserted that the PTI founder failed to provide any credible explanation for transferring billions of rupees to Malik Riaz of Bahria Town, nor did he justify the receipt of valuable land in return.

Tarar dismissed claims that the conviction was politically motivated or linked to the PTI founder's vision of establishing a "Riyasat-e-Madina," stating that the court's decision was based solely on evidence and legal merit. He described the Al-Qadir Trust case as one of the most significant corruption scandals in Pakistan's history and accused the PTI founder of creating a sham trust to mask illicit dealings.

COAS didn't speak to any journalist: DG ISPR

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Director General Inter-Services Public Relations (DG ISPR) Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry on Thursday clarified that the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Asim Munir has not given any interview to any journalist.

He termed Suhail Warraich's action inappropriate and described it as an effort of self-promotion and personal gain. Talking to journalists, the DG ISPR said the article by Suhail Warraich, which is currently being discussed, pertains to an event in Brussels where hundreds of people took photographs. "Neither

PTI nor any apology came under discussion," he said.

He said that the perpetrators and facilitators of the May 9 incidents must be brought to justice in accordance with the law. Expressing regret, he said that even a senior journalist had demonstrated such irresponsibility. The DG ISPR said that Pakistan is capable of changing the destiny of the entire region, which is why it continues to face repeated attacks.

Terming the youth as a great asset of Pakistan, he urged them to understand the legacy and history of their ideological state and to recognize their strength. "The day they realize their power, no extremist or proxy will be able to fright-

en them," he added. He said India believed that by supporting its terrorist proxies and facilitators, it could discredit the Pakistan Army through an attack. However, everything unfolded contrary to India's nefarious designs, he observed.

Pakistan and its armed forces gave a befitting response to India and its proxies, he asserted. He recounted how some believed that India, with its military machine worth billions of dollars, would easily defeat Pakistan. There were even suggestions that India and its proxies—including Fitna al-Khawarij and Fitna Hindustan—should attack Pakistan simultaneously.

Mustafa Baloch highlights rapid rain relief in Karachi

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Spokesperson Sindh Government Mustafa Abdullah Baloch, said that after the intense monsoon rains drenched Karachi, the Sindh government responded with remarkable speed and efficiency. Within hours, provincial government, local authorities, and emergency services were fully mobilized to restore normality and safeguard citizens. Mustafa Abdullah Baloch emphasized that close coordination between the Chief Minister's office, district administrations, the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, Water Board, traffic police, and the Provincial Management & Disaster Authority (PMDA) enabled a city-wide operation that delivered quick results.

According to the spokesperson, Mustafa Abdullah Baloch, the government's proactive measures-such as advance cleaning of major drains and nullahs ahead of the monsoon season-proved instrumental. These preparations reduced flooding in key areas and helped ensure that accumulated rainwater was drained efficiently. The spokesperson said this preemptive work demonstrated the government's commitment to protecting residents

dents from the worst impacts of extreme weather.

The spokesperson, Mustafa Abdullah Baloch, also noted that to ensure public safety and allow emergency teams to operate without hindrance, the Sindh government declared a public holiday. This timely step, welcomed by the public, helped reduce road congestion, prevent accidents, and accelerate restoration work across the city.

Highlighting the scope of operations, the spokesperson, Mustafa Abdullah Baloch, praised the swift deployment of de-watering pumps, heavy machinery, and field teams to clear water from residential and commercial areas. He commended the dedication of rescue workers, municipal staff, and volunteers who worked tirelessly in challenging conditions to reopen roads, restore electricity, and provide relief to affected neighborhoods.

The spokesperson, Mustafa Abdullah Baloch, underlined that the recent heavy downpours also reflect the growing influence of climate change on weather patterns in Karachi and other cities of Pakistan. Rising global temperatures, he explained, are intensifying the monsoon cycle and

making extreme rainfall events more frequent. He noted that phenomena such as cloudbursts-where massive volumes of rain fall in a short span over a limited area-are becoming increasingly common, leading to flash floods and urban inundation. He added that Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has repeatedly raised this concern before the international community, stressing that while Pakistan contributes barely 1% of global carbon emissions, it is among the countries most severely affected by climate change. The spokesperson said such advocacy is vital to secure global support for enhancing Pakistan's capacity to withstand and adapt to these environmental challenges.

Looking ahead, the spokesperson, Mustafa Abdullah Baloch, assured that the government is maintaining a high state of readiness. Continuous monitoring, standby relief teams, and public advisories are in place to respond quickly to any further rainfall. These ongoing efforts, he said, reflect the Sindh government's determination to safeguard lives, protect infrastructure, and keep the city moving, even under the most demanding weather conditions.

Pakistan holds prominent position in tourism

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan said that Pakistan holds a prominent position in the field of tourism worldwide. The hotel and restaurant sector in Pakistan is developing rapidly. The role of the business community is important in the country's economic development. He expressed these views while addressing the International Food and Restaurant Award ceremony organized by Brain Designer Pakistan in Islamabad.

Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan said that the hotel and restaurant sector in Pakistan is developing very rapidly, with a little attention from the government, it can be further improved. He said that Allah has blessed Pakistan with natural beauty, which is a center of attraction for tourists from all over the world. The Governor of Punjab said that food and tourism are closely related. He said that the promotion of tourism is proving to be helpful in highlighting the positive image of Pakistan around the world. The Governor of Punjab said that Pakistan needs young people like CEO Brain Designer Raja Rauf who are working for the promotion of tourism and food industry. He further said that the we have defeated India with the power of unity in Marqat i Haq. The Governor of Punjab said that Pakistan is a peace-loving country, but this should not be considered as weakness. He said that Pakistan wants peace with its neighboring countries, but will not compromise on its integrity.

Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan said that steps are needed for cheap electricity so that the business community gets relief. He said that in the current situation of heavy rains and floods, the public should avoid going to the tourist places in northern areas. The Punjab Governor said that the flash floods have caused severe damage in the northern areas including Buner and Gilgit. He said that people's houses, property, livestock and valuables were washed away in the flood. The flood victims are currently waiting for help. The Punjab Governor said that the Pakistan Army, PDMA and the government are working day and night to help the flood victims. He said that made an appeal to the philanthropists to actively help the flood victims in this difficult and difficult time.

Renowned educationist Mumtaz Ali passes away

F.P. Report

SUJAWAL: Renowned educationist, administrator, and activist Mumtaz Ali Khawaja passed away after a prolonged illness at a private hospital in Karachi on Thursday morning. According to family sources, he was hospitalized a week ago after his health deteriorated. The 87-year-old educationist had been battling multiple health complications for the past two decades and breathed his last on Thursday morning, close relatives revealed.

He was ranked as one of the notable educationists of Sujawal and Thatta districts, playing a vital role in creating mass awareness about the importance of quality education in remote areas. His cousin, former labor unionist and columnist Ghulam Mustafa Hashmani, revealed that the late Mumtaz Ali was among the few educated figures in Jati Taluka, Thatta district, who understood the importance of quality education.

After completing his graduation from the University of Sindh Jamshoro, he joined Aga Khan School Tarr Khawaja as an honorary teacher, educating hundreds of students. In 1976, he was appointed as a high school teacher at Government High School Sujawal, where he held key positions. Later, he collaborated with local villagers, and through his efforts, the historic Government Middle School Tarr Khawaja was upgraded to a high school, and in 1985, he became the headmaster of that school.

ed her to join the investigation and fully cooperate with the authorities.

The court also instructed the investigating officer to submit a progress report on the probe at the upcoming hearing. The case emerged after certain videos of the couple circulated online, allegedly promoting gambling-related activities, leading to legal proceedings against them.

UN Women and Zalmi Foundation sign MoU

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: UN Women Pakistan and Zalmi Foundation have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaborate on advancing gender equality and empowering women and girls through sports, leadership, and economic empowerment initiatives. The signing ceremony, held in Islamabad, marked the beginning of a strategic partnership that will see both organizations join forces on a range of impactful programmes, from national women's sports leagues to vocational training and community outreach.

The MoU was formally signed by Main Abbas Layaq, Chief Operating Officer of Zalmi Foundation, and Jamshed M. Kazi, Country Representative of UN Women Pakistan. Speaking at the ceremony, Jamshed M. Kazi, Country Representative of UN Women Pakistan, said: "At UN Women, we believe that every woman and girl has the right to realize and reach her full potential - whether in classrooms, at workplaces, in communities or on sports fields. This partnership with Zalmi Foundation is not just about games and competitions; it is about dismantling barriers, defying stereotypes and social norms, and opening doors to leadership and opportunity. Sport has the power to change lives. The ability to drive gender equality by teaching women and girls teamwork, self-reliance, resilience and confidence. Together, we are creating spaces where women's voices are heard, their talents are celebrated, and their dreams are within reach."

Mr. Javed Afridi, Chairman of Peshawar Zalmi and Zalmi Foundation, reaffirmed his organization's commitment to this cause: "Sports has always been a unifying force, and through this partnership



with UN Women, we are determined to ensure that women and girls across Pakistan have equal opportunities to shine, both on and off the field. This initiative is not just about cricket or football; it is about building confidence, leadership, and resilience among women, while also contributing to their economic independence and empowerment."

Under the partnership, a series of flagship initiatives will be launched to promote women's empowerment through sports and skills development. These initiatives include women's cricket and football leagues aimed at expanding opportunities for young girls to participate in competitive sports, along with skills training programmes designed to strengthen women's economic independence. The sports leagues will involve regional talent identification, structured tournaments, coaching camps, and leadership sessions, while the vocational training will focus on stitching, design, and entrepreneurship, enabling women to establish sustainable home-based businesses. UN Women will contribute by providing technical guidance on gender mainstreaming, facilitating awareness sessions on women's rights, offering mentorship opportunities, and supporting media visibility.

Beyond the field and training spaces, the partnership will emphasize mentorship and leadership development by connecting participants with

role models from sports and other sectors, community mobilization to ensure inclusive participation from underrepresented areas, and strategic storytelling to highlight inspiring examples of women breaking barriers. Institutional engagement will be reinforced through public events, recognition awards, and advocacy initiatives promoting gender equality.

This collaboration represents a multi-dimensional commitment to creating opportunities for women and girls, enhancing confidence and leadership, and challenging stereotypes through both sports and economic empowerment. It marks a significant step towards fostering inclusion, resilience, and ambition across Pakistan.

UN Women exists to advance women's rights, gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. As the lead UN entity on gender equality, we shift laws, institutions, social behaviours and services to close the gender gap and build an equal world for all women and girls. We keep the rights of women and girls at the centre of global progress-always, everywhere. Because gender equality is not just what we do. It is who we are.

Zalmi Foundation is the philanthropic arm of Peshawar Zalmi, committed to social development through initiatives in sports, education, health, and youth empowerment across Pakistan.

Media urged to amplify family planning breakthroughs

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Population Council, in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), convened the Meeting of the Media Coalition on Population under the theme "Seizing the Moment - New Developments in the SRH Landscape in Pakistan: The Catalyst Role of Media." The meeting brought together leading journalists, religious scholars, and medical experts to discuss how the media can accelerate progress on family planning and reproductive health.

In his opening remarks, Ikram ul Ahad, Deputy Manager Communication, Population Council, highlighted some of the major developments in recent months in taking forward the population management, including the Council of Islamic Ideology's Joint Declaration affirming the permissibility of birth spacing in Islam related to mother and child health outcomes, the Prime Minister's announcement of a high-level committee on population, the removal of sales tax on contraceptives, and the passage of a National Assembly resolution recognizing population growth as a pressing national challenge. "We are at a defining moment where political leadership, religious consensus, and fiscal facilitation are aligning. The media must seize this moment to amplify voices from Parliament, religious forums, and communities, and translate these breakthroughs into public awareness and accountability," he said.

Providing a policy and systems perspective, Dr. Ali Mir, Senior Director, Population Council, emphasized the need to build on recent milestones while acknowledging persistent challenges. "The momentum we see today is the result of years of groundwork, yet stark disparities remain across and within provinces.



Shedding light on the media's role, Dr. Mir added, "True behavior change requires influencing deeply rooted gender norms, social customs, and critical gaps in SRH service availability continue to act as binding constraints. Here, the media can play a vital role in challenging norms, reshaping perceptions, and fostering sustained change." He emphasized the need of creating equitable availability of health and education services for all.

Speaking from a religious perspective, Allama Tahmeed Jaan Al-Azhari, Executive Director of the International Research Council for Religious Affairs (IRCRA), described the recent Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) ruling as a turning point. "The CII's declaration-affirming that birth spacing is essential for maternal and child health and aligned with Islamic teachings-provides the moral clarity Pakistan has needed," he said. Drawing on Islamic principles of Meezan (balance), he added, "Islam not only permits but encourages deliberate intervals between pregnancies to safeguard women's health and family well-being. This ruling is a powerful tool to dispel misconceptions and elevate informed religious discourse."

Offering clinical and public health evidence, Dr. Saima Zubair, FRCOG, Information Secretary of the Society of Obstetricians & Gynecologists of Pakistan (SoGP) and Senior Vice President of the Pakistan Academy of Family Physicians (PAFP), highlighted the urgency of action and the

media's role. "Pakistan endures a maternal mortality rate of about 180 deaths per 100,000 live births and an infant mortality rate of 64 per 1,000. Nearly 3.8 million unintended pregnancies each year lead to unsafe abortions, endangering women's lives," she noted. Dr. Zubair added that spacing births by at least 24 months can reduce neonatal mortality by up to 50%. "Family planning is not just about preventing pregnancies-it is about saving lives, enhancing health, and empowering women," she emphasized.

In his concluding remarks, Dr. Ghulam Farid Khan, Programme Analyst M&E (SRH), UNFPA, said, "Meeting the unmet need for family planning is key to reducing unintended pregnancies and unsafe abortions while upholding the dignity and health of women and families. The media's role will be vital in breaking taboos, correcting myths, and ensuring these services reach every community."

The meeting, attended by journalists from across the country representing leading national media outlets, concluded with a strong consensus: the alignment of religious endorsement, political commitment, and fiscal facilitation presents an unprecedented opportunity. By shaping narratives around balanced family size, equity, and health, the media can serve as watchdog, translator, and bridge-helping deliver reproductive health services where they are most needed and setting Pakistan on a healthier, more sustainable path.

Tessori calls for APC to devise solution for Karachi's problems

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori, expressing deep concern over the devastation caused by recent heavy rains, today urged for an All-Parties Conference (APC) to formulate a comprehensive and permanent strategy for addressing Karachi's chronic urban challenges as well as the problems faced by other parts of Sindh. He underscored the need for provincial and federal governments, local bodies, and all stakeholders to come together in preparing a new master plan for the province.

While speaking to the media at Governor House, he pointed out that a political party has ruled Sindh for 17 years, with the same party also holding the local government for the last four years, yet no written or concrete solution has been put forward. Stressing the urgency, he remarked that this was not the time for criticism but for practical steps. He urged stakeholders not to wait for the next spell of rains and to immediately sit down to prepare a workable plan. The Governor noted that relations between the federal and provincial governments are currently strong, eliminating any hindrance in pursuing practical proposals. He assured that his office is ready to coordinate with federal institu-

tions wherever needed.

Highlighting the plight of citizens, Kamran Tessori mentioned that while water had been cleared from main roads, thousands of homes remain inundated, forcing families onto rooftops. He explained that vehicles, electronic appliances, and engines have been destroyed, with the middle class facing immense financial setbacks. "It is not enough to say water was drained by evening; the damage runs much deeper, and only sustainable planning can provide lasting relief," he emphasized.

He also voiced concern over prolonged power outages, damaged homes, and shuttered businesses in Karachi, Hyderabad, Mirpurkhas, and other cities, calling for an end to political blame games. Despite having both a political party mayor and nine town administrations controlled by another political group, he noted, citizens' issues remain unresolved. "The real question is: who stopped them from working? Today, businesses are closed, laborers idle, schools disrupted, and people deprived of basic needs," he lamented.

Governor Tessori stressed the urgency of drafting a new master plan for Karachi, clearly assigning responsibilities to every institution. He suggested that the Prime Minister should personally visit Karachi and convene an

APC, ensuring the participation of provincial and federal authorities, local representatives, and opposition parties to finalize a coordinated approach before the next rains.

Revealing that Governor House has received over 11,000 complaints in just two days, he pointed out that the lack of executive powers hampers immediate action. Concluding his remarks, he stated, "If politics is put aside and practical measures are taken, both provincial and federal governments have the capacity to resolve these issues. Now is the right time to agree on a new master plan and bring permanent relief to the people of Karachi and Sindh."

Meanwhile, the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) has warned of a looming catastrophe in the metropolis and urged the Sindh Government to immediately declare an emergency, as record-breaking monsoon rains have devastated Karachi, leaving 17 people dead, crippling infrastructure, and plunging businesses into crisis. In a joint statement, Chairman Businessmen Group (BMG) Zubair Motiwala and KCCI President Muhammad Jawed Bilwani lamented that despite Karachi being the country's economic lifeline, the city continues to suffer neglect and poor reinvestment in its infrastructure.

Sharjah social centre celebrates August 14

F.P. Report

SHARJAH: Sharjah Social Centre marked Pakistan's Independence Day on August 14 with a memorable celebration, bringing together children, parents, and community members to experience a practical lesson in love for the homeland, hope, and preparation for the future.

The event began with the energy and enthusiasm of the children. Students from ten schools, both young and older, participated in speeches, tableaux, and various activities that showcased courage, cooperation, and love for Pakistan. Awards were presented to students of grades 10 and 12 toppers, as well as O levels and A levels topper students, to recognize their efforts, creativity, and dedication.

Consul General Hussein Muhammad addressed the children and parents, emphasizing that the younger generation is the future of Pakistan. He highlighted that courage, unity, and love for the homeland



are the greatest strengths of a nation. The children were also educated about climate exchange, the importance of trees, and meteorological challenges to prepare them for natural disasters and social responsibilities in the future.

Sharjah Social Centre President, Chaudhry Khalid Hussain, highlighted the importance of the children's efforts and the community's participation, noting that such programs foster patriotism, resilience, and civic awareness among young minds. Community members also took part in the celebration, emphasizing that under the banner of

love for our homeland and people, we are all united, a sentiment expressed by Engineer Muhammad Zubair.

Finally, Chaudhry Khalid Hussain thanked all the guests, the Consul General, officials of consulate and the community members for their participation in strengthening the spirit of love, hope, and unity for Pakistan. This event was not only a celebration of Independence Day but also a message of courage, hope, unity, environmental awareness, and recognition of children's talents for the future generation.

Mayor Karachi inspects rain-hit areas

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab today visited several areas of District Central, including Nagan Chowranghi, Do Minute Chowranghi, Surjani, Sakhi Hasan, KDA Chowranghi, Hyderi and other localities, where he inspected on-ground drainage and cleanup operations.

He noted that teams of Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) worked day and night to clear rainwater and ensure timely disposal across the city. The Mayor underlined that the swift response of KMC staff prevented large-scale accumulation of water and emphasized that comprehensive steps are in place to address complaints quickly. During the visit, he interacted with citizens, listened to their concerns, and issued immediate directions for resolution. He observed that Gujjar Nullah

is now flowing in its natural course, adding that the timely cleaning of drains helped avert a critical situation.

While inspecting Gurumandir, Jahangir Road, Federal B Area, Shahrah-e-Pakistan, Sher Shah Suri Road, and other places, Murtaza Wahab mentioned that bags of stones and gravel were found at some choking points by the Water Corporation staff. However, the administration acted promptly to remove the obstructions. He informed that traffic has been restored on Shahrah-e-Pakistan, Shahrah-e-Aurangzeb, Rashid Minhas Road, and Sher Shah Suri Road. He also stressed that he is personally visiting areas where complaints arise to ensure immediate redressal.

During his visit to District West, the Mayor recalled the devastation in Yousuf Goth during the heavy rains of 2020 and

2021. He noted that a new major drain was constructed in the locality to improve the sewerage system. As a result, despite the latest downpour, water is flowing smoothly, and the streets remained clear of flooding.

Highlighting progress, Murtaza Wahab pointed out that all routes from North Nazimabad to Sohrab Goth have been cleared. He praised the dedication of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) workers and elected representatives whose efforts have led to visible improvements. He remarked that while critics limit themselves to rhetoric, the city administration's practical work speaks for itself. On this occasion, Deputy Parliamentary Leader in City Council Dil Muhammad, Town Chairman Haji Nawaz Brohi, UC Chairperson Zubeida, other elected representatives, and officials accompanied the Mayor.

Ducky Bhai's wife Aroob Jatoi gets relief

F.P. Report

LAHORE: A Lahore sessions court on Thursday barred police from arresting YouTuber Saad Rehman, widely known as Ducky Bhai, his wife Aroob Jatoi until August 30 in a case alleging promotion of gambling through social media content.

The matter came up for hearing before an

Additional Sessions Judge, where Aroob Jatoi was represented by advocates Irfan Kalyat and Raja Abdul Rahman Ranjha. Her legal team sought interim bail to prevent arrest in the ongoing inquiry.

Granting her plea, the court approved interim bail and ordered that she must not be taken into custody until the next hearing. At the same time, the judge direct-



PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court Bar Association General Secretary Ishfaq Daudzai along with cabinet members at a relief camp for flood victims, demonstrating their commitment to humanitarian support.

Lessons from Zarb-e-Karrar: What next?

Air Marshal (Retd) Asim Suleiman



PAKISTAN secured a remarkable victory over India during a period of modest expectations. In the West, the country was systematically denied access to avenues of economic, diplomatic, and military support, owing to the prevailing geopolitical priorities. Nonetheless, it triumphed over an adversary widely regarded as the West's principal hope in countering a rising power, China. If this is not cause for celebration, then what is? This moment presents the nation with an opportunity to craft a grand narrative and refine its strategic communication. While there is no need for euphoria, it would be a disservice to downplay the significance of this achievement. It marks a watershed in regional dynamics, and Pakistan must capitalise on it. The respect earned is not transactional, as some suggest; rather, it reflects a deeper truth about human nature as manifested in state behaviour. Among nations, the image has now been instated: of a nation that can fight, and one that has taken the wind out of India, which saw itself as a regional hegemon. There are lessons embedded in this episode that will shape the future of the region.

First Lesson: The Armed forces, under the leadership of Field Marshal General Asim Munir and Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Babar Sidhu, drowned India's grand designs of 'Akhand Bharat' and its perceived role as the regional net security provider in the depths of the Indian Ocean. India's defeat culminated in a loss so profound it reshaped the nation's strategic identity. Its credibility as the guarantor of regional order has been fundamentally compromised. This outcome has permanently altered India's trajectory, not merely in terms of military capability, but more significantly in its global perception. The veneer of invincibility has been stripped away, and with it, the strategic narrative that once underpinned its regional posture. India's diplomatic meltdown that followed after the events of May war, is the evidence of India's reputational nosedive in global affairs.

Second Lesson: India's centre of gravity, Rafale in the air and the S-400 on the ground, was effectively neutralised by the Pakistan Air Force. This achievement, for detractors raises a critical question: why did India opt for a ceasefire on 10th May? The answer lies in what would have transpired from the 11th May onwards had the ceasefire not been concluded. India's air force was effectively grounded, a fact acknowledged by its own Chief of Defence Staff, General Anil Chauhan. Reduced to deploying drones for its air campaign, which is poor man's weapon of choice, as it is reminiscence of how weaker parties in the Middle East and Europe have turned to such instruments under duress. Meanwhile, the PAF was fully poised to launch a sustained offensive air campaign. India was down and under, with no credible response to PAF's notch-two-up manoeuvre. They were checkmated, fully aware that they could not match the tempo of war set by the PAF. Exit was the only option left.

Third Lesson: India's indigenous capability is not worth the hype that surrounds it. The myth of the BrahMos missile system was shattered during the conflict. Widely advertised as a game-changing weapon, its effectiveness in the theatre of war proved underwhelming. The armed forces of Pakistan successfully neutralised the barrage of attacks through a combination of soft and hard kills. India failed to achieve the strategic outcomes it had anticipated by employing BrahMos missiles. The gap between projection and performance was laid bare.

These lessons have reshaped the way the world perceives South Asia's strategic equilibrium. This is not a transactional phase; it is a reality the international community has acknowledged, and is now engaging with Pakistan accordingly, offering space in avenues from which it was once excluded. The longevity of this phase depends entirely on Pakistan: on how deftly it plays its cards in an ever-morphing global order. Pakistan must now focus on the fungibility of power—translating its proven military capability into diplomatic and economic mileage.

Pakistan's next challenge is not merely to navigate the turbulent winds of geopolitical storms, but to shape them, while walking a tightrope in balancing its relations with both the United States and China. India will likely continue to play the role of spoiler in the region, driven by its ambition to ascend the ladder of global prestige, at the expense of its neighbours. In light of this, Pakistan must remain militarily prepared to counter any future designs India may harbour.

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Chief Justice PHC dismisses Judicial Magistrate from Service

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Chief Justice of Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice S.M. Atique Shah has dismissed Judicial Magistrate Salman Ahmad from service due to disciplinary violations.

According to a notification issued by the Registrar of Peshawar High Court, the judicial magistrate was found guilty of breaching discipline, leading to an inquiry and subsequent disciplinary action.

Following a complaint, an inquiry was initiated against the judicial magistrate, during which he was issued a show-cause notice.

The magistrate appeared before the inquiry committee but failed to defend himself against the allegations. Based on the inquiry committee's report and recommendations, disciplinary action was taken, resulting in the magistrate's dismissal from service.

PHC seeks explanation from KP govt against repeated transfer of Deputy Director Education

The Peshawar High Court has expressed concern over the repeated transfers of Deputy Director Education Gul Raj and sought an explanation from the provincial government. Justice Waqar Ahmad remarked that while PTI claims federal government harassment, the provincial government seems to be following suit, on Thursday.

PHC two-member bench comprising Justice Waqar Ahmad and Justice Kamran Hayat Miankhal heard the petition. The petitioner's lawyer, Nawroz Khan Advocate, informed the court that Gul Raj was transferred on political grounds. Initially posted in the Directorate of Education for Merged Districts, Gul Raj was transferred to Lower Dir after three months.

The lawyer argued that the transfers were part of political vendetta due to his relation to the petitioner, who is his sister. He claimed that the Chief Minister was displeased with him for seeking an adjournment in a case involving PTI's Atif Khan, leading to his removal from the position of Additional Advocate General.

Justice Waqar Ahmad emphasized that political matters should not affect families. He noted the irony that while PTI complains about federal harassment, the provincial government appears to be doing the same. The court directed the Advocate General to look into the matter and adjourned the hearing, restraining the provincial government from taking further action against the petitioner.

Training of 1,400 teachers of Girls Community School begins

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The professional training of 1,400 Girls Community Schools (GCS) teachers has commenced on August 17, 2025, in the districts of Peshawar, Nowshera, Swabi, and Haripur.

The initiative is being carried out in collaboration with KP-HCIP and the Directorate of Professional Development (DPD).

The training program has been designed to address gaps identified in the online assessment held on July 10, 2025.

The assessment highlighted the need for improvement in quantitative and analytical reasoning, subject content competency, pedagogical skills, and classroom management.

According to The Education Support Scheme (ESEF) Spokesperson Mohammad Fawad Mian, the training will be conducted in three phases, each comprising five days, and will continue until August 31, 2025.

He added that district focal persons, District Program Officers, and ESEF Head Office officials have been tasked with monitoring the training process to ensure smooth implementation.

He further stated that the training will not only enhance teachers' professional standards but will also help modernize teaching practices.

"We are confident that this program will directly contribute to improving students' academic performance and shaping a brighter future for our children," he remarked.

Universities pensioners get seven years' pending dues

Pensioners laud efforts of Higher Education Minister

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Higher Education, Archives and Libraries, Meena Khan Afridi, has apologized to the pensioners of universities across the province for the delay in pension disbursements.

He announced that funds have now been released for lump-sum payments to all employees. University pensioners and employees expressed their gratitude to the KP government, Minister Meena Khan Afridi, and other senior officials for addressing this longstanding issue.

In connection with the settlement of pension arrears, a special ceremony was held at the University of Agriculture, Peshawar, under the auspices of the Universities Intellectual Forum. Cheques for pending dues were distributed among university pensioners at the event.

The chief guest on the occasion was the KP Minister for Higher Education Meena Khan Afridi, while Advisor to Chief Minister on Finance Muzzammil Aslam and Special Assistant to Chief Minister on Science and IT Shafqat Ayaz also attended.

Addressing the ceremony, Minister Meena Khan Afridi said that, in line with the vision of PTI's founding chairman Imran Khan and the directives of Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, efforts for the betterment of higher education have been underway since day one. He announced that pension arrears of all university pensioners in KP were being paid in lump sum.

The Minister highlighted that the current government allocated Rs. 4.5 billion for universities in its first year, which was increased to Rs. 10 billion this year.

He further stated that by June 2026, all universities

in the province will be fully solarized and shifted to an E-Office system, while a ranking system for provincial universities will also be launched this year.

He expressed hope that by the next Senate meeting, most universities in KP will become financially surplus.

Minister Afridi also congratulated PTI's founding chairman Imran Khan on securing bail in the May 9 court cases and lauded Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur's efforts for the province's financial autonomy.

Speaking on the occasion, Advisor to CM on Finance Muzzammil Aslam said that the founding chairman had issued clear directions to ensure all resources are provided for higher education. He stated that this year, all pension arrears have been cleared, and the university grant has been enhanced to Rs. 10 billion.

He added that 22% of

the provincial budget is being spent on education, with 19% for primary and secondary education and 2.75% for higher education. The government aims to raise higher education's share to 5% by 2028. He further noted that 20% of provincial debt will be repaid this year, with plans in place for repayment of remaining liabilities.

Special Assistant to CM on Science and Information Technology, Shafqat Ayaz, said the government, with cabinet members' support, was addressing academia's issues on a priority basis, with the payment of pension arrears being a key step.

The Universities Intellectual Forum praised Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur and Minister Meena Khan Afridi for their education-friendly vision, stating that the current government had taken significant steps to improve access to quality education.

Shakoor chairs meeting to discuss progress of WWB

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa minister for labour Fazal Shakoor Khan on Thursday chaired an important meeting of the progress of Workers Welfare Board Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The meeting was attended by Secretary labour department Captain (R) Mian Adil Iqbal, Secretary Workers Welfare Board Sher Alam Khan, and other concerned officers.

The meeting reviewed in detail various agenda items including the posting and transfer policy of teaching

staff in Workers Welfare Board schools across the province, promotion to the next grades, expeditious disposal of medical cases, financial and budgetary matters, and provision of electricity as well as allotment of family flats work-erw at Regi Lalma, Peshawar.

During the meeting, various suggestions regarding the posting/transfer policy for teaching staff were discussed. It is suggested that a placement committee would be constituted to rationalize while teachers desiring transfers would submit their applications to

the said committee, which will carry out the posting/transfer exercise once a year between April and July, at the start of the academic session and no transfers would be made afterwards.

Regarding promotions of teaching staff, the provincial minister Fazal Shakoor Khan issued directives to the concerned officials to convene the meeting of the Departmental Promotion Committee (DPC) next week to discuss promotion cases.

The meeting was further informed that more than 200 medical cases had been

received by the Medical Committee, out of which 50 cases have been recommended while 150 are in the pipeline and would be resolved soon. To ensure timely resolution of medical cases, the proposal for seeking input from doctors was also discussed.

On the issue of electricity provision to the 2056 family flats constructed at Regi Lalma for industrial workers, the provincial minister assured that he would soon hold a meeting with the Advisor on Energy and Power, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, to resolve the matter on priority.

Munro Hiking Trail will become a Tourism Landmark in Pakistan

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a joint meeting of the Department of KP Tourism and the KP Forest, it was decided that the Munro Hiking Trail will soon be opened for adventure-seeking trekkers. The meeting was attended by Secretary KP Forests Mr. Shahid Zaman, Secretary KP Tourism Dr. Abdul Samad, Director General Culture & Tourism Authority Habib ullah Arif, Director General Environmental Protection Agency Samiullah, and officers from both departments. Secretary KP Forest, Shahid Zaman stated that the Munro Hiking Trail is located near Jabouri, Mansehra, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, one of the most beautiful places in Pakistan. He said this track was developed between 1900-1905 by A.V. Munro, a Forest Conservator in British India. Its purpose was to establish a horse trail from Kund to Kamal Ban (Naran Valley), passing through the mountainous region between the Siran and Kaghan Valleys. The track has been further enhanced by the Forest Department, which has arranged accommodation and other facilities for adventure tourism enthusiasts at its entry point. This 66-km-long track passes through various valleys, forests, and mountainous terrain, serving as a bridge between the Siran and Kaghan valleys. Key points of interest along and around the track include Galya/Darbei, Nadi Bangla, Naga Forest, Mala Meadows, Sharan Forest, Manshi Top, and Kamal Ban Forest.

Shahid Afridi

THE severe impacts of climate change are becoming increasingly evident in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Across the globe unusual rises in temperature, disruption in rainfall patterns and environmental imbalance have once again brought devastation to Pakistan particularly Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In 13 districts of the province cloudbursts, floods and landslides have resulted in the deaths of more than 450 people with over 600 injured. According to initial estimates the economy and basic infrastructure have suffered losses exceeding 40 billion rupees.

The rapid melting of glaciers is not only raising the threat of floods but also increasing the likelihood of cloudbursts in mountainous regions. These cloudbursts trigger flash floods that engulf villages. Torrential waters



descending from the mountains are not only destroying settlements but also moving towards major cities crippling urban life.

According to the Meteorological Department if 10 centimeters or more of rainfall occurs in a small area within one hour it is classified as a cloudburst. This phenomenon usually covers an area of one to ten kilometers and is a sign of severe climate change. The recent cloudburst and

subsequent floods have once again raised the pressing question: Are we as a nation prepared to face climate-related risks. Climate change is no longer just an environmental issue it has now become a social, economic and humanitarian crisis requiring urgent and serious attention.

Among the most severely affected districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are Buner, Bajaur, Battagram, Swat, Mansehra,

Torghar, Upper and Lower Dir. In Buner alone 290 people lost their lives and over 200 were injured thousands of livestock perished, hundreds of houses and shops were completely destroyed while thousands suffered partial damage over 30 thousand acres of agricultural land was damaged destroying maize, rice, vegetables and fruit orchards.

This destruction is expected to result in food shortages and inflation in the coming months. Overall economic losses are estimated to exceed 40 billion rupees. According to a provincial government report, state-owned properties suffered damages of over 20 billion rupees with 603 government buildings either destroyed or partially damaged across 20 departments. The most destruction was recorded in Battagram 214 buildings, Swat 97, Bajaur 65 and Mansehra 58. Additionally, 37 educational institutions, 83



roads, 10 bridges were completely destroyed while 226 irrigation channels and 68 water supply schemes were damaged. According to the KP Finance Advisor the provincial government has so far released 4 billion rupees for relief in affected areas. According to the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) recent rains and floods have left 748 people dead and 978 injured across the country. The death toll

includes 165 in Punjab, 446 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 40 in Sindh, 45 in Gilgit-Baltistan, 22 in Azad Kashmir and 8 in Islamabad. Nearly 990 houses collapsed and around 4,000 livestock were lost.

Pakistan has been facing climate-related risks for years. According to Germanwatch's Climate Risk Index 2025, Pakistan ranked among the most affected countries in 2022 when unprecedented rains and glacial lake outbursts

impacted 94 districts affecting 33 million people, leaving 1,700 dead, displacing 7.6 million and causing economic losses exceeding 30 billion dollars.

Climate change is no longer just a subject of scientific debate it has become a harsh reality of daily life. The recent cloudbursts and floods have made it clear that unless urgent and serious action is taken such disasters will assume far more dangerous proportions in the coming years.

The government, environmental experts and local communities must work together on awareness campaigns, planning and sustainable development strategies. Otherwise these natural disasters will continue to threaten our cities, farmlands and the future of our coming generations. We must take steps to protect, conserve and improve our forests as this will help safeguard us from the ill impacts of climate change.



In brief

Commissioner visits flood-hit areas in Swat F.P. Report

MINGORA: Malakand Division Commissioner Abid Wazir conducted a detailed visit to the areas affected by recent rains and floods, including Makan Bagh, Mula Baba, Mingora, and adjacent locations. During the visit, he was accompanied by Deputy Commissioner Swat Salim Jan Marwat, Additional Deputy Commissioner Numan Ali Shah, WSSC Swat, and other relevant department officials. During the visit, the Commissioner reviewed relief and rehabilitation activities and met with flood victims to understand their problems and issues. He directed the concerned officials to take immediate measures to resolve the public's difficulties. Talking to the media, Commissioner Abid Wazir said that recent rains and floods have affected most districts of Malakand Division, with District Buner being the most affected, while Swat, Shangla, and Bajaur are also among the severely affected districts. He said that relief and rehabilitation efforts are underway in all districts, with all relevant departments working together. He stated that most roads in Mingora have been opened for traffic, while the Makan Bagh and Mula Baba road will be opened by this evening, where debris removal and cleaning work are progressing rapidly. Provision of clean drinking water has been 90% completed, and work on restoring two major water supply schemes is also underway. Similarly, electricity restoration in the mentioned areas has been 80% completed, and full restoration will be ensured soon. Commissioner Abid Wazir said that people are voluntarily participating in debris removal and cleaning efforts alongside WSSC Swat employees. He appreciated the significant involvement of the public, the Pak Army, NDMA, PDMA, welfare organizations, and other institutions in relief and rehabilitation activities. The Commissioner stated that the provincial government is providing Rs. 2 million compensation to the families of martyrs who lost their lives in recent rains and floods. Surveys are also underway to assess damages to homes, shops, crops, livestock, and other losses. After the survey is completed, the affected people will be provided assistance according to the provincial government's directives.

Staff found absent F.P. Report

KOHAT: Under the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's program "Awami Agenda", the Commissioner Kohat Division, Syed Motasim Billah Shah, paid a surprise visit to Hangu and Orakzai districts on Thursday. During the visit, the Commissioner thoroughly inspected administrative affairs and service delivery at various government offices and health facilities. At the District Health Office Orakzai, 13 out of 27 staff members were found absent from duty. Expressing deep anger, the Commissioner directed immediate departmental action against the absentees. Moreover, due to storing medicines in unsafe conditions, the District Store Keeper (EPI) and District Store Keeper (Medicines) were suspended and disciplinary proceedings were initiated against them. Later, the Commissioner, visited the Basic Health Unit Ibrahimzai, Hangu, where he appreciated the health department and staff for ensuring the availability of medicines and maintaining proper administrative measures.

Specialist doctors visit flood-hit Buner



F.P. Report

BUNER: Emergency Medicine Specialist (NHS, UK) and Dermatologist Dr. Umar Farooq Khan visited Buner and treated many flood-affected patients at Army Medical Camp set up in Pir Baba, on Thursday. Dr. Umar and the people

of Buner applauded the quality of medical services provided by the Army and local civil administration for emergency situations. However, there are dire need of psychologists and psychiatrists because the families of martyred, still missing, injured and badly affected areas are traumatized.

One killed, 3 children drowned

F.P. Reprt

LOWER DIR: Armed men abducted and killed a former forest watchman in Maidan area of Lower Dir district on Thursday morning, police and residents said.

They said that three to four unidentified assailants seized Faizur Rehman, son of Sher Zada and a resident of Lalu village, from near his house at around 6:40am. His body was later found shot dead in the nearby Lalu stream. Police officials reached the spot soon after the incident and launched an investigation. A police official said that the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) later claimed responsibility for the killing.

Children drown in Panjkora River: In a separate incident, three children drowned in the Panjkora River at Shalfalm

Malikabad on Thursday, officials said.

The victims were identified as Sana, 10, Maria, 6, and Ajira, 8. Rescue 1122 teams managed to pull two of the girls alive and provided them first aid, but one girl remained missing till late in the day. According to a Rescue 1122 spokesperson, divers equipped with modern tools, assisted by local residents, continued a search operation to recover the missing child.

Youth killed in Munda: Unidentified gunmen shot dead the son of a local elder in Munda late Tuesday night and escaped, police and residents said. Following funeral prayers, residents staged a protest at Munda Chowk, demanding immediate arrest of the culprits. Police assured the protesters of full cooperation and pledged to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Relief convoy reached Shangla

F.P. Report

SHANGLA: A relief convoy comprising 41 trucks, dispatched by the Prime Minister of Pakistan, arrived in Shangla district on August 21, 2025, to assist communities affected by recent flooding.

The convoy was received at Chagam House, Puran, where Prime Minister's Youth Program focal person Malik Roof Awan and Adnan Amir Maqam participated in the relief operations. On this occasion, additional aid provided by the Malik Awan Foundation was formally handed over to Engineer Tahir Hussain, President of the Youth Program for Shangla District.

The relief goods will be distributed among flood victims in several severely affected areas, including Gumbat Chagam, Shati Dara, Machkandi, and surrounding localities within the jurisdiction of Aloh and Choga police stations. Local residents expressed gratitude to the Prime Minister and his representatives for the timely assistance and voiced

hope that efforts toward rehabilitation of affected families would continue.

PML-N Leader visits flood victims: Dr. Ibadullah, Leader of the Opposition in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly and MPA from Shangla (PK-30), visited various flood-affected areas of the district. During his visit, he went door-to-door, meeting with the affected families and expressing deep sorrow over the tragic loss of lives and widespread destruction caused by the recent floods.

On this occasion, Dr. Ibadullah personally distributed PKR 50,000 to the families of each deceased victim from his own pocket. Speaking to the victims, he said: "The essence of our politics is public service. We belong to the people, and it is the people who have elected us. Therefore, all our efforts and energies will be dedicated to serving them."

He assured the affected families that they would not be left alone, their damaged houses would be reconstructed, and shelter would be provided to every homeless family.

District Task Force meeting held F.P. Report

KOHAT: Complying the directions of the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, an important meeting of the District Task Force on the "Cashless Khyber Pakhtunkhwa" initiative was held on the special directions of the Deputy Commissioner Kohat Rahimullah Mehsud, under the chairmanship of Additional Deputy Commissioner Finance & Planning, Syed Aamir Ali Shah today.

The meeting beside others, was also attended by the officers of the district administration, police, departments concerned, representatives of the mobile companies, microfinance banks, Jazz Cash, trade unions and KCCI.

Participants were briefed in detail on digital wallet accounts, electronic payments and modern financial facilities. It was told that a cashless system is the need of the modern era, ensuring safe and transparent financial transactions, reducing wastage of time and resources and providing convenience to the public. It was further told that economies around the world are rapidly shifting towards cashless systems and it is imperative for citizens of Pakistan particularly Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to adopt modern technologies for easier and more secure financial management.

In the meeting, it was stressed, to ensure effective and sustainable implementation by taking the trader community and the public into confidence. It was further stressed the need for consultations, awareness campaigns and training sessions before implementation to build public trust.

Additional Deputy Commissioner assured the participants that the district administration would ensure the phased and effective implementation of the cashless system while giving due importance to the suggestions of all stakeholders. He urged the banking sector, relevant institutions and trade organizations to highlight the benefits of digital transactions and a cashless economy through a joint public awareness campaign. He further emphasized that all technical and practical measures in this regard should be completed at the earliest so that citizens could fully benefit from modern financial facilities.

Meanwhile, in view of the recent heavy rains and the potential threat of floodwater entering the school premises in Mohallah Faqir Khel, Chairman DDAC Karak and MPA Khurshid Khattak took immediate action on the public complaints and a report highlighted by the Media.

On his directions, the C&W Department's heavy machinery was promptly dispatched to the site. The team successfully diverted the floodwater and saved the said school from possible damage. On this occasion, MNA Shahid Khattak's focal person Aashiq Munir and Engineer Junaid were also present. Speaking on the occasion, they said "Educational institutions are the future of our children and their protection is our top priority. Delays in addressing public issues will not be tolerated."

They while appreciating the efforts of the C&W team, said that their round-the-clock work ensured the timely safety of the school which is a practical demonstration of both public cooperation and the commitment of the elected representatives.

Revival of jirga system and ADR mechanisms debated

Khawaja Wajih ud Din & Mohammad Zafar Ali

A recent federal government proposal to revive the Jirga system and establish an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism in the Newly Merged Districts (NMDs) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) has ignited a significant debate. The initiative, reportedly driven by local requests, aims to improve justice delivery and strengthen law and order while operating within the existing constitutional framework. However, it has been met with strong opposition, particularly from the provincial government, which cites constitutional violations and concerns about provincial autonomy.

Legal Framework, Benefits, and Risks: The authors, having been associated with the establishment of the legal and security framework in the newly merged districts, assessed the legal position, benefits, and risks associated with both the traditional Jirga system and a formalized ADR mechanism. Pakistan's legal system, it should be noted, already has extensive provisions for ADR, including: Civil Procedure Code of 1908 (CPC); Specifically, Section 89-A and Order X Rule 1A provide mechanisms for mediation and conciliation.

Other Enabling Acts: Several other statutes encourage ADR, such as: The Arbitration Act, 1940, The Probation of Offenders Ordinance, 1960, Sections 10 and 12 of the Family Courts Act, 1964, Section 195C of the Customs Act, 1969, and Chapter XVII of the Customs Rules, 2001, Article 163 of the Qanun-i-Shahadat Order, 1984 (decision on oath), Plea Bargaining (Section 25 of NAB Ordinance, 1999), Section 134A of the Income Tax Ordinance, 2001, and Rule 231 C of the Income Tax Rules, 2002, The Small Claims and Minor Offences Courts Ordinance, 2002, Section 47A of the Sales Tax Act, 1990, and Chapter X of the Sales Tax Rules, 2004, Section 38 of the Federal Excise Act, 2005, and Rule 53 of the Federal Excise Rules and Sections 96-99 of the Local Government Act, 2013.

Furthermore, the federal government's Alternative Dispute Resolution Act, 2017, and the K-P Alternative Dispute Resolution Act, 2020, are already in force. What clearly emerges is that there is no dearth of law on Alternative Dispute Resolution, hence instead the focus should be on implementing existing laws. Instead mulling over the revival of the old Jirga system under the now-defunct Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR), seems to regressive rather than progressive.

The potential benefits of a well-structured ADR system are widely recognized. These include speedy and cost-effective justice, reduced burden on formal courts, and a culturally relevant approach that can enhance community trust. However, the proposal also carries significant risks. A primary concern is the potential for a parallel justice system that could undermine the formal judiciary. There are also fears that decisions made by unelected Jirga members could violate constitutional rights, particularly for women and marginalized groups, and that the system

could be vulnerable to political manipulation.

Infrastructure and Institutional Progress in NMDs: The debate comes despite significant progress in establishing formal judicial and executive infrastructure in the NMDs since their merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The provincial government has approved 907 judicial posts, including positions for District and Sessions Judges, Additional District and Sessions Judges, Senior Civil Judges, and Civil Judges, to establish regular courts in the tribal districts. Auxiliary staff positions have also been created, and the Peshawar High Court has promoted numerous judicial officers to fill these roles.

Beyond the judiciary, the merger has seen the creation of 702 local governments and 28,000 new police positions. Other rule of law institutions like prosecution, prisons, and probation are also being established. This extensive infrastructure development, including the construction of judicial complexes, is already underway, suggesting that the formal justice system is being institutionalized.

Opposition and Constitutional Concerns: The federal proposal has not been without controversy. The provincial government has voiced strong objections, labelling the formation of the federal committee a "blatant constitutional violation" that undermines provincial autonomy. They cite multiple articles of the Pakistani Constitution—including Articles 42, 97, 119, 121, 137, 142, 146, 147, 246, as well as the 25th and 18th Amendments—to argue that the federal government lacks the legal authority to legislate on a provincial matter.

Further opposition has come from various quarters. There are concerns about the lack of representation of elected NMD provincial assembly members in the committee's proceedings. Accusations have also been made that the initiative is a pretext for the federal government to gain control over the region's valuable mineral resources. Many fears that the proposal could be a step toward undoing the FATA-KP merger, a hard-won integration that brought constitutional rights and the rule of law to the region. Human rights activists have also reiterated their long-standing reservations, highlighting the undemocratic and exclusionary nature of traditional Jirgas, which often discriminate against women and minorities.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) Mines and Minerals Bill, a point of significant contention, has been stalled due to a lack of consensus. The opposition and some government members have raised strong objections, arguing that the draft legislation violates provincial autonomy and the 18th Amendment. This opposition stems from concerns that the federal government is attempting to gain control over the region's valuable mineral resources, a fear that has been linked to the broader debate about the NMDs' future.

Systemic Digitization and Modernization of the Administration of Justice: To address the complexities of justice delivery, a specific recommendation involves leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) and digital technologies. This would entail simplifying judicial procedures by using AI to identify complexities and

streamline processes, ensuring faster and more efficient dispensation of justice. This is seen as a way to modernize the legal system without resorting to traditional, potentially discriminatory, Jirga-style mechanisms.

Recommendations for the Way Forward: In light of these challenges, several recommendations have been put forth to ensure any new mechanism is legitimate and effective. First and foremost, any proposed system must be strictly aligned with Pakistan's Constitution and national laws, ensuring and passing the test of objective judicial scrutiny. It was emphasized that the problem is not lack of legislation but a failure of implementation. Therefore, the focus should be on mechanisms for implementing existing laws.

Other key recommendations include providing training to mediators on human rights and legal principles, ensuring the meaningful participation of women, and establishing transparent and documented procedures. To protect the formal justice system, the scope of any new mechanism should be limited to civil and minor disputes, with criminal matters remaining under the purview of formal courts. A clear and accessible appeal process to formal courts must also be considered essential. It is foremost to understand the most of the civil matters pertain to ascertainable facts and data, hence the judicial discretion needs to be extremely restricted, which will make the unnecessary litigation a futile exercise. Unfortunately, the frivolous litigation is not punished, no law of torts being truly implemented, hence the proclivity for excessive litigation getting encouraged.

Finally, long-term success hinges on securing genuine legislative backing and buy-in from the K-P provincial government and local elected representatives. The complexities of judicial procedures must also be simplified, possibly through the integration of digital technologies and AI.

This entire discussion is framed by the federal government's historic responsibility for the former FATA regions. For over 70 years, these areas were under the direct administrative and operational control of the federal government, which contributed to a lack and failure of state-building institutions. Therefore, the onus is on the federal government to provide sufficient and commensurate resources to compensate for these past failures. A commitment of funds is a must to bring the NMDs at par with the rest of the country on a fast-track basis, ensuring that the merger's promise of development is fully realized. The federal government must provide sufficient and commensurate resources to bring the NMDs on par with other provinces, recognizing the historical lack of state-building institutions in the region. Without this financial commitment, the establishment of the rule of law and other vital state institutions will remain elusive and severely hampered.

By acknowledging the complexity and sensitivity of the issue, the need is to emphasize the importance of continued collaboration between federal and provincial authorities and local communities to achieve sustainable development in the NMDs while upholding the supremacy of the Constitution.

JI, AKF dispatch more relief goods for flood hit people in Malakand

Haleem Asad

LOWER DIR: The third relief convoy of Jamaat-e-Islami Islamabad, comprising five trucks loaded with relief goods, were dispatched for flood-affected areas of Buner under the leadership of the JI Islamabad chief, Nasrullah Randhawa.

The Jamaat-e-Islami Khyber Pakhtunkhwa North chief Inayatullah Khan, Al-Khidmat Foundation provincial president Fazal Mahmood, and other office-bearers received the consignment at the Chakdara Motorway Interchange. Speaking on the occasion, Inayatullah Khan said relief items worth Rs170 million were being distributed in phases across flood-hit districts of Malakand division. He added that on the instructions of party chief Hafiz Naeemur Rehman, thousands of Jamaat-e-Islami and AKF workers had been mobilised to assist affected fami-

lies in Buner, Bajaur, Shangla and Dir.

He said volunteers were also using heavy machinery to remove boulders and debris from homes, mosques, business centers, and roads to restore access. The relief items include tents, water purification units, kitchen sets, tarpaulins, and food supplies. Inayatullah said the second phase of rehabilitation would soon begin.

Highlighting the role of Al-Khidmat Foundation, he said the organisation had emerged as a leading humanitarian body in Pakistan. Fazal Mahmood noted that the initial phase had focused on search and rescue operations, which were still ongoing to locate missing persons, while temporary relief activities were being carried out simultaneously. He added that long-term rehabilitation and reconstruction support would also be extended in the next stage. Jamaat-e-Islami leaders expressed gratitude to Al-

Khidmat Foundation Islamabad officials and volunteers for their timely assistance.

PMS officer laid to rest: Provincial Management Service (PMS) officer Tariq Jamal, currently serving in grade BPS-19 as Director Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority, was laid to rest at his ancestral graveyard in Talash. His funeral prayer was led by prominent religious scholar, Maulana Muhammad Ismail, and attended by administration officers, colleagues, relatives and friends.

The deceased had also served as additional deputy commissioner finance and district monitoring officer (education) in Lower Dir for several years. He passed away at Peshawar due to cardiac failure the other day. The deceased was the son of Haji Gul Jamal and cousin of Maulana Dr. Muhammad Ismail.

E-courts in Pakistan: Bridging justice and technology



Hira Fatima

THE Pakistani judiciary has been criticized for ages regarding delayed justice, case backlog, and inconvenience to litigants in seeking recourse to courts, particularly those residing in

out-of-way places. To counter these negatives and to bring about the modernization of the judicial system in Pakistan, the idea of e-courts came to be introduced in the country.

E-courts mean utilizing new information and communication technology to carry out court proceedings online. Rather than physical presence in the court-house, judges, attorneys, and witnesses are linked with video-link systems, and records of cases are stored electronically.

The main goal of e-courts is to provide speedy, affordable, and transparent justice. Regular court proceedings in Pakistan entice numerous adjournments, extended journeys for litigants, and security issues in sensitive cases. Through going digital with hearings, the judiciary is not only saving time and

resources but also easing the litigation burden on parties involved. The system also reduces risks of transporting under-trial prisoners and witnesses, especially in terror or high-profile cases, ensuring higher security.

Pakistan came out openly with its first e-court in 2019 when the Supreme Court launched a video-link facility. Through this effort, lawyers from the Karachi and Quetta registries could plead cases in front of sitting judges in Islamabad without the need to cross provinces. This achievement was not only a milestone in the nation's judicial record in terms of technology but also served to demonstrate the scope for developing such practices further at High Courts and District Courts.

video-link facilities have come to be used increasingly to take down witness statements, particularly in criminal cases where attendance in person might be inconvenient or dangerous.

Some of the features of e-courts, which are a promising innovation, include enabling video-conferencing for hearings, online case management, and encouraging digital record-keeping so that documents and evidence remain stored electronically. By lessening adjournments and curtailing unnecessary travel, the system lends itself to efficiency and accessibility. For people in remote locations like Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan, and interior Sindh, e-courts present an opportunity to engage with legal proceedings without the financial and physical cost of traveling to major cities.

In spite of these benefits, there are a few challenges to the implementation of e-courts in Pakistan. The nation has a persistent digital divide, with few Internet connections in rural areas and a lack of infrastructure to provide sophisticated ICT facilities. Judges, lawyers, and court personnel must train to function in this new way of holding proceedings. Additionally, cybersecurity is a cause for concern, as judicial information is extremely sensitive and needs to be protected from hacking and abuse of power.

In the future, the destiny of e-courts in Pakistan seems bright if the judiciary and government keep pouring money into digital infrastructure and capacity-building. Making e-courts available in every district and tehsil, merging mobile courts with digi-

ital setups, and liaising with organizations such as NADRA for facilitating secure verification of identity can further reinforce the system. In the long run, e-courts can not only reduce the backlog of cases but also make justice more accessible, transparent, and efficient for the common citizen.

In summary, e-courts of Pakistan are a step in the right direction towards judicial modernization. Although there are challenges in infrastructure, digital literacy, and security, initial success of video-link hearings at the Supreme Court has shown the vast potential of the project. With effective expansion and administration, e-courts can revolutionize the system of justice so that it delivers timely and inexpensive justice to everyone in Pakistan.



China's growing nuclear arsenal

HONG KONG (Reuters): Alongside a massive build-up in conventional military firepower, China has embarked on a rapid and sustained increase in the size and capability of its nuclear forces, according to the US military and arms control experts. The commander of the US Strategic Command, General Anthony Cotton, told Congress in March that the directive from Chinese leader Xi Jinping that China's military be ready to seize Taiwan by 2027 was driving a build-up of nuclear weapons that could be launched from land, air and sea.

In its 2023 national defense policy, China renewed its longstanding pledge that it would not be the first to use nuclear weapons under any circumstances. The so-called "no first use" policy also includes a promise that China will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against a non-nuclear armed state. In response to questions, the defense ministry in Beijing said "a

nuclear war cannot be won and must not be waged." China, it said, adhered to a "nuclear strategy of self-defense and pursues a no-first-use policy."

In its annual report on Chinese military power, the Pentagon said despite China's public stance, its strategy probably includes a possible first use in response to conventional attacks that threaten the viability of its nuclear forces, command and control or that approximates the effect of a nuclear strike. Beijing would also probably consider nuclear first use if a conventional military defeat in Taiwan "gravely threatened" the Communist regime's survival, the Pentagon said in the report published late last year. China's defense ministry said it opposed "any attempt to hype up the so-called 'Chinese nuclear threat' in an effort to smear and defame China and deliberately mislead the international community." China is expanding and modernizing its weapons stockpile faster than any other nuclear-armed power

and has accumulated about 600 warheads, according to the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, a Chicago-based non-profit. It said China is building about 350 new missile silos and several new bases for road mobile launchers. It estimated that China's military, the People's Liberation Army, had about 712 launchers for land-based missiles but not all were assigned for nuclear weapons. Of those launchers, 462 can be loaded with missiles "that can reach the continental United States," it said.

Many of the PLA's launchers are for shorter range missiles intended to attack regional targets but most of those were not assigned for a nuclear strike, the Bulletin's assessment said. In its report, the Pentagon estimated that the PLA would have more than 1,000 operational nuclear warheads by 2030, as it seeks to build a bigger force ranging from low-yield precision strike missiles to intercontinental ballistic missiles with multi-megaton explosive impact.

Poland calls drone crash in country's east

WARSAW (AP): Poland's defense minister said that a flying object that crashed and exploded in a cornfield in eastern Poland was identified as a Russian drone, calling it a provocation by Russia. At a news conference in Warsaw, Defense Minister Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz accused Russia of provoking NATO during a crucial moment, as peace talks over the war in neighboring Ukraine are underway, the country's news agency PAP reported. "Russia is provoking us once again," Kosiniak-Kamysz said, just as peace talks have given hope that the war "has a chance of ending."

Police said they received reports of the crash around 2 a.m. and found burned metal and plastic debris at the scene, near the village of Osiny. The blast broke windows in some nearby houses, but nobody was injured, PAP reported. Poland's Armed Forces Operational Command said on social media that no violations of Polish airspace from neighboring Ukraine or Belarus were recorded overnight.

Officials initially said the explosion may have been caused by a part of an old engine with a propeller. Lublin District Prosecutor Grzegorz Trusiewicz told reporters several investigators - both civilian and military - were examining the crash site. Since Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine more than three years ago, there have been a number of intrusions into Polish airspace, raising alarm in the European Union and NATO member state and reminding people how close the war is.

NZ facing challenges

WELLINGTON (Reuters): New Zealand is facing the toughest national security challenges of recent times with increasing threats of foreign interference and espionage, particularly from China, according to an intelligence report released. The New Zealand Security Intelligence Service (SIS) report said there was almost certainly undetected espionage activity harming the country's interests and that foreign states continue to target critical organisations, infrastructure and technology to steal sensitive information.

"Some states, including China, Russia and Iran, are willing to engage in covert or deceptive activity in order to influence discussions and decisions, or gain access to technology and information that can help them meet these goals ... New Zealand has been targeted by some of these activities," the report said. China was a particularly "assertive and powerful" actor in the region and had demonstrated both a willingness and capability to undertake intelligence activity that targets New Zealand's national interests, it added.

The Chinese Embassy in New Zealand did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The report titled New Zealand's Security Threat Environment is released annually as part of a government shift to better inform New Zealanders about risks the country is facing. The country, part of the Five Eyes intelligence and security alliance, has increasingly amped up its rhetoric over the growing influence of China in the region and a rise in geopolitical tensions, committing earlier this year to spend more on defence. Director-General of Security Andrew Hampton said the threats need to be taken much more seriously than they are currently.

"Our threat environment is deteriorating and that has a direct impact on our safety and security," he said in a statement released alongside the report. The report also pointed to the growing threat of violent extremism and said the most plausible attack scenario remains a lone actor who has been radicalised online. "Grievances and polarising issues in the online information space are almost certainly driving support for a range of violent extremist ideologies within New Zealand," the report noted.

Murni, sourced timber mostly from rainforest in areas the NGOs visited, half of which was then exported to US firms MJB Wood and Tumac Lumber in 2024, they said.

MJB Wood is the main Iauan plywood supplier to Jayco, while Tumac Lumber supplies companies such as RV parts maker Patrick Industries, "whose customers include Thor Industries, Forest River and Winnebago", the report said. The NGOs said it meant it was "almost certain" Indonesian tropical wood was being used in the RV supply chain in the United States. None of the companies mentioned replied to the report's authors when asked for comment, it said. Neither the companies nor the Indonesian environment ministry immediately responded to an AFP request for comment.



GAZA STRIP: Palestinians rush for cover as smoke billows after an Israeli strike on a building in Jabalia.

US destroyers head toward waters off Venezuela

WASHINGTON (AP): The United States is deploying three Aegis guided-missile destroyers to the waters off Venezuela as part of President Donald Trump's effort to combat threats from Latin American drug cartels, according to a US official briefed on the planning. The USS Gravely, the USS Jason Dunham and the USS Sampson are expected to arrive soon, said the official, who was not authorized to comment and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

A Defense Department official confirmed that the military assets have been assigned to the region in support of counter narcotics efforts. The official, who was not authorized to comment about military planning, said the vessels would be deployed "over the course of several months." The deployment of US destroyers and personnel comes as Donald Trump has pushed for using the US military to thwart cartels he blames for the flow of fentanyl and other illicit drugs into American communities and for perpetuating violence in some US cities. Trump has also pressed Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum to cooperate more on security than her predecessor, specifically being more aggressive in pursuit of Mexico's cartels. But she has drawn a clear line when it comes to Mexico's sovereignty, rejecting suggestions by Trump and others of intervention by the US military. Trump in February designated

Venezuela's Tren de Aragua, MS-13 in El Salvador and six groups based in Mexico as foreign terrorist organizations. His Republican administration has also stepped up immigration enforcement against alleged gang members.

The designation is normally reserved for groups like al-Qaida or the Islamic State group that use violence for political ends - not for money-focused crime rings such as the Latin American cartels. But the Trump administration argues the international connections and operations of the groups - including drug trafficking, migrant smuggling and violent pushes to extend their territory - warrant the designation. Earlier this month, the Trump government announced it was doubling to \$50 million a reward for the arrest of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, accusing him of being one of the world's largest narco-traffickers and working with cartels to flood the US with fentanyl-laced cocaine. The press office of Venezuela's government did not respond to a request for comment from the AP on the deployment of the destroyers. But without mentioning the ships, Foreign Minister Yvan Gil in a statement characterized the US government's drug-trafficking accusations against Venezuela.

"Washington's accusing Venezuela of drug trafficking reveals its lack of credibility and the failure of its policies

in the region," Gil said. "While Washington threatens, Venezuela steadily advances in peace and sovereignty, demonstrating that true effectiveness against crime is achieved by respecting the independence of its peoples. Every aggressive statement confirms the inability of imperialism to subdue a free and sovereign people." The statement was followed by the government's decision to temporarily ban the purchase, sale and operation of drones in Venezuela's airspace. In 2018, drones armed with explosives detonated near Maduro in an apparent assassination attempt while he was delivering a speech to hundreds of soldiers being broadcast live on television. Maduro said the US had increased its threats against Venezuela and announced the planned deployment of more than 4.5 million militia members around the country. The militias were created by then-President Hugo Chávez to incorporate volunteers who could assist the armed forces in the defense of external and domestic attacks. "The empire has gone mad and has renewed its threats to Venezuela's peace and tranquility," Maduro said at an event in Caracas, without mentioning any specific action. Maduro was indicted in a New York federal court in 2020, during the first Trump presidency, along with several close allies on federal charges of narco-terrorism and conspiracy to import cocaine. Back then, the US offered a \$15 million reward for his arrest.

Chinese troops swelter through rehearsal for major military parade

BEIJING (AP): Rows of neatly dressed soldiers marched in unison to shouted instructions at a training ground in humid Beijing, as China prepares to unveil new domestically produced military hardware at a parade next month.

President Xi Jinping will inspect troops in the capital's Tiananmen Square at the event to mark 80 years since the end of World War II, with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin and other world leaders expected to attend. Pin-straight lines of men and women clutching guns packed the pavement at a rehearsal on a military training square under the hot sun in north-west Beijing.

Soldiers in their twenties stared sternly as sweat collected on their faces and soaked through their fatigues. Wang Ranran, an army guard, said she was

"extremely proud" to participate in the parade on September 3. "China often uses the term 'steel-gun rose' to describe its female soldiers," she said. "The combination of roses and guns, we really like it." Troops wearing white, green and navy blue uniforms with Chinese flags on their chests started and stopped to the piercing voices of the officers directing the show.

Training that is "strict, difficult and practical" has always been the army's tradition, said Lan Yu, a second-level staff sergeant. Rehearsals had not lasted long, he said, because parade training was part of their daily schedule.

Millions of Chinese people were killed during a prolonged war with imperial Japan in the 1930s and 40s, which became part of a global conflict following

Tokyo's attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. The ruling Communist Party has held a series of blockbuster events in recent years to commemorate its wartime resistance. China's military will showcase its latest equipment on September 3, "reflecting the evolution of modern warfare", Major General Wu Zeke, an official at China's military commission, told a news briefing. "All of the weapons and equipment taking part in this review were selected from domestically produced, currently active main battle systems, with a significant proportion being newly unveiled equipment," Wu said.

These will include strategic heavy weapons and hypersonic precision systems, as well as unmanned and counter-unmanned equipment making their public debut, he

said. The parade, which will last around 70 minutes, will "fully showcase our military's powerful capability to prevail in modern war", Wu said. It will also feature ground troops marching in formation, armoured columns, aerial echelons and other high-tech fighting gear. The Kremlin has confirmed that Putin will attend, and Chinese officials said other world leaders were also expected at the parade. China raised its defence spending for 2025 by 7.2 percent in March.

The increase comes as Beijing's armed forces undergo rapid modernisation and eye deepening strategic competition with the United States. China has the world's second-largest military budget but lags well behind the United States, its primary strategic rival.

Peru's Constitutional Court pauses probes into President Dina

PERU: The Constitutional Court of Peru has paused investigations into Dina Boluarte until her term ends in 2026, citing her position as the country's sitting president. The court suspended probes led by the public prosecutor's office that looked into alleged misconduct under Boluarte.

"The suspended investigations will continue after the end of the presidential term," the ruling explained. One of the most significant probes had to do with Boluarte's response to the protests that erupted in Peru in December 2022, after the embattled president at the time, Pedro Castillo, attempted to dissolve Congress. Instead, Castillo was impeached, removed from office and imprisoned, with critics calling his actions an attempted coup d'état. His removal, in turn, prompted months of intense public backlash: Thousands of protesters

blocked roads and led marches in support of the left-wing leader. Boluarte, who took over the presidency, declared a state of emergency in response, and the subsequent clashes between the police and protesters killed more than 60 people and left hundreds injured. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights found that, in certain parts of the country, "the disproportionate, indiscriminate, and lethal use of force was a major element of the State response to the protests". It noted that "a significant number of victims were not even involved in the protests".

In January 2023, Attorney General Patricia Benavides launched a probe into the actions of Boluarte and her ministers. By November of that year, Benavides had filed a constitutional complaint, accusing Boluarte of causing death and injury to protesters. The public

prosecutor's office later set aside part of the investigation, which delved into whether Boluarte's actions amounted to "genocide". Boluarte has denied any wrongdoing and instead called the protest probe a distraction from the attorney general's own public scandals. But Boluarte has continued to face probes into other aspects of her presidency. Police in 2024 raided her home and the presidential palace as part of the "Rolex case", an investigation prompted by media reports that Boluarte owned multiple luxury watches and high-end jewellery that were beyond her means to purchase. Critics have accused her of seeking illicit enrichment.

Boluarte, however, said her hands were "clean", and Congress denied motions to impeach her over the "Rolex case". Another investigation looked into her absence from office in 2023, when

Boluarte said she had to undergo a "necessary and essential" medical procedure on her nose - though critics have said it was a cosmetic procedure. Her absence, they argue, was therefore a dereliction of duty, done without notifying Congress. In that case, too, Boluarte has denied the charges.

Peru has weathered much instability in its government: Boluarte is the sixth president in seven years, and virtually all of Peru's presidents have faced criminal investigations, if not convictions, in the last quarter century. Boluarte, however, had petitioned the Constitutional Court to stop the investigations until her term is over. She is set to exit her office on July 28, 2026, after calling for a new general election in March. She has faced public pressure to resign since taking over for Castillo in December 2022. — Aljazeera

Xi makes second-ever visit to Tibet as president

BEIJING (Reuters): Chinese President Xi Jinping arrived in the Tibetan capital of Lhasa for his second-ever visit as China's leader to mark the 60th anniversary of Tibet's founding as an autonomous region. Six years after the 14th Dalai Lama fled into exile in India following a failed uprising, China's ruling Communist Party established the Tibet Autonomous Region in 1965, the country's fifth and final autonomous region after Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, Guangxi and Ningxia.

The designation was meant to offer local ethnic minority groups such as the Tibetans greater say over policy matters, including freedom of religious belief. But international human rights groups and exiles routinely describe China's rule in Tibet as "oppressive", an accusation that Beijing rejects. "To govern, stabilise and develop Tibet, the first thing is to maintain

political stability, social stability, ethnic unity and religious harmony," state media cited Xi as saying to senior Tibet officials. Xi last flew to Tibet in July 2021 where he urged people there to "follow the party" in a visit largely perceived by outside observers to signal the Communist Party's confidence that order had finally been established in a region with a long history of protest against Chinese rule.

During a brief period following the 2008 Beijing Olympics, when China further opened its doors to the outside world, Tibet was rocked by protests by monks and nuns, and then a series of self-immolations. Tibetan Buddhism must be guided to adapt to China's socialist system, Xi said. Prior to 2021, the last Chinese leader to visit Tibet was Jiang Zemin in 1990. More broadly, Tibet is a highly strategic region for China due to its border with India. Troops from both

sides had clashed at their border over the years. The Himalayan region also possesses abundant natural resources including immense hydropower potential. Xi's arrival in Tibet coincided with a rare trip this week by China's top diplomat Wang Yi to India, where both countries pledged to rebuild ties damaged by a deadly 2020 border skirmish. China's latest mega hydropower project in Tibet has also unsettled India downstream.

Xi said the project must be "vigorously" pursued as part of China's carbon reduction goals while protecting Asia's "water tower". Xi was accompanied by Wang Huning and Cai Qi, the party's fourth and fifth-ranked leaders. In 2015, the party sent the now retired Yu Zhengsheng, who held the equivalent rank of Wang at the time, to Tibet for the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Tibet Autonomous Region.

US demand for RVs fuels deforestation

WASHINGTON (AFP): Tropical wood demand from some of America's top RV brands is fuelling deforestation on the Indonesian island of Borneo, home to Asia's last great rainforest, according to a new investigation by environmental NGOs. The recreational vehicle industry is now the biggest consumer of tropical wood in the United States, UK-based NGO Earthsight and Indonesian NGO Auriga Nusantara said in a report published.

They said evidence showed sheets of tropical "lauan" plywood found in Indonesia were likely being used in the floors, walls and ceilings of RVs produced by major brands like Jayco, Winnebago and Forest River. "Nature-loving RV owners will be horrified to learn that their hobby risks destroying rainforests," said Earthsight director

Sam Lawson in a press release. "America's RV giants need to get out of the 1980s and implement the kinds of minimum sustainability standards other US corporates have had in place for decades." Indonesia has one of the world's highest rates of deforestation linked to mining, farming and logging, and is accused of allowing firms to operate in Borneo with little oversight. Borneo island has one of the world's largest tracts of rainforest and hosts orangutans, long-nosed monkeys, clouded leopards, pig-tailed macaques, flying fox-bats and the smallest rhinos on the planet. Large tracts of orangutan habitat in Borneo were found to be "cleared to make way for a plantation of fast-growing timber", the NGOs said. An Indonesian plywood company, PT Kayu Lapis Asli

injunction against the owner of the hotel, ruling that asylum seekers should be removed by September 12. The hotel's owner said it would seek to appeal the ruling. Eyre also dismissed a last-minute attempt by the Home Office, Britain's interior ministry, to intervene in the case in support of the hotel owner. The Home Office's lawyer, Edward Brown, had argued the injunction would have a "substantial impact" on the government's ability to comply with its legal duty to provide accommodation, describing the hotel as "a key part of national asylum accommodation infrastructure."

Border Security Minister Angela Eagle

said in a statement: "We will continue working with local authorities and communities to address legitimate concerns. Our work continues to close all asylum hotels by the end of this Parliament (2029)." Hundreds of people have protested outside the Bell Hotel since two asylum seekers were charged over separate incidents, with 16 people also having been charged in relation to what Essex Police described as criminal disorder in Epping. Care4Calais, a charity supporting asylum seekers and refugees, said some residents have felt frightened and frustrated after being threatened, chased, and had objects thrown at them since the protests in Epping began.

UK council wins bid to move asylum seekers from hotel

LONDON (Reuters): A British district council won its bid to have asylum seekers temporarily removed from a hotel that has become the focal point for protests after a resident was charged with sexual assault. Epping Forest District Council took legal action to stop asylum seekers from being housed in the Bell Hotel in Epping, in the county of Essex, about 20 miles (32.19 km) north of London.

Anti-immigration protesters and pro-immigration groups have gathered outside the hotel since an Ethiopian asylum seeker was charged in July with sexual assault and other offences. He has denied the charges and is due to stand trial next week. Judge Stephen Eyre grant-

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UK inflation heat puts Bank of England back in the spotlight

BRITISH inflation looks set to hit 4% next month, double the Bank of England's target and a level likely to add to nervousness at the central bank about the risk of price growth getting stuck at a stubbornly high rate. Consumer prices climbed by 3.8% in July, data showed on Wednesday, the fastest annual rise for a Group of Seven economy and approaching the BoE's forecast of a 4% peak in September.

While below the four-decade high of 11.1% reached in October 2022, when energy prices were surging after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, July's reading was the strongest in 18 months. By comparison, US inflation held at 2.7% in July and in the euro zone it is expected to stay around 2%. British inflation has been above the BoE's 2% target almost constantly since May 2021, reported Reuters.

Little wonder then that the central bank — which saw its standing fall in the eyes of the public when inflation jumped in 2022 1 has suggested that its already gradual run of interest rate reductions might slow, even with the jobs market weakening. It was reported by Reuters.

That would be a blow to Prime Minister Keir Starmer and finance minister Rachel Reeves who are seeking to speed up Britain's slow-moving economy. They have pointed to the five rate cuts since they came into office as a sign of progress.

The BoE's quarter-point cut to its benchmark rate on August 7 was opposed by almost half of its monetary policymakers. One of them, Catherine Mann, pointed in March to research in the United States showing that public attentiveness to inflation doubles when price growth hits 4%. The research, by Oliver Pfaueti, a University of Texas assistant professor, found the increased US public awareness of inflation "substantially amplified the already inflationary supply shocks and rendered inflation more persistent".

Thomas Pugh, chief economist at accountancy firm RSM UK, said inflation at 4% was probably not an automatic trigger for long-lasting economic damage but "there is some pretty good evidence that consumers and businesses are paying a lot more attention to inflation". He noted that September's data would be used to set rail fares and student loan repayments and by some pension schemes.

"There is a genuine risk of some higher inflation becoming baked into the system," Pugh said. Many businesses are caught between the burden of rising costs and the risk of losing customers also under strain. Steve Hardeman, managing director of Clevedon Fasteners, which makes rivets and other parts for construction and engineering firms, said his firm had raised prices around five times since 2022 in response to higher electricity bills and labour costs.

"We're looking at increasing our prices again because of things that are coming down the line," he said. Nimisha Raja, founder of food manufacturer Nim's, said she had seen a lot of "opportunistic" price rises. She pushed back when one supplier sought to raise the price of courgettes by another 5% after a 30% increase earlier this year. "I said we can't afford to do that because we can't pass this cost on to our customers. And they did back down."

The BoE has become increasingly alert to the risk of inflation getting stuck too high. But it is counting on a gradual deceleration in wage growth to continue.

At around 5% a year, it is down from almost 8% two years ago but remains far above the 3% level that the BoE thinks is consistent with its 2% inflation target.

Despite a slowdown in payrolls numbers, some employers are still scrambling to retain staff. The British arm of German supermarket Lidl said last week it would give workers a fifth pay rise in two years, matching an increase at rival Aldi. Many other firms are taking a more cautious approach. Private-sector pay settlements held at 3% in the three months to July and uncertainty about the economy suggest further caution ahead, data firm Brightmine said on Wednesday.

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Critical minerals: The way forward

Adil Husain

THE fresh layers of extremism and militancy in Pakhtunkhwa is getting more space as the state authorities, political parties and the general populace holds conflicting views on almost all the outstanding issues. Whether it is the allocation of financial resources, the construction of new dams, security initiatives, financial reforms or the exploration of critical minerals, all the stakeholders of the state including the institutions, political parties, intellectuals and the general masses hardly come to terms with the government. After failing to convince the masses protesting against the construction of new canals on the Indus, the newly emerging priorities characterized by domestic, regional and geostrategic considerations created a fresh layer of resistance throughout the peripheries.

The new strategic move of the government to exploit the critical minerals in Pakhtunkhwa, Baluchistan and GB followed by the military operation in Bajaur and the subsequent resistance of the masses reveals the present state of uncertainty and confusion in the state. While the narratives of both the conflicting sides are more logical and clear headed in direction, the rigidity and aggressiveness in their approaches complicates the issue thereby avoids the possibility of any meaningful rapprochement. Meanwhile the growing political polarization and the deepening culture of trust deficit, the declining position of the PTI government in KP, the rift between ANP and PTM and the subsequent resurgence of right wing politics under state patronage accompanied by the ambiguous approaches of the opposition parties towards outstanding issues further contribute to the fragile political atmosphere. This bitter reality calls for an enlightened and inclusive political approach that can avoid the possible repercussions of the changing horizon.

While upholding the old political order of status quo, the political culture of Pakistan is prone to frequent political crisis and dissents as the dominant circles pay no heads to the demands of the wider population in the country. Most of the times personal considerations followed by regional and global geostrategic priorities overlook the layers of internal political dissents. The policies motivated by such considerations when implemented at home, generates a new cycle of resistance followed by the aggressiveness of the state authorities. One

such move can be clearly seen in the passage of the Mines and Minerals act and the subsequent opposition of the masses from all over the country.

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While the warm statements of president Trump regarding the mineral deals has been much celebrated at the federal level which finally pulled Pakistan out of the freezing point in terms of diplomatic endeavors, the deadlock with the opposition parties and particularly the resistance of the locals need to be tackled

seriously.

It's logical that the resources of the province falls within the constitutionally guaranteed jurisdiction of the province but what makes the issue more ambiguous is the poor credibility of the provincial government. The PTI government is increasingly losing the support of the masses. Instead of prioritizing human welfare, its policies are more directed to play the politics of the Islamabad at the expense of the resources of the province.

Grandeur's position further deteriorates with his ambiguous approach towards the minerals act

Building trustful relationship through political consensus among all the stakeholders is the best way forward. In doing so both the sides have to adopt a more flexible, people oriented and peace and prosperity focused approach.

This will help in the better materialization of the ongoing development in terms of foreign investment for better and stable future. The federal government has to convince the provinces that their resources would be justly used for the uplift of human development, infrastructure and social welfare.

If the deadlock over the issue of SIFC persists, the platforms of the council of common interests, National Economic Council and National Finance Commission along with other valid bodies established under the constitution of 1973 and strengthened by 18th amendment are the best options to be followed. Politicians and intellectuals must have to come up with alternative strategies for better bargain. Natural resources are true blessings but leaving these in dormancy or exploiting them for the sake of few families is not a wise strategy at all. This is the time to revisit priorities, mobilize resources and develop national Capacity by integrating smaller provinces in the national economic and industrial complexes so that Pakistan can stand firm in facing the emerging trends in the geostrategic competition and play a more pivotal role in domestic and global political dynamics.

The second striking criticism regarding minerals exploration deals with the proper management and utilization of the money generated through foreign investment. It is generally believed that the financial gains of the project is most likely to be processed through the platform of the Special Investment Facilitation council which is regarded by many politicians and intellectuals as unconstitutional and Irrelevant to be interested with this task. They believe that this body facilitates the

monopoly of the few and that whatever the country gets from foreign investment will go to the banks of the dominant families instead of being used for the welfare of the common people. The demand of the Awami National Party led All parties conference to abolish this forum is testament to this narrative.

Political matters are resolved through proper strategies and practical priorities. While the criticisms of the opposition parties and ethnic movements in Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan is of great significance, their empty minded and ambiguous approach towards the exploration of resources and modernization of economy creates an alarming situation. This scarcity of great minds and the absence of well-equipped politicians and statecrafts could potentially downgrade the already perverted bond of democracy in Pakistan.

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Climate resilience is a strategic investment in future growth

Mahmoud Mohieldin

FOR emerging markets and developing economies, or EMDEs, investing in resilience is not a luxury; it is an imperative. Climate disasters and ecological degradation are impeding their economic prospects and straining their finances. Perhaps more importantly, these shocks are exacerbating unsustainable debt burdens at a time when donor countries are slashing development aid, making it harder for EMDEs to finance investments in climate adaptation.

Over the past two decades, the 74 economies comprising the Climate Vulnerable Forum and the Vulnerable Group of Twenty have suffered more than \$525 billion in losses — equivalent to roughly 20 percent of their collective gross domestic product — due to climate shocks. This includes acute disasters like floods, hurricanes, and droughts, as well as slower-moving events such as desertification and coastal erosion.

Meanwhile, the degradation of natural ecosystems through deforestation and biodiversity loss has aggravated food and water insecurity and increased climate risks by eliminating natural carbon sinks. These dynamics create formidable obstacles — namely, limited fiscal space and high capital costs — that trap countries in a vicious cycle of vulnerability. Breaking free requires a significant scaling-up in financing for climate-adaptation efforts.

To that end, the Sharm El-Sheikh Adaptation Agenda, launched in 2022, proposes 30 adaptation targets in key sectors such as agriculture, public health, and infrastructure with the goal of spurring inclusive, effective, and equitable action by 2030. The pro-

The problem is structural. Existing macro-fiscal tools — such as the debt-sustainability frameworks used by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and, by extension, sovereign credit ratings — account for climate and nature-related risks, but do not sufficiently recognize the economic benefits of reducing those risks. Natural disasters, climate-related or otherwise, are rightly treated as threats to fiscal stability. But the investments required to mitigate their effects are seen only as adding to the debt burden, rather than as critical for reducing losses or as driving the development of growth-enhancing strategic assets. For example, investments in flood-resilient infrastructure in Vietnam have not only reduced damage costs but also boosted land values, improved public health, and increased worker productivity. And investments in nature-based solutions such as restoring mangroves or wetlands can simultaneously address climate, food, and water challenges, and boost infrastructure performance.

posed outcomes are not merely defensive; they create jobs, boost productivity, and improve creditworthiness. Unfortunately, these benefits are not reflected in current macroeconomic frameworks.

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As a result, high-impact interventions such as coastal defenses, underground power lines, and mangrove restoration are sidelined in favor of more conventional infrastructure projects like roads, bridges, and ports.

These perverse incentives are reflected in EMDEs' planning and budgeting processes. The environment ministries that oversee Nationally Determined Contributions and National Adaptation Plans under the Paris climate agreement tend not to engage systematically with finance ministries, meaning that these resilience strategies are not fully integrated into medium and long-term national financial planning. That leaves NDCs and NAPs at risk of being aspirational, rather than actionable.

With critical adaptation investments overlooked in budgets, and with insufficient volumes of grant or concessional finance to plug ensuing gaps, many are calling for changes in how debt is treated, including reforms of fiscal frameworks so that investments in climate and nature resilience are treated as productive. A recent paper by the Bridgetown Initiative outlines four steps that governments can take to achieve this goal.

First, EMDEs must quantify acute and chronic climate and nature risks. A better understanding of the potential macroeconomic effects can help guide assessments of the financing required to reduce those risks. The paper offers a new typology to help categorize investments by risk type and sector, which would streamline the process.

Once policymakers have identified which investments are needed, they must assess their impact on the economy's growth trajectory. Spending on resilience measures can reduce future losses from climate disasters, boost productivity, and raise incomes.

These benefits must be incorporated into forecasted models, as is already

done for traditional infrastructure investments. The long-term growth benefits of resilience-focused capital projects could then be factored into debt-sustainability analyses. This would show that such investments are, in fact, fiscally prudent with the right financing conditions, thus strengthening the case for more concessional and longer-term borrowing.

Lastly, with a more comprehensive understanding of the macroeconomic effects of resilience-based interventions, EMDEs can devise credible investment plans and financing strategies that align with fiscal and budgetary policy. Factoring climate resilience into macroeconomic planning should strengthen, not diminish, a country's growth narrative. When done well, this empowers finance ministries to engage more effectively with donors, credit-rating agencies, markets, and international financial institutions, all of which play a critical direct or indirect role in supporting resilience and adaptation efforts.

With the IMF and the World Bank reviewing their Debt Sustainability Framework for Low-Income Countries, this is an opportune time for EMDEs to update their methodologies to reflect the benefits of adaptation measures. Climate and nature shocks are now an economic reality, not a distant threat. Building resilience to these shocks will form the foundation of sustainable development and fiscal stability for years to come.

The Democrats go ‘Trump lite’ in latest plan to save democracy

DEMOCRATS have tried everything to beat Donald Trump. But they’re only 1 for 3 in presidential elections against him. Twice, they impeached him — but that didn’t destroy his political career.

Several top Democratic prosecutors brought the force of the law against him, but in trying to bring him down, they only made him stronger.

They’ve tried to “go high” when he went low. But he went lower and won.

And painting Trump as the worst-ever threat to American democracy didn’t thwart the greatest White House comeback story in history.

So, what do Democrats do now?

The latest plan, piloted by California Gov. Gavin Newsom, whose counteroffensive just won the support of former President Barack Obama, is to be a bit more like Trump — but only up to a point and for a limited time.

California state legislators are expected on Thursday to pass bills to set up a statewide referendum in November on redrawing the state’s congressional maps in a way that could net Democrats five seats in the House of Representatives.

The counterattack went into force after deep-red Texas enacted its plan, ordered by the president, to launch a rare mid-cycle redistricting effort in search of five Republican House seats. Trump is blatantly attempting to save the GOP — and himself — from losing the chamber in the 2026 midterms and is prepared to do anything to prevent it.

Texas Democrats made a big noise, leaving the state to block votes on the plan — but like almost all other party schemes to slow Trump, it was doomed to fail. The Texas House passed the redistricting bill on Wednesday; it will now move to the state Senate.

Newsom — who has a long and testy history with the president — but who shares some of his instincts for stunt politics — is not just taking on Trump by leveraging the mechanics of government in the Democratic cause.

He’s also personifying the maxim that one way to defang a bully is to laugh at him. The gover-

nor’s turned his social media accounts into a parody of the president’s own huffing and puffing in block capitals on Truth Social.

“THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION TO THIS MATTER! — GN” Newsom wrote after a post on X earlier this month, trolling Trump by mimicking one of his online quirks.

This might all seem rather immature and below the dignity of the governor of one of the most powerful states in the union. But it’s playing Trump at his own social media game and recognizes that the president has shattered the norms of political speech.

A more serious argument many Democrats are now making is that the Republican Party has transformed into such an anti-democratic force that they must do everything to fight back.

Sure, it would be more noble for Democrats to stand on principle and refuse to follow Republicans down an authoritarian path by just drawing up more House seats because they feel like it. But they’d be sure to lose.

Newsom’s response might be cynical. But he’s also seized on the Texas redistricting fight because he’s one of the few Democrats who have power and know how to use it. He’s also channeling palpable demands from the Democratic base for more of a fight.

“He doesn’t play by a different set of rules,” Newsom said of Trump last week. “He doesn’t believe in the rules.” On Monday, Newsom seized on Trump’s latest Truth Social rant about mail-in voting with his own post on X that aimed to get into the president’s head.

“Trump knows he is going to LOSE in 2026,” Newsom wrote. “His plan to rig new Congressional seats is going to backfire — thanks to California. Now, he’s clamoring for other ways to cook the results. This man reeks of DESPERATION.”

Newsom is taking a political gamble. There is no guarantee that enough of California’s voters will agree with his attempt to change the state Constitution. The California Citizens Redistricting Commission is a cherished plank of state democracy.

Stephen Collinson

But as he eyes the White House, the California governor has created a platform to elevate himself over Democratic rivals in galvanizing demands for more urgency in the fight against Trump and his administration challenging election fairness on multiple fronts.

In effect, he’s soft-launching a bid for the 2028 Democratic nomination without having to make it official. If he succeeds in creating more seats for his party and it captures the House next year, he will claim a lion’s share of the credit.

Obama addressed the conundrum of whether to play by the rules on redistricting as a true democrat might in a speech on Tuesday night.

“I’ve had to wrestle with my preference, which would be that we don’t have political gerrymandering,” he said at a fundraiser for the National Democratic Redistricting Committee. The ex-president added: “What I also know is that if we don’t respond effectively, then this White House and Republican-controlled state governments all across the country, they will not stop, because they do not appear to believe in this idea of an inclusive, expansive democracy.”

Obama said he had “tremendous respect” for Newsom’s approach in that Newsom made the California response conditional on what Texas did. He also praised Newsom’s proposal to restore the state’s independent redistricting committee after the 2030 census — following Trump’s term.

The 44th president’s pragmatism reflects bitter experience, since he rocketed to attention in a 2004 Democratic National Convention address in which he declared, “There’s not a liberal America and a conservative America — there’s the United States of America.”

Obama might be best remembered for soaring speeches. But eight years since he left the White House, it’s often forgotten he could play hardball: His 2012 reelection campaign ruthlessly savaged GOP nominee Mitt Romney’s character.

Arguing that democracy was not “self-executing,” Obama said that

if Democrats really believe their own rhetoric, they should do something about it. He called for more support for the NDRC, litigation and organizing.

And Obama also made striking allusions to the fights against slavery and racial discrimination in the 20th century. “It took organizing and activism, and people demonstrating and sometimes getting beat or thrown in jail. It took a civil war,” he said. “It took extraordinary leadership and courage in order to amend the Constitution. And then to make sure that those victories were actually manifested required people to march and go to jail and in some cases, die.” This came against a backdrop of the supine response of law firms, universities and corporate chieftains to Trump’s power grabs.

Obama’s warning posed the immediate question of whether the ex-president will be taking a more prominent political role himself. Obama has been a caustic critic of Trump at key moments — for instance during the 2020 and 2024 Democratic National Conventions, when he warned about his successor’s threat to democracy. But he has wide interests in a lucrative retirement, including in film production and advocacy for his post-presidential foundation. And ex-presidents (among many others) know there can be a price for standing up to a successor who has weaponized the Justice Department.

And would Obama be an effective force? His efforts in 2024, including a barn-burner speech at the convention in Chicago that was one-upped by former first lady Michelle Obama, couldn’t prevent Trump’s return to the White House. Many Democrats are pining for a new generation of leaders.

And the next Democratic president, whenever he or she arrives, will require fresh vision and energy after the GOP’s attempt to eviscerate the government. Meanwhile, Newsom isn’t the only Democrat adopting some of Trump’s methods to try to gain traction in the age of fragmented media and online anarchy. Texas Rep. Jasmine Crockett, for instance,

has been trolling the president, Trump-style on social media. “The man in the White House wants to ‘crack down’ on crime in D.C.... cute,” she wrote on X this week. “The audacity of sitting in the Oval Office with felony charges and thinking you can lecture anyone on ‘law and order.’”

Still, Democrats had better be careful. However brazen they get, they’ll never match Trump’s flame-throwing. A subtext of Trump’s populism is that all politics are corrupt. And if voters believe that the Democrats are just as bad as the president, his own more venal behavior won’t seem as bad.

Trump and MAGA Republicans are trying to create such equivalence. They’ve portrayed the criminal indictments against Trump during his campaign as the cold-blooded exploitation of government power — even though several of them arose from his attempt to steal the 2020 election. The GOP has better arguments that he was singled out in a successful civil fraud prosecution against him, his adult sons and the Trump Organization in New York.

And when Republicans argue that Democrats are guilty of flagrant partisan redistricting of House seats in states they control, like Illinois and Maryland, they have a point. Still, most such efforts fit into the conventional corruption of the age-old practice of gerrymandering. No modern political figure has attempted the assaults on democracy and elections carried out by Trump.

The run-up to the midterms may also show whether voters want another showdown over democracy when they are pained by still-high grocery prices and a struggle to afford housing.

Neither party has compelling plans to offer relief. No wonder Trump’s approval ratings are underwater and Democrats have been plumbing record lows in popularity this year.

Democrats are now vowing to “fight fire with fire,” as New York Gov. Kathy Hochul put it recently.

But getting down in the muck and fighting dirty with Trump is risky. He’s miles better at it than they are.

The man, the vision, the Kingdom

FOR nearly a decade, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has led a remarkable socioeconomic transformation of Saudi Arabia. Vision 2030 has enabled the Kingdom to emerge as a pivotal regional and global actor, drawing on its exceptional national traits as the richest Arab nation, the largest Gulf state, the citadel of Islam, and the global energy leader.

Yet Western understanding of this profound shift has lagged. It remains filtered through outdated frames and Orientalist assumptions, often colored by neo-colonial liberal agendas in both policy and perception.

Karen Elliott House’s “The Man Who Would Be King: Mohammed bin Salman and the Transformation of Saudi Arabia” comes as a welcome corrective. This book, by one of America’s most seasoned observers of the Kingdom, offers a vivid, up-close exploration of the crown prince: his personality, his ambitions, and the sweeping changes reshaping Saudi society.

At its heart, House’s account charts the breathtaking pace of reform since 2015. She highlights the rise of a leader whose ascent was at once unforeseen and, in hindsight, inevitable. The crown prince emerges in her telling as a figure capable of breaking through entrenched interests and barriers that long stifled Saudi development. What gives the narrative authenticity is House’s use of first-hand encounters. She draws on meetings with the crown prince himself and conversations with a wide spectrum of Saudis — ministers, business innovators, and young men and women. This textured reporting gives the reforms a human face, illustrating changes that once seemed unimaginable.

In many respects, House has written a book less about policy papers and more about lived transformation. She describes the rollback of religious police, the rise of entertainment and culture, and, most of all, the expanded role of women. Where once Saudi women were absent from public life, they are now company leaders, astronauts, athletes, and diplomats. As House notes: “A woman’s ambition is no longer deplorable but laudable ... A woman’s aspiration to public office, once a source of family shame, is now cause for pride.”

The impact on Saudi youth is equally striking. Long deprived of normal outlets for expression and social interaction, young Saudis now embrace the opportunities opening before them. House portrays their excitement vividly: the joy at concerts and festivals, the ease of public mingling, the confidence of a generation that sees itself as global competitors.

Vision 2030 is the thread

Dr. Ali Awadh Asseri

that runs through the book. House shows that it is not only an economic diversification plan but also a recalibration of the social contract. It seeks to unleash Saudi creativity, talent, and ambition — male and female — on a scale unseen in the Kingdom’s modern history. She captures how giga-projects such as NEOM and the Line are more than futuristic visions. They symbolize Saudi Arabia reclaiming its place as a global crossroads of people, ideas, and commerce. For House, these initiatives embody a historic reorientation: from rentier state to entrepreneurial society. This dimension of the book is especially relevant today. The crown prince’s assertive diplomacy — whether reconciliation with Iran, mediation in Ukraine, advocacy for Palestine, rapport with Washington, or outreach to China and Russia — confirms House’s portrayal of a leader intent on securing Saudi interests in a turbulent world. She notes how Saudis themselves increasingly view old partners as unreliable, making self-reliance and proactive diplomacy an imperative. House situates the crown prince in a wider geopolitical context. The Middle East of the past decade has been marked by extremism, terrorism, and war — with devastating consequences. Against this backdrop, Saudi Arabia has diversified its partnerships and acted more independently in pursuit of national interests. “The world has a stake in MBS. If over the next generation he can truly transform Saudi into a beacon of moderate Islam, not extremism, that will impact the whole Islamic world given the Kingdom’s influence as custodian of Islam’s holiest sites.”

Recent events validate this analysis: Saudi Arabia has hosted peace talks on Ukraine, worked to dampen Iran-Israel escalation, and spearheaded Arab-Islamic unity on Gaza. These initiatives underscore the point: National prosperity is inseparable from regional stability. The crown prince has translated this insight into a more confident, pragmatic foreign policy — Saudi Arabia as bridge-builder, not merely a player — while declaring “Saudi Arabia First” as his guiding principle. House considers Western criticism of the Kingdom unjust, arguing: “Saudi Arabia doesn’t actually top any analytical list of most abusive governments (and) ranks in abuses well behind Iran, China, Russia, and North Korea.” Yet, “US officials — and to some extent American people — hold Saudi Arabia, a long-time ally, more accountable than they do adversaries like China, Russia, and Iran.”

This is where House departs from many Western commentators. She shows that the reforms underway are neither cosmetic nor

superficial. They are part of an overarching national project. For Saudis, the pace is not reckless, but necessary — an answer to decades of inertia and to the demands of a young, ambitious population. Still, the author acknowledges lingering skepticism in Western circles. Can giga-projects succeed? Can rapid liberalization be sustained? She treats these questions seriously, but ultimately suggests they underestimate Saudi resilience and adaptability.

While American columnist Thomas Friedman has at times highlighted the crown prince’s boldness, Western media has often been critical, focusing on shortcomings, while overlooking successes. Academic literature has often echoed this criticism. David Rundell’s “Vision or Mirage: Saudi Arabia at the Crossroads” (2021) questioned how much of Vision 2030 is genuine transformation and how much remains illusion. House herself was cautious in her earlier work “On Saudi Arabia: Its People, Past, Religion, Fault Lines — and Future” (2015), but her latest book marks a striking shift — from realism to recognition that the Kingdom has entered a new era. If the book has a flaw, it is that it sometimes underplays how much Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman’s vision is rooted in Saudi traditions. While comparisons to Augustus, Peter the Great, or Lee Kuan Yew are illuminating, they risk obscuring the distinctively Saudi framework: one shaped by our religion, history, tribes, and youthful energy. The crown prince’s ambition is not imported; it is authentically Saudi. As House portrays him, he sees himself as “a historic figure, a leader not only transforming Saudi Arabia but impacting the world with his big dreams and bold intentions.”

That said, House succeeds in showing how the Kingdom has redefined itself — not imitating others, but setting its own course. The national mood she captures — confidence, pride, ambition — is unmistakably Saudi. Her narrative is brisk — more political chronicle than biography, enlivened with anecdotes that make the book both authoritative and accessible. In the end, “The Man Who Would Be King” is more than a portrait of one leader. It is a chronicle of a nation in renewal. For outsiders, it explains reforms too often misunderstood; for Saudis, it captures the transformation we are living.

House’s access and analysis are formidable, but the deeper story is the Kingdom itself: a people writing a new chapter with ambition and confidence under determined leadership. Saudi Arabia’s journey is still unfolding. However, as this book reminds us, the Kingdom is no longer defined by what it was, but by what it is becoming.

Trump’s occupation of DC is a rehearsal for autocracy

WASHINGTON, DC, youth activist Afeni Evans has become the most recent symbol of US President Donald Trump’s federal takeover of the city’s police.

On August 15, Metro Transit Police officers pepper-sprayed and forced the 28-year-old Evans to the ground at the Navy Yard subway stop for allegedly committing fare evasion. Evans and other Harriet’s Wildcat Dreams volunteers were at the station on “cop watch” to ensure the federal takeover would not lead to harassment of Black youth. Yet, it happened to three Black youths anyway, prompting Evans to intervene, which led to her arrest.

After public protests in DC and on social media, she was released to cheering crowds outside the court, and the charges against her were dropped the next day.

Like with so many other issues related to Trump and his attempts at autocracy, his use of the National Guard and US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to stifle community ecosystems especially impacts Washington’s Black, Brown and Queer resi-

dents. This effort to squash potential dissent is more than a distraction from the Epstein files controversy or America’s economic troubles.

Locally, it is a partial end to the District of Columbia’s half-century of home rule, which otherwise makes the city independent of direct federal oversight. Nationally, it is an open question about whether DC can remain a site of protest, a place where marches and other gatherings can effect change or even occur at all in the current autocratic climate.

Trump’s executive order announcing his takeover of DC’s police force on August 11 should not have come as a surprise, especially given his attempts to bring the federal government’s power to bear in California back in June. “Crime is out of control in the District of Columbia”, the order reads, stating that the “increase in violent crime in the heart of our Republic... poses intolerable risks to the vital federal functions that take place in the District of Columbia”.

But the truth is, Trump’s executive order manufactured a crisis out of far-right fantasies. Six

days before Trump’s announcement, two teenagers carjacked Edward Coristine, a 19-year-old former staffer at the Department of Government Efficiency, in DC’s Logan Circle. “We’re going to do something about it. That includes bringing in the National Guard,” Trump said in the aftermath of the incident.

However, the two alleged carjackers in police custody were from Hyattsville, Maryland, in Prince George’s County, and not DC.

Trump’s moves also fly in the face of another truth: Crime is no bigger an issue in DC than it is anywhere else in the United States. At the beginning of the year, a joint report from the US Attorney’s Office in DC and the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) showed that the city’s violent crime rate had dropped by 35 percent in 2024, reaching its lowest rate since the mid-1990s.

“Armed carjackings are down 53%,” according to the report.

Washington, DC, is a great stage for beta-testing how willing the rest of the US is to go to achieve Trump’s dream of autocratic rule. DC remains a majority-minority city,

with Black Washingtonians making up a plurality (43 percent) of the population, despite 30 years of middle-class (mostly white) gentrification — white Washingtonians make up 39 percent of DC’s population.

So, it is not that surprising Trump would attempt such heavy-handed tactics in a soft occupation of DC, particularly in a city that was once famously nicknamed “Chocolate City”.

In a capital where more than 90 percent of voters chose former Vice President Kamala Harris over Trump in the 2024 presidential election, Trump is also sending the unvarnished and racist message that Black folk, and especially Black youth, are criminals.

Imposing a heightened police presence and hundreds of National Guard soldiers on a multiracial city is nothing but a wannabe strongman’s attempt to appear strong to his anti-Black supporters.

DC is also known as a place that holds significance for Queer Americans. One out of every seven adults in the nation’s capital identifies

as, roughly 80,000 Washingtonians in all.

Northwest DC, particularly communities like Dupont Circle, Logan Circle, Adams Morgan, and parts of Shaw and Columbia Heights, became a relatively safe space in the 1960s and 1970s for Queer culture and businesses to thrive. The inaugural National March for Lesbian and Gay Rights began in DC in 1979.

It should not shock anyone that an anti-Queer Trump administration would also target DC’s Queer and migrant spaces.

The federalised police presence in DC has been especially noticeable along the 14th Street and U Street corridors, including the installation of not-so-random checkpoints over the past couple of weeks. Inevitably — between the National Guard, federal law enforcement and anti-immigrant agencies like Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), in conjunction with the MPD — they have made dozens of arrests, and smothered nightlife and business traffic in these communities.

Trump, in his own ham-fisted way, is also

attempting to erase DC’s history as one of protest and resistance. As the US evolved into a superpower, and DC transformed into the international community’s superpower city during and after World War II, the city also became a place for protest, particularly for racial justice and civil rights. Examples include the March on Washington on August 28, 1963, as well as a series of antiwar protests against Vietnam between 1965 and 1971.

Marches and protests for the Equal Rights Amendment, for a Gay Rights Bill, for Chicano rights, Indigenous rights, and migrant and refugee rights came alongside civil rights marches and protests throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

Massive protests like the 2017 Women’s March, the George Floyd protests in 2020 and the Free Palestine protests last year have made DC a target ripe for government overreach.

But what Trump is doing to DC in 2025 is not quite unprecedented — not for him, and not for the federal government. In 2018, during Trump’s first term as president, the US National Park Service (NPS) sought to shrink the available sidewalk

space around the White House for protests “by 80 percent”, and to charge demonstrators permit fees “to allow the NPS to recover some of the costs” of public safety provisions.

On June 1, 2020, the National Guard and the US Park Police tear-gassed, lobbed concussion grenades and violently arrested George Floyd protesters at Lafayette Square, across the street from the White House — all so that Trump could do a photo-op nearby on the steps of St John’s Church, calling himself “your president of law and order” along the way.

Trump has followed in the footsteps of another “law and order” president, Richard Nixon. In May 1971, Nixon unleashed the National Guard and local police against thousands of antiwar demonstrators in DC, in what became known as the Mayday protests, leading to more than 12,000 arrests over a three-day period.

In 1932, President Herbert Hoover authorised the use of military force against a ragtag group of 20,000 unemployed and unhoused World War I veterans known as the Bonus Army.

At the height of the Great Depression and looking for the bonus money Congress owed them, the military responded with gas grenades, bayonets, flamethrowers and tanks, destroying their shantytowns along the National Mall and Anacostia River. Two veterans died, while the Army injured thousands of others. The resulting tear gas cloud over the city also led to the death of an infant.

Trump and his small army of occupiers are trying to make an example out of the nation’s capital, to destroy the DC of the past century, its vibrancy and resistance. The irony, of course, is that one of Trump’s first acts in his second term was to pardon more than 1,500 insurrectionists who had been part of the January 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol, a deadly and treasonous event.

Now, Trump wants to cower Washingtonians into accepting autocracy.

DC’s legacy as the national seat of power, as an international city, and as the centre of the so-called Free World, is in peril. But its most vulnerable and marginalised residents continue to resist, despite the dangers of Trump as a despot.



Kamal meets BD's Adviser for Industries

— to strengthen bilateral cooperation

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Minister for Commerce of Pakistan, Jam Kamal Khan, held productive discussions with Bangladesh's Adviser for Industries, Adilur Rahman Khan, in Dhaka on Thursday to explore avenues for industrial cooperation between the two countries.

Pakistan's High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Imran Haider, was also present during the meeting, said a release issued here.

The Minister and the Adviser underscored the importance of leveraging their economic and indus-

trial base to the mutual advantage of the two countries to address issues of food security, value addition in the food industry, and aligning industrial technology.

Discussions focused on exchanging expertise across diverse sectors through mutual exchange of delegations and knowledge sharing.

The Minister for Commerce emphasized Pakistan's keen interest in being a part of Bangladesh's evolving industrial landscape through collabora-

tion, joint ventures and mutual investment. He emphasised the need for a shared vision to create a facilitative economic ecosystem for industrial growth.

Building on the positive growth in bilateral trade, he underscored the need to transform this relationship into a sustainable partnership. He focused on value-addition industries for revenue generation and socio-economic uplift and appreciated Bangladesh's growth in sectors such as pharmaceuticals, textiles, and Information Technology.

The Adviser for Industries highlighted Bangladesh's progress in industrial development and acknowledged Bangladesh's growing industrial requirements.

The Adviser showed keen interest in knowledge sharing and industrial collaboration. He identified leather, ship-building, sugar, agro-processing, and SMEs as areas of possible collaboration.

The meeting concluded with a mutual resolve to build on bilateral trade and industrial development through collaborative efforts.



DHAKA: Federal Minister for Commerce of Pakistan Jam Kamal Khan meeting with Bangladesh's Adviser for Industries Adilur Rahman Khan.

Sindh Bank conducts Hajj 2026-Ballot for employees



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Bank conducted the Hajj 2026 computerized balloting for

its employees at Head Office, overseen by President and CEO, Muhammad Anwar, in the presence of senior management. The transpa-

rent computerized balloting process selected 10 employees (5 from each category of principal and alternate) to be sponsored for the sacred pil-

grimage of Hajj in 2026.

The following employees were declared principal candidates:

1. Waheed Ahmed
2. Muhammad Roaid
3. Shakeel Ahmed
4. Muhammad Mumtaz
5. Waqar Ali

Additionally, the following employees were named as alternate candidates:

1. Waqar Hussain
2. Ishfaq Ahmed Malik
3. Imtiaz Ali
4. Abrar Ahmed
5. Muhammad Ishaq

Sindh Bank congratulates the selected employees and reaffirms its commitment to supporting its workforce through meaningful initiatives.

Pakistan achieves capacity to produce 3m olive plants annually

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan has achieved self-sufficiency in olive plant production, with the capacity to produce up to 3 million plants annually through local nurseries.

Pakistan would earlier import 700,000 to 800,000 olive plants each year but now it can fully meet demand through domestic resources.

Principal Scientist at Centre of Excellence for Olive Research and Training (CEFORT) Chakwal Dr. Muhammad Ramzan Anser told to Wealth Pakistan.

He said CEFORT have developed protocols, facilitated private nurseries, and transferred technology to the private sector to ensure a consistent supply of quality plants for growers.

"CEFORT has screened 86 olive varieties from different countries and selected 22 for commercial use" he added.

DR. Ramzan said Pakistan has successfully cultivated world-class vari-

eties, including Greek Koroneiki, Italian Coratina and Frantoio, and Spanish Arbequina and Manzanilla.

Highlighting support for growers, Dr. Ramzan said that CEFORT will place agriculture graduates in various clusters to guide and train farmers, and is also working to develop the capacity of 100 master trainers in both public and private sectors in the Potohar region.

He said CEFORT has also standardized recipes for olive-based products such as pickles, jams, chutneys, and bakery items. Currently, there are 20 commercial brands in Punjab and around 48 nationwide using our formulations.

Since 2017, about 40 cold press units for olive oil extraction have been installed across the country. He said given the rising scale of cultivation, we will require hundreds of such units in the coming years.

Dr. Ramzan underlined the potential of the Potohar

region, where over 700,000 acres of barren and rocky land are well-suited for olives.

Olives thrive in this type of land where no other commercial activity exists.

Reflecting on the sector's development, he said Pakistan that trials began in 2008-09 across Punjab's districts and ecological zones, and by 2015 farmers were provided with tested varieties and technical support.

"CEFORT remains the first olive centre in Pakistan offering full value-chain R&D support" he remarked.

It is worth mentioning here that under a newly launched initiative, the Punjab government plans to bring 3,625 acres of land under olive plantation. Applications have been invited from eligible growers to apply for the three-year subsidy-backed programme by November 15.

He said this is the first project of its kind in

Pakistan whereby all wings of the agriculture department will be facilitating farmers in an integrated manner.

In the first year, olive trees will be planted on 1,000 acres, with farmers receiving a subsidy of Rs57,960 per acre.

A total of 583,625 olive plants will be planted during the course of this project (2025-28), with each acre accommodating 161 plants.

Farmers owning a minimum of five acres of land can apply for the project, with preference given to clusters where olive cultivation already exists. However, the availability of drip irrigation is a mandatory requirement for farmers planning to establish olive orchards on five acres or more.

He said farmers will also be required to maintain the land for a minimum of 10 years, with the obligation to replace any dead plants at their own expense.

Pak's total liquid foreign reserves stand at \$ 19.57b

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The total liquid foreign reserves of Pakistan stood at \$ 19,570.8 million as of August 15, 2025 while the reserves held by the State Bank of Pakistan were recorded as \$ 14,256.2 million.

"During the week ended on 15 Aug. 2025, SBP reserves increased by US\$ 13 million to US\$ 14,256.2 million," the central bank reported on Thursday in its weekly statement on liquid foreign reserves position.

Meanwhile, net foreign reserves held by the commercial banks also increased by \$ 61 million to \$ 5,314.6 million during the period under review, as shown in the forex reserves break up.

Total liquid foreign reserves held by the country, in the previous week ended on August 08, 2025, were \$ 19,496.7 million.

Among them the central bank held foreign reserves amounting to \$ 14,243.2 million while the commercial banks held reserves of \$ 5,253.5 million.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Five ships, Hansa Africa, Groton, CMA CGM Otello, Khairpur and Sarwat Gas carrying containers, Mogas and LPG, berthed at Container Terminal, Oil Terminal and SSGC Terminal the other day.

Meanwhile seven more ships carrying Containers, Soyabean seeds, Chemicals, LNG and Palm oil also arrived at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim during the same day.

Ten ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them, Gas carrier Al-Qassar left the port on Thursday morning and five more ships, Hansa Africa, Groton, CMA CGM Otello, Morning Glory and Sarwat Gas are expected to sail on today afternoon.

A cargo volume of 157,244 comprising 119,216 tonnes imports cargo and 38,028 tonnes export cargo was handled at the Port, including containerized cargo carried in 5,705 Containers (3,621 TEUs Imports and 2,084 TEUs export) during the last 24 hours.

15 ships at outer anchorage of the port, out of them four ships namely MSC Lyse V, Al-Salam, Hafnia Andrea and Southern Robin & another ship Venus carrying Containers, LNG, Palm oil, Chemicals and LPG are expected to take berths at QICT, EETL, LCT, MW-1 and SSGC respectively on Thursday.

Exports up by 18.76 to Rs762,746m

ISLAMABAD (APP): The exports from the country in rupee term increased by 18.76 percent on year-on-year basis in July 2025 compared to the corresponding month of last year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Thursday.

The exports in July 2025 were recorded at Rs. 762,746 million as compared to Rs. 642,272 million during July 2024, according to PBS provisional figures.

PSX turns bearish, sheds 1,355 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 Index turned around to bearish trend on Thursday, losing 1,355.74 points, a negative change of 0.90%, closing at 149,235.26 points against 150,591.00 points last trading day.

A total of 1,062,993,695 shares were traded during the day as compared to 667,817,396 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 55.824 billion against Rs 40.728 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 480 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 130 of them recorded gains and 323 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 27 companies remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Fauji Foods Limited with 62,087,443 shares at Rs 16.94 per share, Pak Elektron with 57,228,568 shares at Rs45.36 per share and Telecard Limited with 56,939,244 shares at Rs 8.34 per share.

Service Industries Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 54.75 per share price, closing at Rs 1,300.55, whereas the runner-up was Indus Motor Company Limited with

Rs52.76 rise in its per share price to Rs2,292.62.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs883.72 per share closing at Rs 31,511.11 followed by The PIA Holding Company LimitedB with Rs377.90 decline in its share price to close at Rs27,501.00.

Meanwhile, in the future market, as many as 480 companies traded shares in the market out of which 130 witnessed gain, 323 loss where the prices of 27 companies remained unchanged.

Rupee gains 03 paise against US Dollar

The Rupee on Thursday appreciated by 03 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 281.92 against the previous day's closing of Rs 281.95.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 284 and Rs 284.5, respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by 25 paise to close at Rs 328.58 against the last day's closing of Rs 328.33, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese yen went up by 01 paise and closed at

Rs1.91, while the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed a decrease of Rs1.07 to close at Rs379.74 against the last day's closing of Rs380.81.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal came down by 01 paise each to close at Rs 76.75 and Rs 75.12, respectively.

Gold prices increase by Rs2,000 to Rs357,200 per tola

The price of 24 karat per tola gold witnessed an increase of Rs 2,000 on Thursday and was sold at Rs 357,200 against its sale at Rs 355,200 on the previous trading day. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association reported.

The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also increased by Rs 1,715 to Rs 306,241 from Rs 304,526, whereas the price of 10 grams of 22 Karat went up by Rs 1,573 to Rs 280,731 from Rs 279,158.

The rates of per tola and ten gram silver increased by Rs 78 and Rs 67, and were traded at Rs 4,013 and Rs 3,440, respectively.

The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$20 to \$3,345 from \$3,325, whereas silver increased by \$0.78 to \$37.80 from \$37.02, the Association reported.

PC triumphs at Int'l Food and Restaurant Awards



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pearl-Continental (PC) Hospitality Division of Hashoo Group, one of Asia's leading hospitality conglomerates, proudly announces that Pearl-Continental Hotels has secured top honours at the prestigious International Food and Restaurant Awards.

The ceremony, held in Rawalpindi, was graced by His Excellency Sardar Saleem Haider Khan, Governor of Punjab, as Chief Guest. Distinguished guests of honour included Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, Advisor to the Prime Minister on Tourism; Aftab Ur Rehman Rana, Managing Director of Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation; Bastien Blanc, Chief Executive Officer of PC Hospitality Division, Hashoo Group.

The event was also attended by senior executives of PC Hospitality, Hashoo Group, dignitaries from embassies, and other prominent personalities from the twin cities.

Competing alongside renowned establishments such as Mövenpick Centaurus Islamabad, Monal Restaurants, and Asian Wok, Pearl-Continental Hotels emerged as standout winners, receiving awards across multiple categories:

Best Pakistani BBQ &

Grill Restaurant - Bukhara by Pearl-Continental

Best Japanese Cuisine - Sakura by Pearl-Continental

Best Continental Cuisine - Marcopolo by Pearl-Continental

Best Executive Chef - Resorts: Chef Mohsin Bahadur Khan, Pearl-Continental Hotel Malam Jabba

Chief Mohsin Bahadur Khan's recognition further enhances PC Malam Jabba's reputation as a premier resort destination celebrated for culinary excellence.

These prestigious accolades reaffirm Pearl-Continental Hotels' long-standing legacy of culinary mastery and commitment to delivering refined dining experiences that combine authenticity, innovation, and service excellence.

At the heart of this success lies the Connoisseur Collection - Pearl-Continental Hotels' signature portfolio of flagship restaurants. Each represents a distinct culinary journey: the rich, slow-cooked artistry of Dum Pukht, the bold, open-flame traditions of Bukhara, the refined elegance of Marco Polo, the precision of Sakura, and the timeless mastery of Tai-Pan. Together, they embody a celebration of heritage, innovation, and world-class gastronomy, defining

the very essence of fine dining in Pakistan.

Speaking on the achievement, Mr. Bastien Blanc, Chief Executive Officer - PC Hospitality Division, Hashoo Group, remarked: "This recognition is a true testament to the passion and dedication of our culinary teams. From Pakistani BBQ traditions to authentic Japanese flavours and Continental classics, Pearl-Continental continues to set the benchmark for premium dining experiences in Pakistan. We are proud of our chefs, who embody the essence of excellence, creativity, and service that our brand stands for."

PC's award-winning restaurants, Bukhara, Sakura, and Marcopolo, are recognized as pioneers in their respective cuisines. They offer distinctive flavours, impeccable service, and elegant dining atmospheres. Chef Mohsin Bahadur Khan's recognition further highlights PC Malam Jabba's reputation as a premier resort destination for culinary excellence.

This international recognition further strengthens Hashoo Group's commitment to advancing Pakistan's hospitality industry and showcasing the nation's vibrant culinary heritage to the world.

Shafay Hussain reviews overall progress of FIEDMC

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister for Industries and Commerce, Chaudhry Shafay Hussain chaired an important meeting to review overall performance of Faisalabad Industrial Estate Development and Management Company (FIEDMC) here at PSIC House on Thursday.

The provincial minister expressed satisfaction over the measures taken by FIEDMC during the last one year for the promotion of investment. Secretary Industries Muhammad Umar Masood, Chairman FIEDMC Rana Azhar Waqar, CEO Mian Jameel Ahmad, Senior Economic Advisor Javed Iqbal, and other concerned officials attended the meeting.

Chaudhry Shafay

Hussain said that during the last one year, effective steps had been taken to attract investment in industrial estates managed by FIEDMC. Construction of boundary walls, better security arrangements, and better industrial infrastructure had resulted in new investments worth billions of rupees. In the last six months, 64 industrial plots were sold in Allama Iqbal Industrial City. He said that setting up industrial units on these plots would bring local investment worth Rs. 119,526 million and foreign investment worth Rs. 7,601 million, creating employment for 6,582 people.

In M-3 Industrial City, 16 industrial plots were sold during the past six months. Establishment of

industrial units on these plots would bring local investment of Rs. 4,205 million and foreign investment of Rs. 1,598 million, creating 2,000 new jobs. The provincial minister emphasized that if industries were not established on the acquired plots according to policy, the plots would be canceled. He made it clear that there would be no compromise on the quality of ongoing development works in the industrial estates.

Chaudhry Shafay Hussain further directed that follow-ups must be ensured to achieve the set targets, and oxygen-producing trees should be planted in the industrial estates. He added that under FIEDMC, a railway

station and a community center were under construction, while the Chiniot-Sahianwala Road was also being developed. Best facilities and foolproof security had been provided to foreign investors, The Minister concluded.

CEO FIEDMC Mian Jameel Ahmad gave a detailed briefing to the provincial minister on ongoing development works and other matters in the industrial estates. He informed that currently 217 industrial units were operational in FIEDMC-managed industrial estates. In the past seven months, Rs. 2,000 million had been recovered from allottees, while recovery notices worth Rs. 3 billion had been issued.

Asian markets creep up

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian markets edged mostly upward in muted morning trading on Thursday, one day before a key speech expected to offer signals about future interest rate cuts in US.

US Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell, who has resisted public demands by President Donald Trump to cut rates, is scheduled to deliver

remarks Friday at the annual central bankers conference in Wyoming.

Data last week provided a mixed picture of US inflation, making it uncertain if the Fed will lower rates as many investors expect in September -- which could bolster growth in the world's largest economy.

In a sign of further uncertainty, recent days have seen a sell-off of

major technology stocks as investors grow wary of a sustained rally in the industry despite a range of global economic hurdles.

Wall Street closed mostly lower on Wednesday, with the tech-heavy Nasdaq falling again as shares in AI chip-maker Nvidia ticked down. Despite the building unease, shares in Seoul were up Thursday morning, bolstered by a rise in

Samsung's price. Shanghai, Sydney, Taipei and Bangkok also charted moderate rises.

Tokyo's Nikkei index continued its fall from the previous day, while shares in Hong Kong were flat.

Japan reported Wednesday that the country's July exports plunged at the steepest rate in over four years, straining under hefty US tariffs.



Asia Cup India-Pakistan set to go ahead



DUBAI (ESPNcricinfo): India will not host or visit Pakistan for bilateral contests, but their athletes and teams can take part in multi-nation events that also involve Pakistan, clearing the path for their upcoming fixtures in the men's Asia Cup in September and the women's ODI World Cup in October. Pakistan sportspersons can also participate in multilateral events hosted by India.

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports set down these guidelines in a statement, clarifying the Indian government's position on sporting relations with Pakistan at a time of strained political relations between the two South Asian countries. The statement left one question unanswered: whether Indian athletes can take part in multilateral events hosted by Pakistan.

The statement comes less than three weeks from the scheduled start of the Asia Cup in the UAE, where India and Pakistan, drawn in the same group,

are set to meet at least once (on September 14 in Dubai), and potentially up to three times. It will be India's first cricket match against Pakistan since the two countries exchanged cross-border hostilities following the Pahalgam terror attack in April.

There have been calls, in this climate, for India to boycott all sporting contact with Pakistan. During July's World Championship of Legends, a tournament featuring retired players, both matches between the teams from the two countries had been abandoned, with the India Champions forfeiting their semi-final against the Pakistan Champions.

With the Indian government making its stand clear, India now have official sanction to play Pakistan in the Asia Cup, which was originally to be hosted by India before being moved to the UAE in July.

"In so far as bilateral sports events in each other's country are con-

cerned, Indian teams will not be participating in competitions in Pakistan. Nor will we permit Pakistani teams to play in India," the ministry's statement said.

In a time of heightened geopolitical tensions, calls for India to boycott all sporting contact with Pakistan have grown louder. Associated Press

"With regard to international and multilateral events, in India or abroad, we are guided by the practices of international sports bodies and the interest of our own sportspersons. It is also relevant to take into account India's emergence as a credible venue for host international sports events.

"Accordingly, Indian teams and individual players will take part in international events that also have teams or players from Pakistan. Similarly, Pakistani players and teams will be able to participate in such multilateral events hosted by India.

"To position India as a preferred destination for

hosting international sporting events, the visa process for sportspersons, team officials, technical personnel, and office-bearers of International Sports Governing Bodies shall be simplified. In respect of office-bearers of International Sports Governing Bodies, a multi-entry visa shall be granted on priority basis for the duration of their official tenure, subject to a maximum period of five years. This shall facilitate their smooth movement into and within the country, in accordance with international norms. Due protocol and courtesies, as per established practice, shall be extended to the Heads of International Sports Governing Bodies during their visits to India." The statement lays down in unambiguous terms what have been the Indian government's unwritten guidelines for cricketing engagements with Pakistan for more than a decade. The two countries have not met in a bilateral series in any format since 2012, but they have faced off multiple times at the ODI and T20 World Cups, the Champions Trophy and the Asia Cup.

Pakistan have visited India for the T20 World Cup in 2016 and the ODI World Cup in 2023, but India did not visit Pakistan for the 2025 Champions Trophy. Their matches, including their semi-final and final, were played in Dubai. The BCCI and the PCB have agreed on this hybrid model for all remaining ICC events in the 2024-27 cycle.



MISSISSAUGA, ONTARIO: Amateur Shauna Liu of Canada plays her shot from the eighth tee during the first round of the CPKC Women's Open 2025 at Mississauga Golf and Country Club on August 21, 2025 in Mississauga, Ontario.

Errani, Vavassori fight back to retain US Open crown

NEW YORK, Aug 20 (Reuters) - Italians Sara Errani and Andrea Vavassori retained their mixed doubles title at the U.S. Open on Wednesday, overcoming Iga Swiatek and Casper Ruud 6-3 5-7 10-6 in the competition's reimagined format that drew some of the top singles players.

The defending champions, who needed a wild card entry into the competition that prioritised singles rankings, relied on their veteran experience to outfox the Polish-Norwegian duo.

The packed house at Arthur Ashe Stadium cheered wildly when Vavassori clinched it with a lethal forehand and hoisted Errani into the air in celebration, as the pair walked away with a \$1 million prize.

"We are doing something in these two years amazing," said Vavassori, who also won the French

Open title with Errani earlier this year. "We showed today that doubles is a great product."

Swiatek and Ruud had never played together before this year and at first appeared completely outmatched as the Italians went up 3-0 in the first set.

Six-times Grand Slam singles champion Swiatek broke back with a superbly placed volley in the seventh game but that momentum evaporated as her double fault helped the defending champions to another break in the eighth.

Vavassori then closed the first set with an unreturnable serve.

The Italians went up a break in the second set in the seventh game but Ruud and Swiatek broke back in the 10th and levelled the match when the Pole struck a backhand winner in the 12th.

Errani and Vavassori went up 4-0 in the tiebreak and were helped to the fin-

ish line after a double fault from Swiatek.

"We pushed to the end, we tried to make it competitive," said Swiatek, standing on the same court where she won the U.S. Open singles title three years ago.

Organisers have tested a novel format for the competition this year, hosting it during the week before the main singles draw with eight entries based on combined singles rankings of players and eight wild cards.

It was an undeniable marketing success with a star-studded lineup that

included Carlos Alcaraz and Novak Djokovic, but the format rankled some who felt it unfairly excluded veteran doubles players.

Hundreds of fans had lined up in the rain outside Arthur Ashe Stadium 90 minutes before the first of two semi-final matches on Wednesday, hardly the crowd one might have expected for the penultimate stage of the mixed doubles in past years.

"Playing with all these people is something incredible for us," said Errani. "This one is for all the doubles players who couldn't play this tournament."



Premier League record broken as Leeds sign Okafor

LONDON (BBC): Leeds United have signed AC Milan striker Noah Okafor for £18m to take spending by Premier League clubs this summer to a record £2.37bn.

The Switzerland striker has joined the Premier League club on a four-year deal.

The 25-year-old becomes Leeds' ninth summer signing since winning the Championship to secure their return to the top flight.

"As a kid, I dreamed of playing in the Premier League. That's why for me it was quite an easy decision," said Okafor.

"My football suits the Premier League so this is like a dream come true. I can't wait to step on the field."

"I heard that the Premier League is the best league in the world, it's so intense. I have loads of friends that played there. I'm really, really excited."

Okafor's arrival means Premier League clubs have now spent more than the previous record in a single

transfer window, the £2.36bn total in the summer of 2023.

The Swiss played for Basel and RB Salzburg before joining Milan on a five-year deal in 2023.

He scored seven goals in 54 games for the Italian club before ending last season on loan at Serie A rivals Napoli.

Who is Okafor?

Forward Okafor has been limited to seven starts in all competitions since moving from his native Switzerland to neighbouring Italy two years ago.

Another 50 appearances have come as a substitute and the most recent of his seven goals for AC Milan came on the opening day of last season. He spent the second part of the campaign on loan at Napoli, making four brief cameos off the bench.

Okafor previously scored 25 goals in 71 Swiss league games but was never a regular starter for either Basel or Salzburg.

He has played 47% of his minutes in Serie A on the left wing, with 41% as

a striker, according to data analysts Opta. Regardless of position, Okafor's touch map from the past two seasons illustrates his tendency to stay high and wide.

The Switzerland international is regarded as a quick and direct player, and he averaged a notable 4.2 dribbles per 90 minutes last season - though fewer than half those were successful.

Okafor, who scored twice for Milan in a pre-season victory against Liverpool, fits Leeds' profile for their summer recruits - he is 6ft 1in and all nine signings so far are at least 5ft 11in, with seven of them over 6ft.

Okafor's arrival at Elland Road takes the total spent by Premier League clubs this summer to £2.37bn, according to data from FootballTransfers.com.

Six Premier League clubs have broken their club transfer records in this window to contribute to the record level of spending.

Brentford completed a deal of up to £42.5m to sign Burkina Faso forward

Dango Ouattara from Bournemouth, who spent £34.6m on French centre-back Bafode Diakite.

Newly promoted Burnley and Sunderland have paid £25m and £26m respectively for French midfielder Lesley Ugochukwu and Senegal midfielder Habib Diarra, whose deal could rise to £30m with add-ons.

Nottingham Forest have broken their transfer record twice this summer, first for Switzerland winger Dan Ndoye from Bologna, then winger Omari Hutchinson from Ipswich for £37.5m.

In June, Liverpool signed Florian Wirtz from Bayer Leverkusen for a guaranteed £100m and a further £16m in add-ons.

Should those add-ons be achieved, Wirtz's move to Anfield would become a British transfer record, beating the £107m Chelsea paid Benfica for Argentina midfielder Enzo Fernandez in 2023.

And with 10 days to go in the window, it is certain that an even bigger record will be set.

9-year old Adayan Gul wins U-11 Sonu Junior Squash title

PESHAWAR (APP): Rising star nine-year-old squash prodigy Adayan Gul, originally from New York, has made headlines after capturing the Under-11 Sonu Junior Squash Tournament title in Connecticut, securing a major milestone in his young career.

Adayan displayed remarkable skill and determination throughout the competition.

In the quarterfinals, he overcame Connecticut's Methow V with scores of 11-8, 11-1, 12-10, advancing confidently to the next stage.

He then powered through the semifinals, defeating New Jersey's Kian Cowl 11-7, 11-3, 11-2 to earn his place in the championship match.

The final proved to be a thriller, as Adayan faced Belgium's Sebastian Verpoorten. In a nail-biting five-game contest, Gul triumphed 11-7, 8-11, 11-6, 3-11, 11-7, clinching the trophy and cementing his rep-

utation as one of squash's brightest young talents.

Adayan's success is deeply tied to the guidance of his father and coach, Adnan Gul, a Level 3 certified international squash coach with nearly two decades of experience. Adnan has coached players in both Malaysia and the United States and is widely recognized for his expertise in squash development and sports science.

"If Adayan continues working with the same dedication, he has the potential to become one of the best international players," said Adnan, proud of his son's rapid rise in the sport. "I also played squash in Peshawar and want my son to be like squash legends Jehangir Khan, Jansher Khan, Qamar Zaman," he added.

Adayan only began competing in squash tournaments in November 2024, yet he has already shown tremendous progress.

He is currently ranked 4th in New York State for

U-11 and holds the 39th position nationally.

His journey began with the U-9 Pyramid Tournament on October 6, 2024, where he defeated Illinois' Elias Zohan in straight sets (11-5, 11-2, 11-6) and went on to win the event after beating New York's Anil Lewis in the semifinal and top-seeded opponents in the final.

Later that year, he continued his winning streak at the Lifetime Westchester Tournament on December 29, 2024.

After dominant early-round performances, Adayan stunned top seed George Bellis in a dramatic final comeback (7-11, 1-11, 11-9, 11-9, 11-5), proving his resilience under pressure.

With his latest victory in Connecticut, Adayan Gul has firmly established himself as a name to watch in junior squash. His dream, he says, is clear: to one day become a World Champion.

Talking to APP, Adnan Gul, said that he is coach-

ing Malaysian and American players currently in the international circuit and performing well. He said he is coaching squash for over 19 years. "I have completed the Level Three Certified Coaching Course in the United States, Level Two courses in Malaysia and the United States, and Level One courses in Sports Science in Malaysia," father of Adyan Gul said.

About his son, he said, he techniques are very good but he needs hard work as for squash one should believe in hard working, dedication and commitment.

Adyan started playing squash competitions from November last year and has performed well.

He is ranked fourth in the New York State rankings in B.U.L. and 39th in the national rankings. His father Adnan Gul says that if Adyan Gul continues to play hard like this, he can become a great international player.

Green set to bowl in Shield cricket, will 'wait and see' if he's at No. 3

SYDNEY (ESPNcricinfo): Australia allrounder Cameron Green is unsure if he will bat at No. 3 in the upcoming Ashes series, but confirmed his return to bowling is likely to come in Sheffield Shield cricket in the lead-in rather than at the ODI or T20I series against India that comes before into the Test summer.

Green, 26, has been Australia's No. 3 in each of their last four Test matches across the World Test Championship final and the three-Test tour of the Caribbean, where he played as a batter-only as he continues his rehabilitation from back surgery in October last year.

He looked increasingly assured in the No. 3 role after a very difficult start, making scores of 4, 0, 3, 15, 26, 52, 46 and 42. While the overall returns appear lean, the last four innings were highly valued within the Australia camp, especially the 46 and 42 in Kingston, which were the second- and third-highest scores in a

game where there were only four individual scores higher than 24.

But speaking in Mackay on Thursday ahead of the second ODI against South Africa, Green said he was unsure if he would continue at No. 3 for the first Ashes Test in Perth in November as the make-up of Australia's top three remained uncertain.

"You never know," Green said. "I think there's certainly a lot of guys that can fill that role. I'm really proud that I was able to do a role up there. But, yeah, wait and see."

If he does not bat No. 3 in the Ashes, it would completely change the dynamic of Australia's top six.

With Steven Smith and Travis Head locked in at four and five, allrounder Beau Webster has noted that his spot at No. 6 would come under pressure when Green's is back to bowling. Usman Khawaja appears certain to open in the Ashes but Sam Konstas knows his place is far from guaranteed with

Tasmania opener Jake Weatherald "in the mix" according to chairman of selectors George Bailey, while all eyes are on Marnus Labuschagne to see if he can regain to some form ahead of the Ashes.

The scrutiny on Konstas has come following a torrid tour of the Caribbean, but Green said there wasn't a lot to glean from the West Indies series given the nature of the pitches.

"It was such tough wickets, especially for the batters, so to try and get out the series unscathed I think was a good effort," Green said. "There wasn't much to take away from that. I think it was just trying to survive, really, and find a way to score some runs. Yeah, I don't think we'll be playing on many wickets quite like that."

Green is set to be available to bowl in the Ashes. He has slowly been building his bowling loads back up at training since June after having not been allowed to bowl following his back surgery.

He has not been available to bowl in either of the T20I series against West Indies or South Africa, and is also playing as a batter-only in the current three-match ODI series.

Australia's next international assignment after the third ODI on Sunday is not until October 1 when they will play a three-match T20I series in four days in New Zealand. Thereafter, Australia play three ODIs against India at home from October 19 to 25 before starting a five-match T20I series against India that runs from October 29 to November 8 with the Ashes starts on November 21.

Green said it was more likely that he would focus on red-ball cricket in the lead-up to the Ashes series with Western Australia set to play three Sheffield Shield matches starting on October 4 against New South Wales at the WACA Ground, October 15 against Tasmania at Bellerive Oval, and October 28 against South Australia.

WWE? Hollywood? Rugby? What megastar Maher might do next

WASHINGTON (BBC): Ilona Maher says she is contemplating an offer to enter professional wrestling with the WWE after playing for the United States at the Women's Rugby World Cup.

The 29-year-old social media sensation, who has nearly nine million followers across her Instagram, TikTok and X channels, has previously appeared on Dancing with the Stars and was named as 2025's best breakthrough athlete at US broadcaster ESPN's prestigious Espy award show.

"I've been approached before by the WWE," she told BBC Sport, joking that her ring name would be 'Maher-vellous'.

"I don't know if I would

[go into wrestling]. I should think about it, there is great money in it." Maher says that if she did get into wrestling it would be with the aim of progressing into Hollywood.

"I would love to get into the acting space and the scripted space. I think a Dwayne 'the Rock' Johnson, John Cena progression - I would love to do that," she added.

"It would be exciting to see my body type on the screen. I'll start off small - probably like a hot assassin or something, let's not get too crazy! 'I'm not going to be in a rom-com just yet."

"We'll see. The world is open, but I do see myself coming back to rugby."

Johnson has starred in the Fast and Furious fran-

chise and Disney blockbuster Moana since leaving WWE, while Cena's acting career includes a cameo in 2023 hit Barbie.

Maher would not be the first sports star to appear in WWE.

Boxers Mike Tyson, Floyd Mayweather and Tyson Fury have all made cameos, while Olympic medalists Kurt Angle and Ronda Rousey have been key ongoing characters in the promotion.

Maher, who has been named at outside centre for Friday evening's World Cup opener against England in Sunderland, says she remains a rugby player first, despite her phenomenal success on social media and clutch of new ventures. Having won a bronze medal with the

US sevens team at Paris 2024, she joined Premiership Women's Rugby side Bristol Bears on a three-month contract in January to help her acclimatise to the 15-a-side game. Her debut against Gloucester-Hartpury set a new attendance crowd for the league of 9,240 after the fixture was switched to Ashton Gate to accommodate more spectators, while her team's social media footprint also grew significantly. "So many times people forget, but I am a rugby player first," Maher added. "I do the social media because I have to because it is not sustainable to be a women's rugby player - I am not going to make money doing it."



In brief

361,900 cusecs water released

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 361,900 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 422,900 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, Tarbela Dam has attained its maximum conservation level of 1550.00 feet which was 148.00 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 268,300 cusecs and 238,900 cusecs, respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1217.45 feet, which was 167.45 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 38,600 cusecs and 7,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 319,400, 479,700, 417,700 and 315,400 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 44,600 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 52,800 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

14 outlaws arrested

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police teams from Aabpara, Margalla, Shams Colony, Khanna, Kirpa, Humak, and Bhara Kahu police stations arrested eight accused involved in different criminal activities. A police spokesperson told APP on Thursday that police teams also recovered 1,762 grams of heroin and five pistols with ammunition from their possession. Cases have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are underway. Additionally, during a special campaign launched to arrest proclaimed offenders and absconders, various police teams apprehended six criminals. The spokesperson said Islamabad Police remain committed to protecting the lives and property of residents and will not allow any elements to disturb public order. He also urged citizens to report any suspicious activities to the relevant police station or via the emergency helpline Pucar-15, so that through mutual cooperation between police and the public, crime can be eradicated from society.

IRC, SALU join forces

ISLAMABAD (APP): The International Rescue Committee (IRC), in collaboration with Shah Abdul Latif University (SALU) on Thursday has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to conduct joint social research. Funded by the European Union Pakistan, the initiative aims to strengthen civil society organizations and support evidence-based interventions in Sindh's nutrition sector. This partnership seeks to enhance the capacity of local organizations and promote positive social change through informed communication strategies. The SIGN program is a collaborative effort between IRC, MERF and Strengthening Participatory Organization (SPO), working together to achieve impactful results. Speaking on this occasion, Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Yousuf Khushk noted, "This partnership enables students and faculty to engage in applied research on adolescent and maternal nutrition. He stated that by working with CSOs, we can build capacity, strengthen academic and practitioner linkages, and generate evidence that informs policy and community-level solutions in Sindh."

Tarbela dam attains maximum conservation level of 1550 Feet

ISLAMABAD (APP): Tarbela Dam reached its maximum conservation level of 1550 feet above mean sea level on Thursday, with 5.728 million-acre feet live water storage in the reservoir.

Filling of Tarbela Dam to its maximum conservation level is a good sign for irrigated agriculture and hydel generation in the country, said a press release.

Tarbela Dam has been playing a key role for socio-economic development in Pakistan for the last 50 years by providing water for agriculture at the time when it is needed, controlling floods and generating low-cost hydel electricity.

The position of the river inflows and outflows at Tarbela, Mangla and Chashma along with the reservoirs levels and the

barrages is as under:

Rivers: Indus at Tarbela: Inflows 268300 cusecs and Outflows 238900 cusecs, Kabul at Nowshera: Inflows 44600 cusecs and Outflows 44600 cusecs, Khairabad Bridge: Inflows 258100 cusecs and Outflows 258100, Jhelum at Mangla: Inflows 38600 cusecs and Outflows 7000 cusecs, Chenab at Marala: Inflows 67600 cusecs and Outflows 49000 cusecs.

Barrages: Jinnah: Inflows 325800 cusecs and Outflows 319400 cusecs, Chashma: Inflows 403500 cusecs and Outflows 351600 cusecs, Taunsa: 485000 Inflows cusecs and Outflows 479700 cusecs, Guddu: Inflows 439100 cusecs and Outflows 417700 cusecs Sukkur: Inflows 363500 cusecs and

Outflows 315400 cusecs Kotri: Inflows 129200 cusecs and Outflows 125800 cusecs, Trimmu: Inflows 79400 cusecs and Outflows 68300 Panjnad: Inflows 70500 cusecs and Outflows 56300 cusecs.

Reservoirs (Level and Storage):

Tarbela: Minimum operating level 1402 feet, present level 1550.00 feet, maximum conservation level 1550 feet, live storage 5.728 MAF.

Mangla: Minimum operating level 1050 feet, present level 1217.45 feet, maximum conservation level 1242 feet, live storage 5.423 MAF.

Chashma: Minimum operating level 638.15 feet, present level 643.30 feet, maximum conservation level 649 feet, live storage 0.094 MAF.

Nikhat condemns heinous incidents of child abuse

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Convenor of the Parliamentary Caucus on Child Rights (PCCR), Dr. Nikhat Shakeel Khan, MNA, has strongly condemned the recent disturbing incidents of child abuse reported from Lahore, expressing deep concern over the rising cases of violence and exploitation of children across the country.

She referred to the Hanjarwal incident where police arrested the principal of a private school for allegedly subjecting an 11-year-old girl to inappropriate behaviour over a period of two months. The arrest was made following a complaint lodged by the victim's mother, and a case has been registered against the accused. Similarly, Dr. Nikhat Shakeel Khan condemned the incident in Mangamandi where two suspects, Usman and Baqir,

allegedly lured a 16-year-old boy with false promises of employment and subjected him to sexual assault before being arrested by the police.

Speaking on behalf of PCCR and the National Assembly of Pakistan, Dr. Nikhat Shakeel Khan said that such heinous crimes not only devastate innocent lives but also threaten the moral, social, and cultural values of society. She emphasized that the protection of children is a collective responsibility and must remain a top national priority.

Convenor PCCR urged all Provincial Child Protection Bureaus, particularly the Punjab Child Protection Bureau, to ensure that the perpetrators of these crimes are brought to justice swiftly and are punished strictly in accordance with the law. She

stressed that visible and decisive action against offenders will act as a strong deterrent and help curb this menace.

Dr. Nikhat Shakeel Khan also called upon civil society organizations, community leaders, and the general public to join hands in supporting the relevant regulatory and enforcement bodies. She underlined that only through collective resolve, active public participation, and strict enforcement of child protection laws can such crimes be eradicated.

Reaffirming the unwavering commitment of the Parliamentary Caucus on Child Rights, Dr. Nikhat Shakeel Khan stated: "Our children are the future of this nation, and safeguarding their dignity, security, and well-being is a sacred duty that we must fulfill together."

NUML holds 25th convocation

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National University of Modern Languages (NUML) successfully concluded its 25th Convocation, a two-day event that also marked the University's Silver Jubilee, celebrating 25 years of commitment to education, research, culture, and excellence.

The convocation was graced by the Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, as Chief Guest. The ceremony was also attended by Rector NUML, Shahid Mahmood Kayani, Director General NUML, Shahzad Munir, faculty members, parents and a large number of distinguished guests, said a press release on Thursday.

A total of 1,271 graduates, including international students from Afghanistan, Egypt were awarded degrees. Among them, 94 students were conferred Gold Medals in recognition of their outstanding academic achievements.

In his inaugural address, Rector NUML Shahid Mahmood Kayani commended the faculty and administration for their unwavering commitment to academic excellence, student mentorship, and institutional growth.

He urged the graduating students to serve as ambassadors of ethical leadership and uphold justice, truth, and human dignity in every sphere of life.

"Let your degrees be more than a credential; let them be a reminder of your duty to give back, to stand for what is right, and to help those who cannot help themselves," he emphasized.

Addressing the gathering, Federal Minister Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui congratulated the graduates and highlighted the transformative power of education.

He said, "Education is your greatest asset. It is now your turn to uplift the nation with your dedication

and hard work."

He particularly acknowledged the achievements of female graduates and underscored the need to prioritize education at all levels for national progress.

DG NUML Shahzad Munir also extended his felicitations to the graduates, expressing hope that with perseverance and by following the vision of the nation's forefathers, the young generation would play a vital role in building a prosperous Pakistan.

The event concluded with group photographs, the traditional tossing of caps, and emotional moments as students dedicated their awards to their parents.

UNDP expresses deep concern

ISLAMABAD (APP): The UNDP is deeply saddened by the tragic loss of lives and widespread destruction caused by the recent floods across Pakistan. UNDP has provided emergency relief items to assist flood-affected families in the hardest-hit regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). These supplies include 180 tents, 103 stretchers, 230 sleeping

bags, 130 floodlights and 53 first aid kits, among other essentials. In close coordination with the Provincial Disaster Management Authority and the Planning and Development Department KP, the relief items are being dispatched to Nowshera, where PDMA will distribute them to communities based on immediate needs.

Int'l experts call for strong frameworks, strategies

ISLAMABAD (APP): International experts on Thursday underscored that while coal remains embedded in Pakistan's power system, the momentum is growing for a structured transition anchored in economic planning, just transition frameworks, and investments in renewable energy and grid modernization.

The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), in collaboration with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), convened a high-level consultative discussion on "Repurposing Coal-fired Power Plants in Pakistan –

Challenges and Opportunities", bringing together policymakers, experts, and energy leaders to chart pathways for Pakistan's transition away from coal, said a press release.

Opening the discussion, Zainab Babar, Researcher SDPI set the context, highlighting the urgency of balancing Pakistan's energy needs with its climate commitments.

Michael Williamson, Section Chief Energy Division at UNESCAP, said coal phase-down is now a central theme in Asia-Pacific following the 2021 Glasgow Climate Pact. "The urgent need is to reverse the trend of coal-

fired generation capacity, strengthen climate policies through NDC 3.0, phase out subsidies for fossil fuels, and accelerate support for renewables and energy efficiency," he emphasized.

He noted that coal remains deeply entrenched, providing 56% of electricity generation in Asia-Pacific, while accounting for 76% of global consumption. He warned that the region's planned 184GW of new coal capacity risks locking in emissions for decades.

Speaking on Pakistan's context, Dr. Khalid Waleed, Energy Economy Expert at SDPI, described the coun-



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Republic of Poland Macej Pisarski meeting with Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Chaudhry Salik Hussain.

'Plant Fraternity' campaign launched

ISLAMABAD (APP): Capital Development Authority (CDA), in collaboration with the Ethiopian Embassy and the Human Resource Development Network (HRDN), on Thursday launched the "Plant Fraternity" campaign at Fatima Jinnah Park, F-9, Islamabad, promoting brotherhood through tree plantation.

The initiative, led by Ethiopian Ambassador Dr. Jemal Beker Abdula, aims to strengthen Pakistan-Ethiopia ties while addressing shared environmental challenges.

A large number of young people joined the plantation drive, underscoring the role of youth in climate action.

Speaking at the event, Ambassador Abdula stressed that Pakistan is among the countries most vulnerable to climate change despite its minimal contribution to global carbon emissions.

"The 'Plant Fraternity' campaign is a gift from our government, through which we aim to share the successful experiences of our Prime Minister, Dr. Abiy Ahmed's Green Legacy Programme, with Pakistan," he said.

The envoy highlighted Ethiopia's success under the Green Legacy Initiative, which has seen the plantation of over 41.2 billion saplings in six years. He said the program has helped combat deforestation, food insecurity, unemployment, and poverty while creating greener landscapes.

CDA's Director General Environment, Awais Tarar, welcomed the initiative, saying it would contribute to Islamabad's green development agenda. He noted that so far this year, CDA has planted 149,200 saplings across the city, dispersed 427,600 seed balls, and sown more than 1.6 million seeds to expand urban greenery. "Our objective is to make Islamabad a greener, more sustainable city, ensuring a healthier environment for residents," he added.

HRDN CEO Robeela Bangash called on youth to take an active role in environmental protection, emphasizing that tree plantation campaigns are vital to mitigating climate change and safeguarding future generations.

Officials said the "Plant Fraternity" campaign reflects the growing partnership between Pakistan and Ethiopia, rooted in shared commitments to environmental sustainability and stronger people-to-people ties.

Lawyers' team visits Mohtasib Secretariat

ISLAMABAD (APP): A representative delegation from S&S Law Associates, Pakistan's first All Women Law Firm headed by Ms. Sibah Farooq, Advocate visited the Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat here Thursday as part of the latter's civil society initiative.

The delegation was briefed in detail on the working of the various sections and departments of the Secretariat by their respective heads and also paid a courtesy call on the Wafaqi Mohtasib, Mr. Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi.

It was informed that the Wafaqi Mohtasib's Office was the premier institution of administrative accountability in the country mandated to address and rectify maladministration of the federal government agencies. Following the success of the Wafaqi Mohtasib's

institution, being the first in the country of its kind, in providing free and expeditious administrative justice to the general public, the concept has been replicated in areas like Banking, Taxation, Insurance and Protection of Women against Harassment at the Work Place, it was told.

The delegation was further informed that last year, a record number of complaints amounting to 226,373 had been received, out of which as many as 223,198 had been addressed satisfactorily. As regards the current year, the delegation was informed that more than 150,000 have been received so far and if we go by the projections made for the current year, this figure may cross 250,000 mark.

Later, the delegation also visited the Asian Ombudsman Association

(AOA) Secretariat located in the Wafaqi Mohtasib's Building and attended a detailed briefing on the Association. It was told that the organization came into being in 1996 mainly due to the efforts of the Wafaqi Mohtasib who has also held its Presidentship most of the time. Presently, the Wafaqi Mohtasib (Federal Ombudsman), Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi, is the current President of the Association.

The delegation highly commended the efforts of Wafaqi Mohtasib's institution in addressing maladministration and checking administrative inefficiencies of the public sector organizations as well as making efforts for good governance in the country, terming the office's performance as being remarkable and worth emulating for all.

Rotary Club Pakistan Corporate hosts reception

ISLAMABAD (APP): Rotary Club Pakistan Corporate organized a prestigious reception in honor of the visiting Rotary International delegation, led by Rotary International President Francisco Azzaro, Trustee Chair of The Rotary Foundation Holger Knaack, and International PolioPlus Committee Chairperson Mike McGovern.

In his address, President Azzaro, along with members of the delegation, lauded the Government of Pakistan's commitment and progress in the eradication of polio, acknowledging the country's remarkable efforts in partnership with Rotary, said a press release issued here on Thursday.

Past Trustee Aziz Memon highlighted the on-ground challenges of polio eradication and paid tribute to the resilience and dedication of frontline polio workers serving in difficult circumstances.

Justice (ret'd) Farrukh Irfan Khan, President of Rotary Club Pakistan Corporate, reaffirmed the Club's resolve to serve communities in need. Imran Ghaznavi, founder of the Club, urged the corporate sector to play an active role in sustainable community service and to join hands with Rotary in its humanitarian initiatives.

Chief guest, Senator Syed Sarmad Ali, emphasized Pakistan's strategic

importance in today's global and regional context. He described Pakistan as a resilient nation with immense potential and as an emerging hub for global tourism.

The event was attended by the Italian Ambassador to Pakistan Marilina Armellini, Shahzad Malik, President ICMA, Ms Ayla Majid, the global president of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), prominent corporate sector leaders and senior journalists.

They appreciated Rotary Club Pakistan Corporate's efforts in establishing a platform that brings together business leadership for impactful service to communities.

They appreciated Rotary Club Pakistan Corporate's efforts in establishing a platform that brings together business leadership for impactful service to communities.

DIG vows crackdown on criminals

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Muhammad Jawad Tariq on Thursday chaired a high-level meeting on crime prevention and directed strict measures to ensure the safety of citizens.

A police spokesperson told APP that the meeting was attended by SSP Counter Terrorism Department (CTD), Zonal SPs, SP Dolphin, SP CTD, and other senior police officers. The DIG emphasized that complete bio-data,

character verification, and registration of non-local tenants must be ensured at all costs.

DIG Tariq directed the immediate arrest of proclaimed offenders and record-holders involved in heinous crimes, adding that patrolling should be made more effective and purposeful with officers visibly present in the field.

A comprehensive crackdown against active criminal gangs was ordered, while indiscriminate action

would also be taken against those involved in illegal weapons, brandishing of arms, and drug trafficking, the spokesperson said.

DIG Tariq stressed that all available resources should be utilized to combat crime and search operations across the capital must continue without interruption. He reaffirmed that the protection of citizens' lives and property remains the top priority of the ICT Police.

Partnerships (JETPs), and local coal integration.

Shah Jahan Mirza, Managing Director PPPIB, underlined government targets of 40% renewable energy by 2025 and 60% by 2030, noting that with net-metered solar, Pakistan is already at 43-44% renewables in its energy mix.

He confirmed that while Pakistan has no timeline for phasing out coal, the 2025-35 plan envisions no new thermal plants, with capacity additions focused on hydro, wind, and nuclear. However, he stressed that grid infrastructure remains the biggest bottleneck in scaling up

renewables.

David Lone, Manager, Global Electricity Transition, Rocky Mountain Institute said coal plants could be converted into flexible grid services or even green hydrogen sites, while George Mowles-Van Ger Gaag, Associate Director of Coal Asset Transition called for a national just transition framework to safeguard jobs and communities.

Yuki Yasui, Managing Director, GFANZ stressed that credibility and financial viability must underpin coal-to-clean transitions, while Ali Amin Policy Fellow from Transition Pathway Initiative, The

London School of Economics argued for sectoral pathways that align Pakistan with the Paris Agreement.

Engineer Ubaid ur Rehman Zia, Head of Energy Unit at SDPI in his concluding remarks said Pakistan's transition debate has shifted from energy security to economic viability.

"Renewables are becoming cheaper while coal financing is nearly nonexistent. The real challenge is addressing stranded assets and capacity payments. Green upscaling and repurposing of coal power plants is the way forward," he remarked.

Three murderer arrested

JALALABAD (Pajhwok): Three people have been arrested in connection with the killing of six members of a family in Surkhrod district of Nangarhar. Unidentified gunmen killed six members of a family in the Sultanpur area of the district. The police headquarters said that three individuals had been detained in connection with the incident. According to the confessions of the detainees, the incident arose from personal and family issues.

Beryl stone sold in Kunar

KUNAR(BNA): 15.5Kgs of beryl stone sold for 69 million Afs in an open auction in Kunar province of the country. Gemstone trader Gohar-ur-Rahman stated that ten percent of the total amount will be allocated for government expenses. The Kunar Department of Mines and Petroleum has also emphasized that numerous facilities have been established for stone traders in the province, allowing them to transport their stones without any concerns.

Stronger Islamic world ties discussed

KABUL (Pajhwok): A delegation from Kuwait visiting Kabul has described close and positive relations among Islamic countries as essential, saying Afghans have many opportunities for progress and economic growth.

In a statement, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) said Minister Maulvi Abdul Kabir met with Dr Djeeh Khalaf Al-Shary, a former member of Kuwait's parliament, together with

Jarallah, a member of a charitable foundation, and businessman Sheikh Fahd Al-Hanan.

Dr Djeeh Khalaf Al-Shary said the purpose of his visit to Afghanistan was to strengthen the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan's (IEA) relations with the Islamic world and with Kuwait.

He added that close and positive ties among Islamic countries are a pressing need of the time and should be reinforced, noting that

Afghans have considerable opportunities for advancement and economic development.

During the meeting, Maulvi Kabir said fostering positive relations with Islamic countries is a priority for the IEA.

He emphasised that the IEA, as a responsible government in Afghanistan, has begun working for the country's progress and is striving to continue its economic activities as an effective system in the region.

School to be built with residents' funding

GHAZNI CITY (Pajhwok): The Education Department of southern Ghazni province says that construction work has begun on a school building funded by local residents in Nawur district.

Maulvi Nasir Ahmad Hussaini, director of the Education Department, told Pajhwok Afghan News that the building is being constructed for Shaheed Ghulam Haidar School in the Warklakh area of the district.

He added that the two-storey building is being erected on two acres of land and will include 12 classrooms and four administrative rooms, along with proper electricity and clean water systems.

He noted that the construction of the school will cost eight million Afghanis, funded entirely by local residents.

Baradar, private firm discuss water project



KABUL (Pajhwok): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) is prioritising solutions to Kabul's worsening water crisis, as Deputy Prime Minister Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar held talks with a private company on a Panjshir water transfer plan.

The project, stretching around 200 kilometres from Bazarak in Panjshir to Tarakhel in Kabul, is expected to resolve water

shortages for some two million residents.

Baradar met officials of the Katawazi Group in Kabul on Thursday, his office said on its X handle.

He underlined that the IEA was fully aware of the capital's water challenges and was making serious and fundamental efforts to address them.

For their part, representatives of the Katawazi Group expressed readiness

to invest in the project, pledging to meet all standards and requirements.

They added that, once the necessary information and documents were received from the Ministry of Energy and Water (MoEW), their technical teams would be deployed to the field and complete the survey and design within two weeks.

Baradar also instructed MoEW officials to provide

the company with the available project information and documents, and to engage with them on the technical, financial and implementation aspects.

He assured the company of his cooperation and called on both MoEW and the Katawazi Group to share their report with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs within two weeks.

Jalali and Kazakh envoy discuss health cooperation



KABUL (Pajhwok): The Minister of Public Health, Maulvi Noor Jalal Jalali, met with Kazakhstan's Ambassador in Kabul to discuss enhancing healthcare workers' skills, improving services in remote areas, supplying medical equipment and controlling communicable diseases.

According to a statement from the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), Maulvi Jalali met with Kazakhstan's Ambassador to Afghanistan, Gaziz Akbasov here.

The meeting focused on enhancing the skills of

healthcare personnel, improving health service delivery in remote districts, providing medical equipment to hospitals, sharing experiences in communicable disease control and promoting bilateral cooperation in the health sector.

Jalali said, "Given the high demand for health services in the country, we have launched initiatives to build general hospitals in 318 districts to prevent maternal and child mortality and provide all citizens with equitable, high-quality healthcare."

He also requested Kazakhstan's support in supplying medical equipment for newly established health centers and suggested that Kazakhstan could contribute through investment or cooperation in building standard hospitals in northern provinces, increasing access to healthcare services for the population.

The Kazakh ambassador added that he would work to provide training opportunities for Afghan healthcare workers in various fields and ensure ongoing collaboration in the health sector.

\$1.5m road inaugurated

L A S H K A R G A H (Pajhwok): A road has been constructed and inaugurated at a cost of more than \$1.5 million in Babaji district of Helmand province, an official said on Thursday.

Maulvi Mohammad Qasim Riaz, the governor's spokesman, told Pajhwok Afghan News that the road, built to proper standards, is 10.5 kilometres long.

He added that the construction of this road would not only make people's daily lives easier, but also play an important role in agriculture, trade, education services and overall economic development.

The head of the Road Construction Committee, Sheikh Maulvi Abdul Wali Agha, said the road had been built at a cost of \$1.75 million by the provincial administration. He noted that all construction work was carried out in line with engineering standards and that the project was closely monitored throughout its implementation.

Residents: Taliban seized homes in Bamiyan's Punjab district

BAMIYAN (Amu TV): Residents of the Rashk area in Punjab district of Bamiyan province of Afghanistan say the Taliban have seized their homes and handed them over to nomadic Kochis, leaving many families displaced and living in temporary tents.

Locals told Amu that the Taliban pressured residents to sign forced land transfer documents. Those who refused have faced arrest warrants and accusations of

"causing division," prompting some families to flee.

"They are under pursuit. The Taliban want to arrest those who refused to sign the order giving their land to the Kochis," said a woman from Punjab district.

Residents said the properties taken were privately owned and that the displaced families are facing severe economic hardship. Some families reported that Taliban and Kochis have even barred them from

grazing their livestock.

The forced displacements in Rashk Pushta Gharghari were reported about a month ago. Locals said the Taliban closed off homes before handing them over to Kochis.

Richard Bennett, the U.N. special rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan, said he is reviewing the situation and warned the Taliban that "forced evictions are never acceptable." He

urged adherence to international standards, including due process, adequate notice, genuine consultation with residents and compensation.

Earlier reports from Bamiyan indicated that 25 families were forcibly displaced under orders from Taliban-appointed governor Abdullah Sarhadi and with the involvement of Kochis.

The Taliban have not responded to Amu's request for comment.

ISIS-K poses major threat with 2,000 fighters in Afghanistan: UN

KABUL (Amu TV): The ISIS-K continues to pose the most serious terrorist threat from Afghanistan and the wider Central Asian region, according to a United Nations report warning of the group's resilience and regional ambitions.

In its latest assessment, the UN Secretary-General's office said ISIS-K maintains about 2,000 fighters in Afghanistan, where it continues to recruit not only locally but also from Central Asian states, Russia's North Caucasus, and disaffected members of other militant groups.

The group, under the leadership of Sanaullah Ghafari (also known as Shahab al-Muhajir), has prioritized attacks on Shia

communities, Afghanistan's Taliban rulers, and foreigners, the report said. While Taliban operations have diminished some of ISIS-K's capabilities, the UN noted that the group "continued to operate with relative impunity."

The report also pointed to Tamim Ansar al-Kurdi as head of Da'esh's regional "Siddiq office," which oversees ISIL-K activities and operations across Central and South Asia.

International concern is mounting over the flow of foreign terrorist fighters from Syria into Central Asia and Afghanistan, raising fears of a broader destabilization effort aimed at undermining regional security.

ISIS-K has claimed

responsibility for some of the deadliest attacks in Afghanistan in recent years, including bombings targeting Shia mosques, Taliban checkpoints, and gatherings of civilians. The group also carried out cross-border rocket attacks into neighboring countries, heightening concerns among Afghanistan's neighbors.

The UN report comes as Afghanistan also remains a haven for other militant groups. The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), a UN-designated terrorist organization, has nearly 6,000 fighters operating from Afghan soil, according to the report. With safe havens close to Pakistan's border, the TTP continues

to pose what Islamabad calls a "grave and immediate danger" to its national security.

The report added that there is credible evidence of collaboration between the TTP, the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), and the Majid Brigade, including the sharing of training camps used to plan attacks against Pakistan's infrastructure, economic projects, and civilians.

UN officials warned that unless addressed, the combination of ISIL-K's entrenched presence in Afghanistan and the growing activities of groups like the TTP could threaten not only Afghanistan's fragile stability but also regional and international peace.

131 released from jails return home

KABUL (Pajhwok): About 131 Afghan refugees have returned to the country after being released from jails in Pakistan, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) said on Thursday.

In a post on X, the MoRR stated that these individuals, who had been detained across various parts of Pakistan, returned home this week following their release.

A source, citing the Spin Boldak Kandahar Migrant Transfers Directorate, said, "These individuals were held in different areas of Pakistan for periods ranging from one to six days."

The ministry added that after arriving in Afghanistan and receiving humanitarian assistance, the returnees were transferred to their home districts.

Restoration of Amir Ali Shir Nawa'i memorial started



MAZAR-I-SHARIF (Ariana News): Local officials in Balkh province have announced the launch of a restoration and beautification project for the memorial of Amir Ali Shir Nawa'i — a renowned literary and cultural figure of the 15th century — in the city of Mazar-i-Sharif. The project is being carried out at a cost of 1.5 million Afghanis.

According to Hafez Abdul Rahman Hemat, the mayor of Mazar-i-Sharif, the project will be completed

within a month in collaboration with the municipality and local residents. The work includes the restoration of the memorial plaque, development of green spaces, seating areas, a small library, and informational displays about Amir Ali Shir Nawa'i's life and literary contributions.

"Our goal is to preserve the values of national and historical figures, enhance the city's beauty, and provide a cultural space for the public," said Hemat.

Several residents of Mazar-i-Sharif welcomed the initiative, calling it a valuable step toward preserving cultural identity, honoring historical personalities, and beautifying the city.

Amir Ali Shir Nawa'i was a prominent literary, political, and cultural figure of the 15th century, known for his poetry, scholarly works, and cultural contributions, earning a distinguished place in the region's history.

Deported Afghans from Iran struggle without basic needs



KABUL (TOLONews): At a refugee camp in Kabul, Afghans recently deported from Iran say they have no access to basic necessities of life.

They cite shortages of healthcare services, shelter, and essential food supplies as major challenges. The returnees call on the Islamic Emirate, as well as domestic and international aid organizations, to urgently address their situation.

Noor Agha, a recent returnee,

said in a distressed voice: "I ask the Islamic Emirate to at least provide treatment for my daughter, who has health problems."

Ruwaida, another deportee from Iran, told TOLONews: "There should be more doctors available for refugees to address their health issues. Last night a child slept here, and now he has developed an allergy."

On another side of the camp,

Fatema Noori can be seen. She had traveled to Iran five years ago for medical treatment but, after being deported, now has no place to live in Afghanistan.

She appealed to the Islamic Emirate for medical care for her sick daughter and for shelter.

She told TOLONews: "I have two children with ongoing health issues, and I cannot find medicine for them. For God's sake, please provide my children with a place of shelter."

Officials in Kabul say they are working to address the problems of newly returned deportees and to provide them with necessary services.

Abu Laith, a security official at the Baba Jan Brigade camp in Kabul, explained: "This is a temporary camp, and they should be relocated within 24 hours. During that time, we provide them with food, a place to sleep, and all necessary facilities."

In recent weeks, the deportation and forced return of Afghans, particularly from Iran and Pakistan, has accelerated, with many being expelled under difficult circumstances and without preparation.

Hanifa team wins football tourney

MAHMOOD RAQI (Pajhwok): The "Jam-i-Wahdat" football tournament, featuring 10 teams, concluded in Kapisa with the team "Mohammad Abu Hanifa Rigrawan" emerging as the champion.

Dr. Wahid, head of the Kapisa Football Federation, said the tournament was held over two months in a group-stage format among teams from across the province. He added that four teams—Esteghlal Qala-i-Naw, Mohammad Abu Hanifa Rigrawan, Ariana, and the Directorate of Disasters—advanced to the semi-finals.

In the final match, Mohammad Abu Hanifa Rigrawan defeated Esteghlal 3-2 to claim the championship.

Dr. Wahid emphasized that the tournament aims to develop and strengthen young players' talents and prepare them for participation in the Kapisa Premier Football League.

PVPV ministry distributes questionnaires in schools

KABUL (Amu TV): The Taliban's Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (PVPV) has distributed questionnaires to teachers and students in Kabul schools, asking about their compliance with their interpretation of Islamic law, sources said.

A copy of the questionnaire reviewed by Amu includes questions on wearing the Taliban-mandated hijab, performing congregational prayers, grooming practices in line with religious traditions, the role of the ministry's inspectors, and issues such as bribery, drug use and sorcery.

Respondents are asked to answer "yes" or "no" and explain reasons for non-compliance. They are also required to provide their names and the location of their schools.

The questionnaire cites elements of the Taliban's law on the promotion of virtue and prevention of vice, which was endorsed by the group's leader in August last year. Taliban officials, including the supreme leader, have repeatedly stressed the importance of enforcing the law, which rights groups say has tightened restrictions on women's educa-

tion, work and freedom of movement.

Some women and girls in Kabul told Amu that increased monitoring under the law has made life more difficult. "We Afghan women are exhausted by the Taliban's endless decrees," said one Kabul resident. "The new rules have trapped women and made living in this country unbearable."

Earlier, the ministry's Directorate of Invitation and Guidance required employees of ministries to take a compulsory religious exam as part of its enforcement measures.

Climate change led to loss of lives across country

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Senior Provincial Minister for Information, Transport and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon, stated that since June, rainfall caused by climate change has led to loss of life across various regions of the country. According to him, 427 deaths occurred in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 165 in Punjab, 40 in Sindh, 22 in Balochistan, 56 in Azad Kashmir, and 8 in Islamabad. In Tharparkar, 198 mm of rainfall resulted in the deaths of 3 individuals and 18 livestock.

During a press conference in Karachi, the Minister said that on August 19, the city recorded an average of over 120 mm of rainfall. Specific areas saw even higher levels: 246 mm in Manghopir, 190 mm in Korangi, 175 mm in Gulzar-e-Hijri, and 149 mm in North Nazimabad. He noted that continuous rainfall led to urban flooding and traffic disruptions, which could have been mitigated had the rain occurred intermittently.

Sharjeel Memon stated that most deaths in Karachi were caused by electrocution, and criticized K-Electric and HESCO for their incompetence, as power outages lasted up to 48 hours in some areas. Despite this, municipal bodies, the mayor, and provincial administration remained active on the streets. Drainage channels had been cleaned in advance, and heavy machinery was deployed for water disposal, although some shortcomings did occur.

He expressed regret over the public's suffering and offered an apology on behalf of the Sindh government. However, he condemned certain media houses for launching a coordinated campaign against the government. He pointed out that parties criticizing the current administration had themselves witnessed hundreds of deaths during minor rainfalls in their own tenures, leaving cities paralyzed for days.



He reiterated that K-Electric and HESCO disappointed citizens, with power outages lasting up to 48 hours in several areas. However, he commended Murtaza Wahab for being present everywhere. He noted that even developed countries are facing severe challenges due to climate change, and warned that a cloud-burst could lead to even worse conditions.

He acknowledged the public's distress but emphasized that no magical solution exists to instantly resolve everything. He said K-Electric's incompetence was most evident during the rains.

On the topic of bail granted to the PTI founder, he extended congratulations and affirmed that respecting court decisions is mandatory for all. In response to a question, he said discussions cannot be based on assumptions, and any constitutional amendment would be deliberated across all party forums.

He stated that damage assessments would be conducted after the rain spell ends. He highlighted that settlements and mosques have been built inside Gujjar Nala, and even some media houses and government offices are constructed on drainage channels. He stressed that the current infrastructure is unreliable and incapable of addressing climate challenges. Issues in the Red Line BRT are also due to utility line conflicts.

He concluded by saying that those who perform well should not be criticized. The Governor represents the entire province, and everyone should work together. Politics should not be done in the name of service. Sharjeel Memon emphasized that Karachi is a city where thousands of people from across the country come daily for employment. He urged the federal government to pay attention to this city, which contributes 70% of the national revenue and offers the best healthcare facilities in Pakistan.



RAWALPINDI: President Asif Ali Zardari visits residence of Shaheed Major Chaudhry Rizwan Tahir and expressed solidarity with bereaved family.

PHC consolidates Umar Ayub petitions

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has deferred the hearing on a petition filed by leader of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Umar Ayub, challenging the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) inquiry into his assets, on Thursday.

PHC divisional bench comprising Justice Waqar Ahmad and Justice Kamran Hayat Miankhal heard the petition. During the hearing, Umar Ayub's lawyer argued that the ECP's inquiry into the petitioner's assets was unlawful, as the commission had no jurisdiction to investigate pre-election matters after the election.

The ECP's lawyer countered that the commission had not initiated any disciplinary action and that a five-member bench had already heard the case. PHC deferred the hearing and consolidate the case with other related petitions.

After the hearing, Umar Ayub told the media that the ECP's action was unlawful and part of a vendetta against him. He expressed frustration over the timing of the inquiry, claiming it was politically motivated. He also mentioned that he had transferred money to his wife and daughter's accounts and criticized the court's decisions in the May 9 cases, alleging political bias.

‘Ukraine not interested in peace’

MOSCOW: Russia has said that Ukraine was “not interested” in a long-term peace deal, accusing it of seeking security guarantees incompatible with Russia's demands. “The Ukrainian regime and its representatives comment on the current situation in a very specific way, directly showing that they are not interested in a sustainable, fair, long-term settlement,” Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said at a news conference on Thursday.

Lavrov also repeated Russia's policy that Russian President Vladimir Putin is ready to meet with Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelenskyy – but only after key issues have previously been worked out by senior officials in what could be a long negotiating process. His comments came as Zelenskyy announced he could meet with Putin, but only after his allies agree to security guarantees for Ukraine to deter future Russian attacks once the fighting stops.

In comments released on Thursday, Zelenskyy also warned that both sides were preparing for further fighting. Russia was building up troops on the southern front line and Ukraine was test-launching a new long-range cruise missile, he said. US President Donald Trump is trying to end Russia's three-and-a-half-year invasion of Ukraine through talks with Zelenskyy and Putin. — Aljazeera

Israeli attacks kill 40 across Gaza

GAZA: Israel's military has intensified its attacks on Gaza City with air strikes on heavily populated areas, as it pushes ahead with the initial stage of an operation to seize the enclave's main urban centre that could forcibly displace close to one million Palestinians.

Among the victims of the Israeli assault on Gaza City on Thursday were six people, including four children, killed in the southern Sabra neighbourhood, a source at the nearby al-Ahli Hospital told Al Jazeera. Footage from the scene of one of the attacks east of Sheikh Radwan showed the bodies of the dead and badly wounded strewn across the street amid flames and wreckage from the attack.

The victims in Gaza City were among at least 40 Palestinians killed across the territory since dawn, hospital sources in Gaza told Al Jazeera, eight of whom were reportedly seeking aid. Among the other victims were five Palestinians killed by an Israeli drone strike northwest of Khan Younis, and at least three killed by Israeli forces near an aid centre north of Rafah, sources told Al Jazeera. In the north of the enclave, four people were killed and 10 injured in Israeli shelling of Jabalia al-Balah, emergency sources told Al Jazeera, while in central Gaza, five people, including two children, were killed while waiting for aid near the so-called Netzarim axis, a source at Al-Awda Hospital said.

In Gaza City, where Israeli troops are posted on the outskirts, thousands of Palestinians continued to flee their homes in a bid to escape the escalating offensive, amid heavy shelling of densely populated neighbourhoods like Sabra and Tuffah. “We are facing a bitter, bitter situation, to die at home or leave and die somewhere else; as long as this war continues, survival is uncertain,” Rabah Abu Elias, a 67-year-old father of seven, told the Reuters news agency.

“In the news, they speak about a possible truce. On the ground, we only hear explosions and see deaths. To leave Gaza City or not isn't an easy decision to make.” Reporting from Gaza City, Al Jazeera correspondent Hani Mahmoud said the Israeli military was repeating a strategy it had used previously in Gaza, “targeting densely populated neighbourhoods to depopulate them”.

Israeli troops had previously taken the

same approach in the eastern Gaza City neighbourhoods of Tuffah and Shujayea, he said, and were now deploying the tactics in the Zeitoun and Sabra districts in the southeast of the city. Reporting from Deir el-Balah in central Gaza, Al Jazeera correspondent Tareq Abu Azzoum said that for those fleeing the Israeli offensive on Gaza City, there were no safe havens in the enclave, as places that had been supposedly deemed safe by the Israeli military had repeatedly been targeted.

“They feel they have been hunted without any safe place to go to,” he said. Abu Azzoum was nearby when a makeshift camp housing displaced Palestinians in Deir el-Balah was struck in an Israeli bombardment on Thursday, close to the city's al-Aqsa Hospital. Footage he captured at the site of the attack showed chaotic scenes, as huge plumes of smoke rose from the attacked area. “It's only 9am ... and the Israeli military is already scaling up attacks in Gaza,” he said.

Israel's military has said it will call up 60,000 reservists as it pursues the operation to seize Gaza City, despite widespread international condemnation, some domestic opposition, and warnings that the offensive will deepen the humanitarian catastrophe and forcibly displace hundreds of thousands of people to concentration zones in southern Gaza. Close to one million Palestinians are believed to be in Gaza City, where Israeli tanks have been pushing closer to the city's centre this week. “The intensification of hostilities in Gaza means more killing, more displacement, more destruction and more panic,” Christian Cardon, chief spokesman for the International Committee of the Red Cross, told Al Jazeera.

“Gaza is a closed space, from which nobody can escape ... and where access to healthcare, food and safe water is dwindling,” he said. “This is intolerable.” The head of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), Philippe Lazzarini, said at a briefing in Geneva that child malnutrition in Gaza City had risen sixfold since March. “We have a population that is extremely weak that will be confronted with a new major military operation,” he said. “Many will simply not have the strength to undergo a new displacement.” — Aljazeera

Pakistan pays tribute to victims of terrorism: FO

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan joined the international community Thursday in solemnly marking the International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism, reiterating its unwavering commitment to eliminating the scourge in all its forms and manifestations.

Foreign Office Spokesperson Ambassador Shafqat Ali Khan, in a statement, said the day serves as a reminder of collective responsibility to stand in solidarity with victims of terrorism, honour their memory, and reaffirm global resolve against this threat. He noted that Pakistan has been one of the worst affected countries by terrorism, suffering over 90,000 casualties and economic losses exceeding US \$150 billion. “Our security forces and people have shown unmatched

resilience and made immense sacrifices to protect not only our homeland but also regional and global peace,” he added.

Ambassador Khan recalled recent terrorist incidents, including the Jaffar Express attack and the bombing of a school bus in Khuzdar, which claimed innocent civilian lives, including children. He stressed that terrorism in Pakistan is not an isolated phenomenon but “orchestrated, planned, and executed from across the borders.” Highlighting emerging threats, he pointed out new forms of terrorism such as fake news and misinformation campaigns, state-sponsored extra-territorial assassinations, and hydro-terrorism.

The Spokesperson also reaffirmed Pakistan's solidarity with oppressed peoples facing state terrorism, particularly in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and

Palestine. “Kashmiris continue to face systematic killings, arbitrary detentions, and enforced disappearances under Indian occupation, yet their resolve for self-determination remains unbroken,” he said. He added that Palestinians are enduring relentless aggression and human rights violations by Israeli forces, actions which amount to genocide. Ambassador Khan emphasized that prolonged conflicts, foreign occupation, and denial of self-determination fuel extremism and terrorism, urging the international community to address these root causes comprehensively. “As we honour the victims of terrorism, Pakistan calls for strengthened international partnership, dialogue, and cooperation to eradicate terrorism without discrimination and to extend meaningful support to victims and their families,” he concluded.

Court tosses \$515m civil fraud penalty against Trump

WASHINGTON: An appeals court in New York has thrown out a civil fraud penalty that would have cost United States President Donald Trump and his business associates nearly half a billion dollars, calling the fine “excessive”.

On Thursday, a five-judge panel in New York's Appellate Division rendered its decision after weighing Trump's appeal for nearly 11 months. In its ruling, the panel cited the Eighth Amendment of the US Constitution, which prohibits the government from levying unduly harsh penalties on its citizens.

The case stems from a civil suit brought by New York Attorney General Letitia James, who argued

that Trump had inflated his financial records in order to secure advantages with insurance companies, banks and other financial institutions. In February 2024, a lower court had ordered Trump to pay \$355m in penalties, an amount the appeals court called into question. That amount has since grown to about \$515m due to accumulating interest.

“While the injunctive relief ordered by the court is well crafted to curb defendants' business culture, the court's disgorgement order, which directs that defendants pay nearly half a billion dollars to the State of New York, is an excessive fine that violates the Eighth Amendment of the United States Constitution,” two of the

panel's judges, Dianne T Renwick and Peter H Moulton, wrote in one opinion. Trump quickly applauded the decision on his social media platform, Truth Social.

“Total victory in the fake New York State Attorney General Letitia James Case! I greatly respect the fact that the Court had the Courage to throw out this unlawful and disgraceful Decision that was hurting Business all throughout New York State,” he wrote. While the court did dismiss the penalty in its entirety, its judges were divided over the merits of the lower court's ruling, which found that Trump and his co-defendants had misrepresented their wealth in “fraudulent ways”. — Aljazeera

CJCSC calls on Uzbek President

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC) General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, NI (M), who is on an official visit to Uzbekistan, called on President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Minister of Defence Major General S h u k h r a t Kholmukhamedov and Secretary National Security Council Lieutenant General Victor Makhmudov.

The discussions covered evolving international and regional geo-political and security environment, with emphasis on matters of mutual interest, said a news release issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) here. Both sides expressed optimism to expand cooperation to further strengthen bilateral relations in defence and security domains, road and rail connectivity and other aspects of cooperation.

The Chairman JCSC highlighted Pakistan's deep-rooted and brotherly ties with Uzbekistan, underscoring shared commitment for further collaborations to promote regional peace, stability, and prosperity. The leadership of Uzbekistan lauded the professionalism of Pakistan Armed Forces and appreciated their sacrifices in the fight against terrorism.

Two killed in Karachi blast

F.P. Report

KARACHI: At least two people were killed and 34 others sustained injuries on Thursday after a powerful blast ripped through a shop beside a firecracker warehouse on MA Jinnah Road, leading to a massive blaze and intermittent explosions in the area.

The sheer intensity of the blast also damaged nearby vehicles and shattered windows of surrounding buildings, filling the area with heavy smoke drifting towards the Lines Area. The ground-plus-two building housed medical equipment shops in addition to the firecracker warehouse. Authorities said flammable items, including oxygen cylinders, were being urgently removed to avert a larger catastrophe.

Police and Rangers swiftly cordoned off the site as rescue workers battled flames engulfing the godown, MA Jinnah Road near Sea Breeze Plaza was sealed from both sides to ensure public safety amid fears of further blasts. Police surgeon Dr Summaiya Syed Tariq said that the number of injured persons reached 34.

One dead in Karachi rains as NDMA issues alert

F.P. Report

KARACHI: A man was killed in a rain-related incident on Thursday as parts of Karachi received rain again for a third day with the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) issuing an emergency alert. Tains had severely strained Karachi's fragile infrastructure, causing stormwater drains and sewers to burst, and also disrupting industrial operations across the economic hub. Several areas experienced extended power and internet service outages, which continued late into Wednesday, disrupting everyday life and adding to citizens' misery. The rain-related death toll rose to 14. Most of the deaths occurred due to collapsing structures, drowning and electrocution during the past three days, according to hospital officials.

Parts of Karachi intermittently received rain today as well, beginning after 2pm. Police surgeon Dr Summaiya Syed told Dawn.com that the body of a 30-year-old, who died from an electric shock, was brought from Karachi's Defence Housing Authority to the medico-legal section of Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre today. The death toll is now 15. An emergency alert from the NDMA at 8:24pm said that heavy rain with thunder was expected in Hyderabad in the next hour or two, which may lead to urban flooding. It said heavy rain was also expected in Karachi within the next 60-90 minutes.

“Torrential rain may cause urban flooding and power outages. This system may affect again from August 24 to 28.” The NDMA urged citizens to avoid travelling on flooded roads, stay away from electric poles, secure electrical appliances and take safety precautions while using them and check drainage systems in areas to prevent water accumula-

tion. It said residents of low-lying areas should keep an emergency kit ready and follow the instructions of the local administration.

Meanwhile, the Karachi Traffic Police issued alerts stating that thunderstorms and heavy rain had begun in the city. “All passers-by and passengers are requested to stay away from dilapidated buildings, signboards, trees and electricity poles during their journey to avoid any possible accident,” the alert read, adding that citizens could contact the 1915 helpline in case of an emergency. A separate alert urged people to be careful while travelling and discouraged unnecessary movement.

Rainfall figures from the Met Department at 8pm showed that Gulshan-i-Hadeed received the most rainfall with 18 millimetres (mm), followed by PAF Base Faisal (17mm), Saadi Town (13.3mm), Airport Old Area (11.2mm), PAK Masoor Base (10mm), Keamari (8mm), Orangi Town (7.8mm), Gulshan-i-Maymar (7.5mm), Surjani Town and North Karachi (7mm), Defence Housing Authority Phase VII (6.4mm), Korangi (4.4mm), University Road (4.2mm) and tracefall in Nazimabad.

An advisory at 5pm, the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) warned of torrential rains with wind/thundershower predicted in the country's upper and central parts from Aug 23-27 and heavy rains expected in Sindh and eastern/southern Baluchistan from Aug 27-29. In its daily weather forecast at 5:30pm, the PMD said rain-wind/thundershowers with isolated heavy falls were expected in Mithi, Tharparker, Umerkot, Mirpurkhas, Hyderabad, Shaheed Benazirabad, Karachi, Thatta, Badin, Sajawal, Tando Allayar, Tando Muhammad Khan, Sanghar, Jamshoro and Dadu with possible urban flooding as well.



KARACHI: Commuters facing difficulties in transportation due to stagnant sewerage and rainwater on roads.

Commodore Sohail takes over as COMCEP

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Commodore Sohail Ahmad Azmie assumed command as Commander Central Punjab (COMCEP). The Change of Command ceremony was held at Naval Complex Walton, Lahore, where Rear Admiral Jawad Ahmed handed over command to the newly appointed Commander.

Commodore Sohail Ahmad Azmie was commissioned in Operations Branch of Pakistan Navy in 1996. He has a distinguished career, holding a wide range of command and staff appointments. His key appointments include Directing Staff at PN War College, Commanding Officer of PNS NASR, Commander AUXMIN - 9 Squadron, Commandant Pakistan



Naval Academy, Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Operational Plans), Commander Combined Task Force 151 at HQ Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) Bahrain and Deputy Commandant & Chief Instructor at Pakistan Navy War College.

The Commodore is an alumnus of Pakistan Navy War College Lahore and National Defence University Islamabad. In recognition of his meritorious services, he has been awarded the Sitara-e-Imtiaz (Military).

During the Change of Command ceremony, Commodore Sohail Ahmad Azmie was presented with a Guard of Honour and introduced to the Staff Officers of Headquarters COMCEP and Pakistan Navy War College. Commander Central Punjab exercises authority over all Pakistan Navy units from Bahawalpur to Wazirabad and is also the Commandant of Pakistan Navy War College, Lahore. The ceremony was attended by Pakistan Navy officers, CPOs, sailors, and civilian personnel.