

Chinese FM calls on COAS  
F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Foreign Minister of China, Mr. Wang Yi, among other commitments also met Chief of Army Staff, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ at Islamabad. Discussions focused on regional security, counter-terrorism, and matters of mutual interest, said a news release issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) here on Friday.



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# UN declares full-blown famine in Gaza

GAZA CITY (Reuters): The world's leading authority on food crises said Friday the Gaza Strip's largest city is gripped by famine, and that it's likely to spread across the territory without a ceasefire and an end to restrictions on humanitarian aid.

The Integrated Food Security Phase

Classification, or IPC, said famine is happening in Gaza City, home to hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, and could spread south to Deir Al-Balah and Khan Younis by the end of next month.

The determination comes after months of warnings by aid groups that Israel's restrictions of food and other aid

into Gaza, and its military offensive, were causing starvation among Palestinian civilians, particularly children. Israel rejected the report, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu calling it an "outright lie." The grim milestone — the first time the IPC has confirmed a famine in the Middle East — is sure to ramp up international pressure on Israel, which has been fighting Hamas since the militant group's Oct. 7, 2023, attack. Israel says it plans to seize Gaza City and other Hamas strongholds, an escalation experts say will exacerbate the hunger crisis.

The IPC said hunger has been driven by fighting and the blockade of aid, and magnified by widespread displacement and the collapse of food production in Gaza, pushing hunger to life-threatening levels across the entire territory after 22 months of war. More than half a mil-

lion people in Gaza, about a quarter of its population, face catastrophic levels of hunger, with many at risk of dying from malnutrition-related causes, the IPC report said.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the findings show a "man-made disaster, a moral indictment, and a failure of humanity itself" and appealed for an "immediate ceasefire." Netanyahu denies there's hunger in Gaza, calling reports of starvation "lies" promoted by Hamas. "The IPC report is an outright lie. Israel does not have a policy of starvation," his office posted on X. After the publication of images of emaciated children in Gaza and reports of hunger-related deaths, Israel announced measures to let more humanitarian aid in. Yet the United Nations says what's entering is far below what's needed.

The Israeli military agency in charge of transferring aid to the territory, known as COGAT, called the report "false and biased." It said significant steps had been taken to expand the amount of aid entering the strip in recent weeks. Israel's Foreign Ministry said more than 100,000 trucks of aid have entered Gaza since the start of the war, including a massive influx in recent weeks. But experts say Gaza is still reeling from the tightening of the blockade from early March until mid-May, when Israel barred the import of all food, medicine and other goods.

"A rapidly increasing number of people, especially young children, are dying preventable deaths from starvation and disease because Israel made starvation a core part of its campaign to control the strip," said Chris Newton, an analyst for the International Crisis

Group. Netanyahu says more military pressure is needed to achieve Israel's goals of freeing the hostages held by Hamas and eliminating the militant group altogether.

Formal famine determinations are rare. The IPC says a famine exists in an area when all three of the following conditions are confirmed: At least 20 percent of households have an extreme lack of food, or are essentially starving. At least 30 percent of children 6 months to 5 years old suffer from acute malnutrition or wasting, based on a weight-to-height measurement; or 15 percent of that age group suffer from acute malnutrition based on the circumference of their upper arm. And at least two people, or four children under 5, per 10,000 are dying daily due to starvation or the interaction of malnutrition and disease.



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister of China, Mr. Wang Yi met with Chief of Army Staff, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir.

## Pak-China reaffirm commitment to further deepening ties: FO

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office (FO) Spokesperson Ambassador Shafqat Ali Khan, on Friday, said Pakistan and China have reaffirmed their commitment to further deepening their "All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership" through enhanced bilateral, regional, and multilateral cooperation.

Addressing the weekly press briefing, Foreign Office Spokesperson Ambassador Shafqat Ali Khan stated that Chinese Foreign Minister and Member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China, Wang Yi, visited Islamabad on August 21, 2025, on the invitation of Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, to co-chair the 6th Pakistan-China Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue.

"Both sides comprehensively reviewed the entire spectrum of bilateral relations, including CPEC Phase-II, trade and economic ties, multilateral cooperation, people-to-people exchanges, and important regional and global issues," Ambassador Khan said. He added that the two ministers agreed to maintain close coordination and communication at bilateral and multilateral forums.

During his visit, Foreign Minister Wang Yi also called on President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir. In his meeting with the President, Asif Ali Zardari expressed gratitude for China's "consistent support for Pakistan's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national development," and appreciated Beijing's principled

stance on the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, he added. He also highlighted the strategic significance of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as part of President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative.

During the Chinese Foreign Minister's interaction with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, both leaders reaffirmed mutual support on core national interests. The Prime Minister reiterated Pakistan's resolve to expand cooperation with China in trade, ICT, agriculture, industrialization, mines and minerals, and other sectors under CPEC Phase-II, he added.

Ambassador Khan added that during the Chinese Foreign Minister's meeting with the Chief of Army Staff, discussions focused on regional security, counterterrorism, and defense cooperation. Both sides underscored their resolve to strengthen coordination at regional and international platforms. The FO spokesperson said the visit was part of regular high-level exchanges aimed at consolidating the Pakistan-China partnership.

Ambassador Khan also informed that the 6th Trilateral Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Pakistan, China, and Afghanistan was held on August 20, 2025, in Kabul. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Foreign Minister Wang Yi, and Afghanistan's Acting Foreign Minister Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi participated.

"The three sides committed to strengthening joint counterterrorism efforts and agreed to enhance collaboration in trade, transit, health, education, culture, combating drug trafficking, and extending CPEC to Afghanistan," he said. Buy vitamins

and supplements. On the sidelines, DPM/FM Dar held a bilateral meeting with Acting Foreign Minister Muttaqi, noting progress in political and economic areas but raising concerns over insufficient cooperation in counterterrorism.

The FO further highlighted that Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar paid an official visit to the United Kingdom (17-19 August 2025), where he met: Hamish Faulksner, UK Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Middle East, Afghanistan, and Pakistan; Several British-Pakistani Members of Parliament, including Mohammad Yasin, Tahir Ali, Imran Hussain, Ayub Khan, and Adnan Hussain; Lord Qurban Hussain and Kashmiri community leaders; Baroness Shirley Botchwey, Commonwealth Secretary-General, who accepted an invitation to visit Pakistan.

During the visit, DPM/FM Dar also inaugurated digital land record services and a one-window passport system at the Pakistan High Commission in London to facilitate the diaspora. He also addressed the British Pakistani Lawyers Forum, warning against India's unlawful attempts to suspend the Indus Waters Treaty, terming them an "existential threat" to Pakistan.

The spokesperson confirmed that on August 12, 2025, Deputy Prime Minister Dar met Gregory LoGerfo, Acting Coordinator for Counterterrorism at the U.S. State Department, as part of the Pakistan-US Counterterrorism Dialogue. Both sides reaffirmed their shared commitment to combating terrorism, including threats posed by the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), ISIS-Khorasan, and other groups.

## President notifies setup of 11th NFC

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has formally constituted the 11th National Finance Commission (NFC) to address critical fiscal matters between the federation and the provinces. The commission, consisting of nine members, was announced through a notification issued by the Finance Division on Friday, which also dissolved the 10th NFC formed in July 2020.

According to the notification, the Federal Minister for Finance will chair the commission, while the finance ministers of Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan will serve as ex-officio members. Each province has also nominated one expert, raising the total number of members to nine. Punjab will be represented by Nasir Mahmood Khosa, Sindh by Dr Asad Sayeed, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by Dr Musharraf Rasool Cyan, and Balochistan by Farman Ullah. The NFC has been tasked with making recommendations to the president regarding the distribution of net proceeds of federally collected taxes among the federation and provinces, grants-in-aid to provinces, and the borrowing powers of both federal and provincial governments. It will also deliberate on the sharing of financial responsibilities for national projects, trans-provincial initiatives, and other fiscal matters referred by the president.

The new terms of reference ToRs recommended to the president for the next Award are: the distribution between the federation and the provinces of the net proceeds of the taxes mentioned in clause (3) of Article 160 of the Constitution; the making of grants-in-aid by the federal government to the provincial governments; the exercise, by the federal government and the provincial governments, of the borrowing powers conferred by the Constitution; issues relating to sharing of financial expense incurred or to be incurred by the federation in respect of subjects and matters falling within the domain of the Provinces; issues relating to sharing of financial expense incurred or to be incurred by the Federation or the Provinces or both in respect of trans-provincial matters; issues relating to financial expense for national projects to be shared by the Federation and Provinces.

## PM for swift relief, steps in flood-hit areas

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday directed immediate and coordinated relief and recovery operations and long-term preventive strategies amid launch of national anti-encroachment drive around waterways.

The prime minister chaired a high-level review meeting on Friday to assess the damage caused by recent monsoon rains and floods across Pakistan, a Prime Minister's Office news release said. Calling the assistance to flood victims a "national duty," the prime minister instructed the Ministry of Water Resources to fully support the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government in restoring water supply systems in affected areas.

"Relief and rescue come first but the process of rehabilitation must begin without delay," the

PM emphasized. He announced the launch of a nationwide campaign to prevent construction along rivers, streams, and natural watercourses, highlighting the urgent need to protect these channels to avert future disasters.

PM Shehbaz Sharif also directed that federal ministers and secretaries be immediately deployed to flood-affected areas where relief efforts are underway, to ensure effective oversight and coordination. Expressing concern over two upcoming expected weather spells, the Prime Minister ordered early warnings to be issued to at-risk populations and called for strict monitoring of all vulnerable zones.

Focusing on Gilgit-Baltistan, where a glacier outburst last night caused debris to form a lake, the Prime Minister directed the NDMA Chairman to monitor the lake closely and ensure pre-emptive

evacuation of potentially affected communities. He instructed the use of engineering resources from the Pakistan Army and FCNA to facilitate the safe drainage of the lake without causing damage.

The meeting was briefed on the river situation, glacial risks, and upcoming weather patterns in the northern and southern regions of the country. The Federal Minister for Information also updated the forum on the establishment of a Central Coordination Committee to streamline ongoing rescue and relief operations. The meeting was attended by federal ministers Ahsan Iqbal, Dr. Musadik Malik, Engineer Amir Muqam, Abdul Aleem Khan, Sardar Awais Leghari, Attaullah Tarar, Mian Moin Wattoo, Advisor Rana Sanaullah, SAPM Mubarak Zeb, and NDMA Chairman Lt. Gen. Inam Haider Malik, along with senior officials.

## Cabinet okays dissolution of Utility Stores Corporation



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday directed the quarters concerned that the dissolution process of the Utility Stores Corporation should be carried out transparently while ensuring full protection of employees' rights as the Cabinet unanimously approved the dissolution of the Utility Stores Corporation, following the suspension of its operations nationwide on July 31.

The Prime Minister presided over a meeting of the federal cabinet, which began with a special prayer for those who lost their lives in the recent rains and floods across the country, a Prime Minister's Office news release said. He expressed gratitude to cabinet members who personally visited flood-hit areas to monitor rescue and relief operations.

The Prime Minister emphasized that reducing farmers' production costs was vital to improving agricultural output and announced the formation of a high-level committee comprising Minister for Climate Change Dr. Musadik Malik, Minister for Petroleum Ali Perviz Malik, Minister for National Food Security Rana Tanveer Hussain, Adviser Muhammad Ali, and Special Assistant on Industry Haroon Akhtar to work on fertilizer pricing and related issues. To further accelerate industrial growth, the cabinet gave in-principle approval to amend the Special Economic Zones Act, 2012.

Prime Minister Shehbaz stressed that providing a business and investor-friendly environment was

crucial for industrial development, adding that the expansion of industries would enhance exports and create new jobs. "With the grace of Almighty Allah, Pakistan's economy is stabilizing and moving towards growth," the Prime Minister remarked.

The meeting also approved the presentation of the Annual Report of the National Economic Council for fiscal year 2023-24 before Parliament, and endorsed decisions taken by the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) on August 19 and the Cabinet Committee on Legislative Cases (CCLC) on August 18.

**Shehbaz calls investment in revamping agriculture sector technologically to augment economic development:** Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said the investment in revamping agriculture sector on modern technology-based solutions would augment economic development of the country as agriculture is the backbone of its economy.

The prime minister addressed a ceremony held here to mark the departure of another 300 students to China for specialized training under the bilateral youth development program a significant step towards transforming Pakistan's agriculture sector. The initiative, a result of strengthened Pakistan-China collaboration, aims to equip Pakistani youth with modern agricultural knowledge and techniques.

During the event, the prime minister lauded the success of the first batch of 300 students who returned after completing high-quality training in Chinese institutions, particularly in the province of Xianzi. He

noted that the program began following his visit to an agriculture university in the province, where he observed the strong academic and practical focus of Chinese training in agriculture.

"We are an agrarian economy, and agriculture is our backbone. Any investment in this sector directly strengthens the national economy. The youth selected through a transparent and merit-based process from all provinces, including an enhanced 10% quota for Balochistan, are our ambassadors in China. They must show the highest standards of discipline, learning, and respect," said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

The prime minister emphasized that Pakistan's economic revival depends on modernizing its agriculture sector and that the youth are the key to unlocking this potential. "We must revive our cotton sector, which once produced 14 million bales but now stands at only 4 million. Similarly, livestock holds massive untapped potential. It is through honesty, struggle, and merit that Pakistan can reach the heights envisioned by Quaid-e-Azam," he said.

The prime minister urged students to return as change agents for Pakistan's agriculture sector, expressing hope that with merit-based effort and discipline, the nation can achieve the prosperity envisioned at its founding. "The youth are the custodians of Pakistan's future. If we remain honest, disciplined, and focused, nothing can stop us from building the Pakistan of our dreams," concluded Prime Minister Sharif.

He extended heartfelt gratitude to Chinese President Xi Jinping, Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Xian Zaidong, and Pakistan's Ambassador to China Khalil Hashmi for their roles in making the program a reality. Chinese Ambassador Xian Zaidong, in his remarks, expressed pride in the deep-rooted friendship between China and Pakistan and reaffirmed China's commitment to support Pakistani development.

Imran's nephew remanded  
F.P. Report

LAHORE: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Friday handed over Shahrez Khan, nephew of PTI founder and son of Aleema Khan, to police on an 8-day physical remand in the May 9 Jinnah House attack case. Earlier, the police produced Shahrez Khan before ATC Judge Manzer Ali Gill after arresting him in connection with the incident.









PESHAWAR: Ambassador (Retd) Farukh Amil, Chairman, Intellectual Property Organization of Pakistan, briefing media at IPO Regional Office.

Violation of merit in Excise Department

Junior officers posted on senior positions

Syed Adnan

PESHAWAR: Rampant nepotism and blatant violations of merit have shaken the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Excise and Taxation Department. According to reliable sources, junior officers are being unlawfully appointed to senior positions, undermining the seniority list and sidelining competent senior officers.

Insiders reveal that certain officers have been strategically placed on "powerful" seats, while some have been occupying the same positions for over two years without rotation. This malpractice has severely damaged both the performance and credibility of the department.

As per departmental service rules, postings and transfers must be carried out on the basis of merit, seniority, and performance. However, the current situation reflects a total disregard for the policy directives issued by the Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

This open violation of merit has sparked frustration and discontent among departmental officers. The ongoing "blind favoritism" has raised a serious question despite the clear instructions of the Chief Secretary, under whose influence are these illegal transfers and postings being carried out.

Khizer flays Saif’s press conference on CM Punjab

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Additional Secretary for Information, Arbab Khizer Hayat, strongly criticized Barrister Saif, the so-called spokesperson of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government, for his recent press conference targeting Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif.

In a statement, Arbab Khizer Hayat said that the sarcastic remarks made by Barrister Saif regarding CM Maryam Nawaz fall under the category of shamelessness and disrespect. He emphasized that Maryam Nawaz is the constitutional Chief Minister of Punjab and does not require a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to undertake a foreign visit.

He further stated that there has been no flood in Punjab that would necessitate the CM cutting short her official visit. He added that it is the responsibility of the provincial government to assist and provide relief to flood victims, a task in which the KP government has completely failed.

Referring to the accusations made by Barrister Saif against former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif during the press conference, Arbab termed them as "akin to spitting at the sky" - meaning baseless and self-damaging.

He said the federal government, Pakistan Army, and Punjab government are all actively engaged in providing maximum support to the flood-affected people. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir have personally visited the affected areas, and dozens of federal ministers, along with the entire state machinery, are working day and night on rehabilitation efforts.

In contrast, he said, the KP provincial government is nowhere to be seen. Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has also failed to provide effective relief to the victims, and the provincial administration seems limited to issuing statements only.

CBP’s drive against encroachment continues

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: On the directions of the Director General Military Lands & Cantonments (DG ML&C), and under the supervision of Station Commander & President Cantonment Board Brigadier Umar Saeed and Chief Executive Officer Cantonment Board Peshawar, Chaudhry Babar Hussain, the anti-encroachment operation continued vigorously for the third consecutive day. The operation was led by Enforcement Officer Raja Yasir Janjua.

During the operation, illegal encroachments established on footpaths and roads in various areas of Peshawar Saddar including Gora Bazaar, Chowk Fawara, Liaquat Bazaar, Saddar Road, Mall Road, Bara Road, and adjoining locations were removed. Dozens of illegal pushcarts and goods were confiscated, clearing pathways for pedestrians to ensure smooth public movement.

Shopkeepers and traders were also served with a final warning that if they attempted to place pushcarts or set up any form of illegal encroachments outside their shops, strict legal action would be taken against them. Speaking on the occasion, Enforcement Officer Raja Yasir Janjua stated that the anti-encroachment drive would continue on a daily basis for the convenience of the public and to maintain the cleanliness of the city. He further pointed out that some traders, on one hand, support such encroachments and earn thousands of rupees daily from them, but when the administration clears the areas, the same traders resort to resistance against enforcement staff. In conclusion, he appealed to the citizens to extend their cooperation with the administration so that the commercial and residential areas of Peshawar Saddar remain clean, orderly, and accessible for all.

KP’s first ever Media Fellowship Program launched

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women, in collaboration with the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Peshawar, UNFPA, and SPO, convened an initial meeting to design and formally launch the province's first-ever Media Fellowship Program.

The meeting was attended by the Commission's Secretary and Program Director, the Chairperson of the Department of Journalism, as well as representatives from UNFPA and SPO.

Speaking on the occasion, the Commission's Secretary, Ms. Tabassum, said that the fellowship aims to promote responsible and research-based journalism on sensitive issues such as gender-based violence and child marriage. She emphasized that the initiative would help strengthen advocacy through media and foster greater institutional collaboration at the provincial level.

According to the agreement, the roles of all partners have been clearly defined.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women will oversee the implementation of the program, participate in technical review meetings, and engage trained media fellows in advocacy activities.

The University of Peshawar will provide academic and research support, facilitate the organization of workshops, and develop strategies to institutionalize the initiative.

SPO, on the other hand, will extend financial and technical assistance and play an active role in organizing workshops.

Participants hailed the initiative as a milestone in launching the province's first media fellowship program.

They noted that it would not only provide practical training opportunities for young journalists but also significantly contribute to promoting gender equality, raising social awareness, and encouraging positive attitudes within society.

KMU scholar Prof. Dr. Farooq Khan Earns PhD in Anatomy

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Prof. Dr. Farooq Khan, Professor of Anatomy from Chamkani, District Kurram (erstwhile tribal district), has successfully completed his PhD in Anatomy from the Khyber Medical University (KMU) Institute of Basic Medical Sciences (IBMS), Peshawar.

He conducted his research under the supervision of Dr. Najma Basir, Associate Professor at KMU-IBMS. His dissertation was titled "Role of RKI-1447 in Promoting Neurological Recovery in Spinal Cord Compression Injury Model."

His PhD public defense was held at KMU-IBMS, where he successfully defended his thesis and was unanimously recommended for the award of PhD degree by both external and internal examiners. It is worth mentioning that Dr. Farooq Khan is currently serving as Professor of Anatomy at Jinnah Medical College, Peshawar.

Bilal Faizi honoured for service in Rescue 1122

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Mr. Bilal Ahmad Faizi, Spokesperson Rescue 1122 Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, is being highly appreciated for his dedicated efforts during the recent floods and cloudburst incidents.

He provided timely and authentic information to the media, shared accurate updates, and highlighted the positive image of Rescue 1122 as well as the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

His professionalism, commitment to his duties as spokesperson, and spirit of public service are commendable.

In recognition of these valuable services, he will be formally awarded a Certificate of Appreciation.



PESHAWAR: The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has intensified its relief and rehabilitation operations for families displaced from Bajaur, who are currently accommodated at the main TDP camp in Bajaur Sports Complex as well as in other government-designated buildings and shelters.

According to PDMA, over 10,000 families have been registered so far, with the figure expected to rise to around 18,000 families - nearly 126,000 individuals including women and children.

"Relief operations are in full swing. Every registered family is being provided with a one-time cash grant of Rs. 50,000, while an additional Rs. 25,000 will be given at the time of their return. Furthermore, on the special instructions of Chief Minister KP, Ali Amin Gandapur, an extra Rs. 15,000 is being disbursed as ration support to each TDP family. To ensure speed and transparency, cash assistance is being transferred through a SIM-based messaging system," said Ms. Sobia Hassam Toru, Director Complex Emergencies Wing (CEW) PDMA, during her visit to the Bajaur Sports Complex camp where nearly 490 families are currently residing while more than 5000 families are residing in government buildings and shelters.

To facilitate smooth registration, NADRA has set up a provisional desk in Bajaur with the presence of female staff to assist women beneficiaries. Alongside cash support, PDMA has provided tents, non-food items (NFIs), clean drinking water, food packages, healthcare services, WASH facilities, and mother-child care, in collaboration with the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) and other humanitarian partners.

Speaking on the occasion, Director General PDMA, Mr. Asfand Yar Khattak, said:

"Our priority is to ensure that every displaced family receives timely and transparent assistance. The government is mobilizing all possible resources to provide relief and restore dignity to the affected people of Bajaur. Chief Minister KP has strictly directed all concerned departments to respect the dignity and cultural values of the displaced families." He added that PDMA staff deployed in the field are strictly following all rules and cultural protocols as directed by the Chief Minister.

Responding to a query, Ms. Toru further stated: "PDMA teams are present on the ground round-the-clock. We are working closely with national and international partners to ensure that no deserving family is left behind. All types of cash assistance can be collected by TDP families from mobile network retailers across the province as soon as they receive the confirmation SMS from the designated network."

PDMA has assured strict monitoring of relief resources, while coordination with NGOs and INGOs continues to strengthen the overall response. The Authority has also appealed to the public for patience and cooperation, reiterating that all deserving families will be facilitated without discrimination.

## Evolving US National Security Strategy for South Asia

Anoshay Fatima

THE National Security Strategy (NSS) of the United States (US) reflects the country's evolving global threat perceptions and strategic objectives. Since the end of the Cold War, US approach to South Asia has evolved, shaped by the Soviet disintegration and the War on Terror, to a rising rivalry with China. This Insight traces shifts in US NSS language since 1987, highlighting key inferences that reveal South Asia's changing role in American grand strategy.

NSS 1987 (President Reagan) had warmly praised Pakistan for "withstanding strong pressures [due to the] Soviet invasion of Afghanistan," offering to "bolster the security of Pakistan" for aiding the "Afghan cause."

NSS 1990 (President Bush) referred to both Pakistan and India as "friends," expressing a desire to "encourage Indo-Pakistani rapprochement" while reaffirming a "special relationship" with "traditional ally Pakistan."

NSS 1995 (President Clinton) urged India and Pakistan to "cap, reduce and ultimately eliminate their weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile capabilities." NSS 1997 reiterated the need for both to align "their nuclear and missile programmes into conformity with international standards."

NSS 1998, reacted sharply to nuclear tests, criticising them for "contributing to a self-defeating cycle of escalation" and urging immediate accession to the CTBT. NSS 1999 and 2000 echoed similar concerns, calling to "respect the Line of Control in Kashmir" and "join the NPT" to avoid the possibility of a "dangerous arms race in South Asia."

NSS 2002 (President George W. Bush) stated: "With Pakistan, our bilateral relations have been bolstered by Pakistan's choice to join the war against terror." It acknowledged India's potential to become "one of the great democratic powers in the twenty-first century" and appreciated it for "working hard to transform" its bilateral relationship with the US.

NSS 2006 praised Pakistan's "effective efforts" in counterterrorism while elevating India through the landmark civil nuclear deal and a "roadmap [for] meaningful cooperation." The strategy, while addressing South and Central Asia as adjacent regions, highlighted Afghanistan's "historical role as a land bridge" for connecting "two vital regions."

By 2010, a broader regional framework began to take shape. NSS 2010 (President Obama) pledged to "strengthen Pakistan's capacity to target violent extremists" while building a long-term "strategic partnership." India was now described as "a key centre of influence" whose "responsible advancement" provided "an opportunity for increased economic, scientific, environmental, and security partnership."

NSS 2015 placed South Asia within the new context of the US "Rebalance to Asia and the Pacific." It called for working with both India and Pakistan to "promote strategic stability, combat terrorism, and advance regional economic integration" but aligned India's "Act East" policy with American regional interests.

NSS 2017 (President Trump) was a turning point. The strategy replaced "Asia-Pacific" with "Indo-Pacific" and described China as a "revisionist power" seeking to "displace" the US. India emerged as a "Major Defence Partner," while Pakistan was cautioned to demonstrate its willingness to decisively confront "terrorist groups operating on its soil" or risk losing "trade and investment ties."

The latest NSS 2022 (President Biden) declared 2022-2032 "a decisive decade" for US-China competition. It underscored the need to counter China's so-called "coercive behaviour" and ensure a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" by deepening ties with India, which it declared "world's largest democracy" and "Major Defence Partner." While providing an "overview" of US "strategic approach," this NSS highlighted alliances like "Quad," "I2U2," and "AUKUS" to "deepen cooperation with like-minded states. Pakistan was not mentioned for the first time since NSS 1993.

An overview of US NSS since the end of the Cold War reveals that the pendulum of US priorities in South Asia shifted from a focus on both countries to one on India. While the 1990s NSS mainly adopted a neutral tone, post-9/11 strategies narrowed Pakistan's significance to counterterrorism efforts in Afghanistan.

Over time, Pakistan's status declined from a "special relationship" (1990) to a complete omission (2022). Conversely, India's standing steadily rose from a "friend" (1990) to a "regional security provider" (2015) and "Major Defence Partner" (2022), indicating Washington's shift in favour of New Delhi. Pakistan, which was once a key ally in countering Soviet influence during the Cold War, was no longer perceived as a suitable partner for the US in achieving its strategic objectives in South Asia.

The shift in US policy was driven by its changing geopolitical lens. As China replaced the USSR as its primary adversary, the US began to view India as a counterweight to China and a potential "net security provider" in China's surrounding region.

However, India reaps the benefits of its defence and security ties with the US-led West and Russia, as well as its economic partnership with China. Although this strategy reduces its overdependence on any single power, the support of big powers gives India a false sense of strength. Posing a risk to regional stability, this strategic over-smartness leads India to assertive actions, such as its recent conflict with Pakistan in May 2025. If Western support for India goes unchecked, volatility in the region may escalate, compounded by India's internal issues, such as Hindutva-driven democratic backsliding, innumerable freedom movements, and societal polarisation.

Amidst the shifting trajectory of US security strategy and its deepening alignment with India, Pakistan cannot afford to only react to the geopolitical landscape. With a clear and resilient foreign policy, Pakistan needs to reinforce ties with China (CPEC, cybersecurity, AI, green technology, etc.) and diversify partnerships, especially with middle powers and Global South forums.

Relevance in regional stability, counterterrorism, and connectivity, especially vis-à-vis Afghanistan, Central Asia and the Gulf, is also essential for Pakistan. To reclaim its strategic visibility in Washington, considering its post-Marka-e-Haq improvement in relations with the US, Pakistan must increase engagement through think tanks and diaspora. This will also restore balance in South Asia's strategic equation by countering India-centric framings, i.e., narratives that prioritise India's perspective while sidelining other regional voices, especially Pakistan.

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## Chairman IPO-Pakistan oversee IP hearings in Peshawar office

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Ambassador (R) Farukh Amil, Chairman, Intellectual Property Organization of Pakistan (IPO-Pakistan), visited the upgraded IPO Regional Office, Peshawar to oversee the Inaugural Session for the Hearings of IP cases.

The Chairman also interacted with the media and briefed them on the role, functions, and responsibilities of IPO-Pakistan.

The Chairman highlighted that IPO-Pakistan was established as an autonomous body in 2005 to ensure integrated and efficient management of intellectual property in the Pakistan on the lines of international standards. Under a unified system, the Trade Marks Registry, Copyright Office, and the Patent & Design Office were brought under the management of IPO-Pakistan.

He outlined the key functions of the Organization, which include: Administering and coordinating all government systems for the protection and strengthening of intellectual property (IP); Managing all IP offices in the country; Creating awareness about intellectual property rights; Advising the Federal Government on IP policy; Ensuring effective enforcement of IP rights through designated IPR enforcement agencies, including Police, FIA, and Pakistan Customs.

In addition to the above, the Chairman stated that, in order to facilitate the business community of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the IPO Regional Office Peshawar has been upgraded and relocated to a more central, convenient location as advocated by the business community. With this development, businesses in KP can now register their intellectual property locally. He informed the media that the first hearing of trademark cases was successfully conducted today at the new regional office.

Speaking about the broader significance of intellectual property and its enforcement, the Chairman emphasized that IP is a vast and critical subject. It not only impacts local markets-including essential goods such as food and medicines-but also has implications for tariffs and trade on a larger scale.

He underlined that effective IPR enforcement plays a decisive role in determining foreign investment. International investors and multinational companies, with their sophisticated understanding of IP abuse, closely monitor how well their brands are protected. Pakistan, he stressed, has no choice but to position itself as a serious investment destination with a strong culture of IP awareness and enforcement. Countries that fall short of global standards in IPR enforcement are often avoided by investors, while IP abuse also harms domestic businesses and discourages entrepreneurs from pursuing innovation.





## In brief

### PEN rejects govt order Syed Waliullah Shah

**NOWSHERA:** The Private Education Network (PEN) has strongly rejected the government's decision to keep private schools closed until August 31 across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including Nowshera. According to PEN, this decision is discriminatory and unfair. PEN leaders highlighted that other schools in Nowshera have already opened for classes on August 4, 2025, allowing elite children to continue their education. In contrast, private and public schools are being forced to remain closed until August 31, 2025, effectively depriving children from lower- and middle-income families of their right to education. The leaders expressed astonishment at the differential treatment, questioning why the heatwave in Nowshera does not seem to affect the military-run schools. They condemned the discriminatory approach and irresponsible statements downplaying the severity of the issue. PEN demands equal opportunities for all educational institutions and urges the government to reconsider its decision. PEN leaders emphasized that such decisions reflect a systemic attempt to deny education to underprivileged children. They called for immediate action to ensure fairness and equality in the education system.

### Checkposts inspected F.P. Report

**D I KHAN:** Station Commander Dera Ismail Khan Brigadier Muhammad Abu Bakar visited the entry and exit police checkposts of Dera Ismail Khan city, including Tariq Shaheed, Aba Shaheed, and Khati checkposts. During the visit, he met with police personnel, praised their performance, and boosted their morale. DSP Sagheer Gilani provided a detailed briefing to the Station Commander about the responsibilities of the police checkposts and the security situation in the area. Station Commander Brigadier Muhammad Abu Bakar emphasized that security forces, police, and the public would work together to ensure the safety of Pakistan and maintain peace in Dera Ismail Khan. He stated that they would collectively strive to rid the area of external threats.

### Rescue operations continue F.P. Report

**SHANGLA:** In the aftermath of the devastating floods and landslides in Shangla, rescue and relief operations are underway while cleanup operations on most roads are progressing rapidly. The compensation has been given to the families of those who lost their lives. Efforts to restore electricity are moving quickly. Rescue teams in Pura are continuing their efforts to find missing individuals. The Pakistan Army, welfare organizations, and local administration are actively involved in relief activities in affected areas. The Communication and Works Department Shangla has awarded a tender for Rs. 21 million. The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has dispatched emergency relief supplies to flood-affected families in Swat and Shangla. Meanwhile, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) senior leader and former provincial minister, Shaukat Yusufzai, met with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Finance Advisor, Muzamil Aslam, in his office.



**NAUNDERO:** A view of destruction due to stagnant rainwater causing of poor sewerage system after flood flowed in area caused by heavy downpour of monsoon season.

## Anti-cervical cancer vaccine drive on Sep 15

### F.P. Report

**HAFIZABAD:** The Health Department Hafizabad has announced that the National Vaccination Campaign against Cervical Cancer will begin on September 15. During this campaign, free preventive vaccines will be administered to girls aged 9 to 14 years to protect them from this life-threatening disease.

In connection with the campaign, the Health Department Hafizabad organized an awareness seminar, which was attended by prominent figures including former MPA Dr. Muzaffar Ali Sheikh, District Health Officer Dr. Faiq Ali Tarar, Deputy District Health Officer Dr. Zaheer Ahmad, local religious scholars Syed Waseem-ul-Hassan Naqvi and Ghulam Mustafa Sultani, CEO Education Muhammad Akram Ashraf, District Education Officer Sofia Jabeen, Deputy DHO Pindi Bhattian Dr. Sarah Ashraf, and Rescue Officer Humayun Ahmad. Assistant Commissioner Ms. Nargis Khatoon Jafri, senior citizens including Haji Liaqat Zawar Khan, and officers from the departments of Education, Health, Rescue 1122, and Population Welfare, along with other stakeholders, also participated in the event.

Addressing the seminar,

Dr. Muzaffar Ali Sheikh highlighted that cervical cancer is a highly dangerous and fatal disease, and the government's efforts to protect young girls through preventive vaccination are commendable. He urged parents to ensure that all eligible girls receive the vaccine during the campaign.

District Health Officer Dr. Faiq Ali Tarar stated that the national campaign would continue from September 15 to September 27, targeting girls between 9 and 14 years of age. Special vaccination teams will visit schools as well as conduct door-to-door campaigns. In addition, vaccination counters will be established at DHQ, THQ, and RHC hospitals across the district.

**Regional Director inspects Rescue center:** On the special directives of Secretary Punjab Emergency Service, Dr. Rizwan Naseer, the Regional Emergency Officer of Gujrat Division, Syed Kamal Abid, conducted an official inspection visit to the Rescue 1122 Station Hafizabad.

Upon arrival, he was warmly received by District Emergency Officer Engineer Adnan Nawaz, who presented a detailed briefing regarding the overall performance, achievements, and ongoing initiatives of Punjab Emergency

Service in the district.

During the course of the visit, the Regional Emergency Officer inspected various sections of the district office, including the control room, accounts office, administrative departments, stores, and the vehicle repair and maintenance workshop. He also closely examined the specialized equipment installed in emergency vehicles. While interacting with rescue personnel, he evaluated their physical fitness, professional expertise, and service standards, which he declared to be "satisfactory and praiseworthy."

At the conclusion of the visit, Regional Emergency Officer Syed Kamal Abid paid tribute to the efforts of the District Emergency Officer Hafizabad and the Repair & Maintenance (R&M) team for their professionalism and commitment. He particularly expressed satisfaction over the fact that Rescue 1122 Hafizabad, while adhering strictly to the Government of Punjab's austerity policy, had managed to utilize the lowest operational budget in the province during the financial year 2024-25. Despite the limited resources, the district successfully ensured excellent vehicle maintenance, effective emergency response, and smooth operational efficiency.

## ADB to launch low carbon agri project in Pakistan

### F.P. Report

**FAISALABAD:** Asian Development Bank is mapping out a project on low carbon agriculture mechanism worth USD 3 million in Pakistan in order to address the agriculture and environmental issues for a better future.

It was stated by Asian Development Bank (ADB) Senior Natural Resources Specialist Noriko Sato while talking to Punjab Higher Education Commission (PHEC) Chairperson Prof Dr Iqar Ahmad Khan and UAF Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Zulfikar Ali and UAF scientists at a meeting held at Syndicate Room.

The blueprint of the projects was being designed in collaboration with UAF. The meeting disused the different projects and lauded and paid homage to the unmatched services of Noriko Sato especially for the agriculture sector of Pakistan.

Noriko Sato said that project will cover seed breeding, Greenhouse Gas Emissions mechanism and high tech operations. She said that ADB supports Pakistan's inclusive, sustainable, and climate-resilient development through investments in the country's economic management, energy, food security, institutional capacities, private sector, public finance, social services, transportation, and urban services.

Prof Dr Iqar Ahmad Khan said that Noriko Sato had played significant role to uplift the agricultural sector in Pakistan. He said that environmental degradation was posing a serious threat that needs to be addressed with collective efforts. He said that ADB has worked on mitigating and climate changes projects with UAF that brought tangible results. He was of the view that the country was confronting with different agrarian and food security challenges including changing environment, water scarcity, low productivity and others.

## Almost 18000 students & 269 teachers at risk in merged districts

### F.P. Report

**KHAR:** Despite the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government recently declaration of an "Emergency," the situation in Merged Districts paints a starkly different picture. While official statements brand education as the cornerstone of national survival and progress, in reality both teachers and students are bearing the brunt of bureaucratic neglect and financial indifference. One of the most crucial initiatives under the Elementary and Secondary Education Department the ADP Project titled "Literacy for All Programme (LFA) in FATA" has been a beacon of hope for Out Of School Children (OOSC).

Established in 2016, this project set up 209 Community Based Education Centers in some of the most remote, underdeveloped and resource starved areas where no government or private schools exist within a radius of 02 to 10 kilometers. Out of these 209 Community Based Education Centers located in the Merged Tribal Districts, currently hosting more than 18,000 students. These are not just statistics but represent thousands of marginalized children who see education as their only window to a brighter future.

Tragically, the project PC-1 expired on June 30, 2025 leaving its continuity hanging in the balance.

Although the program has been extended multiple times and a revised PC-1 was approved in March 2024 allocating Rs. 432.592 million specifically for salaries components only. Later on increased by the provincial Cabinet to Rs. 654.464 million where Project Teachers have not been paid their dues since October 2023. This means that hundreds of dedicated community project teachers who have continued to teach despite extreme financial hardship are now waiting for nearly 20 months of unpaid salaries.

Despite uncertainty and military operations in Merged Districts, these project teachers are working in far flung communities under difficult conditions are not just imparting education but also spreading hope, resilience and peace in the form of education. Yet, the non-payment of salaries has pushed their families into despair with many facing hunger, humiliation and the erosion of their dignity. Their children now look towards the state with anxious and unanswered questions. If immediate funds are not released the risk is grave, disheartened teachers may be forced to abandon these community schools thereby jeopardising the education of 18,000 children and pushing them back into the darkness of illiteracy.

Demands from Teachers, Parents and Village

Committees: Immediate release of Rs. 165 million in pending salaries to restore teachers dignity and sustain their livelihood.

Mainstreaming of the ADP Project "Literacy for All Programme in FATA" by incorporating it into the current budget similar to Settled Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to end the recurring uncertainty surrounding the project future.

The government must realize that declarations alone will not ignite an educational revolution. If education has truly been given the status of an "Emergency" then the first priority must be the frontline architects of this mission the teachers who despite 20 months of unpaid service continue to carry the torch of education in Merged Districts. The time for decisive action is now.

Will the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government honor its promises and safeguard the future of 18,000 enrolled students or will it let the dream of an "Educational Emergency" collapse into empty rhetoric and forgotten statistics???

The appeal: Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, the Minister for Elementary & Secondary Education and the Corps Commander Peshawar are earnestly requested to take immediate and serious steps to prevent 18,000 dreams from being extinguished/drop out.

## RPO visits central jail Mardan

### Fazal Haq

**MARDAN:** Regional Police Officer (RPO) visited Central Jail Mardan where he carried out a comprehensive review of the overall security situation and safety measures. He was accompanied by District Police Officer (DPO) Mardan, Superintendent Jail and other senior officials, on Friday.

During the visit, the RPO inspected the security personnel stationed at the entry and exit points, the use of modern security equipment, and the CCTV surveillance system. He toured various sections of the jail and was briefed in detail on the security protocols implemented within the facility. Jail authorities informed the RPO about the current security strategies, methods for inmate monitoring, and preparedness plans in case of emergencies.

gencies.

Commending the performance of the security staff, RPO Jawad Qamar stressed that no effort should be spared in making the security of Central Jail

technology to prevent any untoward incidents.

The RPO underlined that the security of a sensitive facility like Central Jail is directly linked to public safety and law and order,



more robust and foolproof, especially in light of the current security environment. He directed concerned officials to ensure proper duty rotation for staff, regular checks of security equipment, and enhanced use of modern

and any negligence or oversight in this regard will not be tolerated. He further stressed the need for close cooperation and effective coordination between police and prison administration to strengthen the security system.

## Committee formed

### F.P. Report

**KARAK:** A committee has been formed under the leadership of Khan Sherani, ADC Finance and Planning. Now, with the appointment of an officer of good character as the chairman of the committee, everything will be clear without any recommendation.

According to the details, the impact of the meeting of MNA Shahid Khattak, Minister Sajjad Barakwal and MPA Khurshid Khattak with ACS and SNGPL.

The provincial government has formed an inspection committee under the leadership of Additional Deputy

Commissioner Finance and Planning Karak, which will conduct a detailed review and inspection of the work done in Phase II of the Expansion Gas Network/Rehab (SNGPL Project) and submit a report to the provincial government. And the deficiencies should be clarified.

## KP floods: Scientists refute cloudburst theory amid rising water

**MINGORA (APP):** As the dust settles and relief efforts continue in flood-ravaged parts of northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), meteorologists are urging calm and clarity in the face of swirling misinformation about cloudburst.

Contrary to viral claims on social and digital media, the catastrophic flooding in Buner and Swat district on August 15 last was not triggered by a cloudburst, experts say, but by the rare convergence of two powerful weather systems over the region.

The tragedy, which has so far claimed more than 427 lives including 291 in Buner, shocked people across the country. Homes and hotels were swept away, families displaced, and critical infrastructure left in ruins in flood hit areas of Buner and other districts due to flash floods and torrential rains.

In the immediate aftermath, speculation intensified on social media, with many attributing the disaster to a "cloudburst"—a term that evokes sudden, torrential downpours with devastating impact in Buner, Shanga, Swat and Swabi districts. But former scientists at the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) have stepped forward to

correct the cloudburst narrative and termed it a collision of westerns and eastern weather systems in Malakand division.

Speaking to APP, Syed Mushtaq Ali Shah, former Chief Meteorologist at the PMD, explained that the meteorological data from the day of the disaster tells a different story and dispelled cloudburst theory attributed to recent flooding. "These systems collided in Buner, causing unprecedented rainfall. But calling it a cloudburst is scientifically incorrect," Mushtaq Shah reiterated.

He said the extreme rainfall occurred when two distinct weather systems—one entering KP from the west and another from the east—converged over the mountainous terrain of Buner. This interaction intensified moisture content in the atmosphere, leading to extended and heavy rainfall that caused flash floods. Unlike a cloudburst, which is typically a hyper-local phenomenon affecting a compact area with rainfall intensities exceeding 100 mm in less than an hour, the rains over Buner were widespread and sustained.

PMD equipment recorded no such spike in precipitation levels that would qualify the event as a

cloudburst. "The term 'cloudburst' is being misused and is creating unnecessary panic among the public," Mushtaq Shah added, warning of the dangers of inaccurate reporting during natural disasters.

The national forest policy revealed that Pakistan's total forest covered area was only five percent and the country was losing about 27,000 hectares of forests per year mainly in private and community owned natural forests. The policy further revealed that forests resources in all provinces especially in KP and Gilgit Baltistan was under tremendous pressures particularly in the communal lands, shamalats, guzara and private owned forests.

The large scale deforestation in private and communal lands besides cutting of trees in watershed areas has adversely impacted climate conditions, flash floods, agriculture yield and quantity of water at outlets besides triggering land degradation, loss of biodiversity and wildlife in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In riparian and coastal areas especially in Sindh and Balochistan besides mountains areas of Hazara and Malakand division, the deforestation ampli-

fied floods and facilitates sea water intrusion thus inflicting huge economic losses due to the government kitty as evident of devastating 2010, 2002 and 2025 floods.

Comparing Pakistan's deforestation rate with the world, Niaz Ali, former Chief Conservator Forests KP said that globally around 10 million hectares of forest every year were deforested equal to area of Portugal. He said around half of this deforestation was counterbalanced by regrowing of forests, which means that an overall around five million hectares of the green gold was lost per year worldwide.

Niaz said that flash floods intensified in northern KP due to deforestation and illegal construction of hotels in riverbeds. Echoing Shah's assessment, Irfan Virk, a current official at PMD, confirmed that radar and ground-based monitoring did not detect the sudden, extreme precipitation typically associated with cloudbursts.

"Our radars did not detect the kind of extreme, sudden precipitation associated with a cloudburst," Virk said. "The flooding was due to prolonged and heavy rainfall and not a sudden burst." Virk also pointed to a growing

trend and said that the increased frequency of unusual weather patterns in Pakistan, many of which are attributed to climate change. However, he cautioned against hastily assigning unfamiliar terms to these events without scientific basis and confirmation.

"Climate change is definitely altering rainfall patterns, but that does not mean every extreme weather event is a cloudburst," he explained. Beyond the meteorological explanations, both experts highlighted another aggravating factor such as environmental degradation. Deforestation, unregulated construction in vulnerable zones especially in riverbeds and poor land management have amplified the region's susceptibility to flash floods.

The large scale removal of trees in community lands in KP reduces the soil's ability to absorb rainwater, leading to faster runoff and more severe flooding. "Cutting down forests has reduced the natural buffer zones in forested areas, making flash floods more likely and more destructive," warned Virk.

Experts argue that the combination of heavy rainfall and deforestation has turned what

could have been a manageable weather event into a humanitarian crisis. Both meteorologists appealed to the media and the public to use precise language and rely on verified scientific data when discussing natural disasters. "Mislabeling such events not only causes panic but can also lead to poor policy decisions," Shah said.

Inaccurate terminology can influence everything from emergency responses to long-term planning and international aid. The experts urged journalists and policymakers to consult meteorological authorities before drawing conclusions. Shah and Virk also stressed the importance of enhanced climate modeling, disaster preparedness, and community education, especially as Pakistan finds itself increasingly vulnerable to the erratic impacts of climate change.

"This is a wake-up call for our disaster preparedness and environmental management," Shah concluded. As the people of Buner and surrounding areas begin the arduous task of rebuilding their lives, understanding the true nature of what happened is more than an academic exercise—it's the foundation for future resilience.





KHARTOUM: People fill containers with water at a distribution point during water outages in Sudan.

## Sudanese lay first bricks to rebuild war-torn Khartoum

KHARTOUM (AFP): On the streets of Sudan's capital Khartoum, builders clear rubble from houses pockmarked with bullet holes, haul away fallen trees and repair broken power lines, in the city's first reconstruction effort since war began over two years ago. Fighting between Sudan's army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which broke out in April 2023, has left the capital battered and hollowed out.

But reconstruction -- led by government agencies and youth-led volunteer groups -- has finally begun to repair hospitals, schools and water and power networks. "We are working to restore the state's infrastructure," volunteer Mostafa Awad said. Once a thriving metropolis of nine million people, Khartoum's skyline is now a jagged silhouette of collapsed buildings. Electrical poles lean precariously or lie snapped on the ground in the streets. Cars, stripped for parts, sit burnt-out and abandoned, their tires melted into the asphalt. AFP correspondents saw entire residential blocks standing with their exterior walls ripped away in the fighting. Danger remains within the soot-stained buildings as authorities slowly work to clear tens of thousands of unexploded bombs left behind by fighters. The UN warns Khartoum is "heavily contaminated by unexploded ordnance", and this month said landmines have been discovered across the capital. Sudan's war has killed tens of thousands, displaced 13 million and plunged the nation into the world's worst hunger and displacement crisis. Until the army pushed the RSF

out of Khartoum in March, the capital -- where four million alone were displaced by fighting -- was a battlefield.

Before they left, paramilitary fighters stripped infrastructure bare, looting everything from medical equipment and water pumps to copper wiring. "Normally in a war zone, you see massive destruction... but you hardly ever see what happened in Khartoum," the UN's resident and humanitarian coordinator Luca Renda said. "All the cables have been taken away from homes, all the pipes have been destroyed," he told AFP, describing systematic looting of both small and large-scale items. Today, power and water systems remain among the city's greatest challenges. The head of east Khartoum's electricity department, Mohamed al-Bashir, described "massive damage" in the capital's main transformer stations. "Some power stations were completely destroyed," he told AFP, explaining the RSF had "specifically targeted transformer oil and copper cables". Vast swathes of Khartoum are without electricity, and with no reliable water supply, a cholera outbreak gripped the city this summer.

Health officials reported up to 1,500 new cases a day in June, according to the UN. On his first visit to Khartoum last month, Sudan's prime minister pledged a wide-scale recovery effort. "Khartoum will return as a proud national capital," Kamil Idris said. Even as war rages on elsewhere in the country, the government has begun planning its return from its wartime capital Port Sudan. It announced central Khartoum -- the

devastated business and government district where some of the fiercest battles took place -- would be evacuated and redesigned. The UN estimates the rehabilitation of the capital's essential facilities to cost around \$350 million, while the full rebuilding of Khartoum "will take years and several billion dollars", Renda told AFP. Hundreds have rolled up their sleeves to start the long and arduous rebuilding work, but obstacles remain. "We faced challenges such as the lack of raw materials, especially infrastructure tools, sanitation (supplies) and iron," said Mohamed El Ser, a construction worker. "Still, the market is relatively starting to recover," he told AFP. In downtown Khartoum, a worker, his hands coated in mud, stacks bricks beside a crumbling building.

AFP correspondents accompanied workers carefully refitting pipes into what once was a family home, while nearby others lifted slabs of concrete and mangled metal into wheelbarrows. On one road that had been a front line, a man repaired a downed streetlight while others dragged a felled tree onto a flatbed truck. The UN expects up to two million people to make their way back to Khartoum by the end of the year. Those who have already returned, estimated to be in the tens of thousands, say life is still difficult, but there's reason for hope. "Honestly, there is an improvement in living conditions," said Ali Mohamed, who recently returned. "There is more stability now, and real services are beginning to come back, like water, electricity and even basic medical care."

## US warships may reach Venezuela coast by weekend in drug cartel operation

WASHINGTON: Three United States warships ordered to deploy off the coast of Venezuela by US President Donald Trump could arrive by the weekend, according to reports, as Washington sends its military to curb drug trafficking by Latin American crime cartels.

The reported deployment of the warships comes as the Trump administration increases pressure on Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, after recently doubling a reward for his arrest to \$50m on what the US claims are drug offences linked to cocaine trafficking. Sources told the Reuters and AFP news agencies that an amphibious squadron consisting of three US Aegis-class guided missile destroyers is heading to the waters off Venezuela and could arrive.

Two sources briefed on the deployment, and speaking on condition of

anonymity, told Reuters that the USS San Antonio, USS Iwo Jima and USS Fort Lauderdale are moving towards the Venezuelan coast and are carrying 4,500 US service members, including 2,200 Marines. The sources declined to detail the specific mission of the squadron. But they have said that recent deployments are aimed at addressing threats to US national security from specially designated "narco-terrorist" organisations in the region. Maduro said that he would be deploying millions of militia members across Venezuela in response to US "threats", which included the reward for his arrest and the launch of a new anti-drug operation in the Caribbean.

"This week, I will activate a special plan with more than 4.5 million militiamen to ensure coverage of the entire national territory - militias that are prepared, activated and armed,"

Maduro said in a televised address. Washington has accused Maduro of leading the Venezuela-based Cartel de los Soles (Cartel of the Suns) cocaine trafficking gang. The US Department of the Treasury designated the cartel as a global terrorist organisation last month, accusing it of supporting the Venezuelan crime group Tren de Aragua and Mexico's Sinaloa drug cartels, which were also designated foreign terrorist organisations earlier this year.

"President Trump has been very clear and consistent, he's prepared to use every element of American power to stop drugs from flooding into our country and to bring those responsible to justice," White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said. "Maduro, it is the view of this administration, is not a legitimate president; he is a fugitive head of this cartel who has been indicted in

the United States for trafficking drugs into this country," Leavitt said. Al Jazeera's Latin America editor, Lucia Newman, reports that Maduro has ordered the grounding of all aerial drones for the next 30 days, "an indication that he might be expecting an attack from the air rather than sea".

"President Trump's vow to send warships to the Caribbean and elsewhere in Latin America to stop the flow of drugs to the United States is being seen as more than just a threat to Venezuela. It could apply to many, many countries in this region," Newman said. "They say today it may be Venezuela, tomorrow it could be any one of them," Newman said. Many in the region are also wondering why Trump has chosen to implement "such an aggressive move in the United States' backyard while he portrays himself as a global peacemaker". — Al Jazeera

## Suspended Thai PM in court for case seeking her ouster

BANGKOK (AFP): Thailand's suspended prime minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra arrived at court to testify in a case seeking to remove her from office over her handling of the kingdom's border row with Cambodia. Paetongtarn, daughter of controversial but influential billionaire ex-prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, is accused of failing in her duties by not standing up for the country properly in a call with former Cambodian leader Hun Sen, audio of which was leaked online.

The Constitutional Court, which ousted her predecessor as prime minister a year ago in a separate ethics case, will rule on whether Paetongtarn

should be thrown out of office. The court suspended Paetongtarn from office last month and summoned her to answer questions in the case -- her 39th birthday. Dressed in a black business suit, Paetongtarn smiled and greeted reporters as she arrived at court in Bangkok with Prommin Lertsuridej, a top adviser who is named in the case with her.

The case centres around her call in June with Hun Sen, Cambodia's longtime ruler and father of its current premier, which focused on the two neighbours' then-brewing row over their disputed border. In the call, Paetongtarn addressed Hun Sen as "uncle" and referred to a Thai military commander

as her "opponent", sparking a furious reaction in Thailand. Conservative lawmakers accused her of kowtowing to Cambodia and undermining the military -- a hugely powerful institution in Thailand. The main partner in Paetongtarn's ruling coalition walked out in protest at her conduct in the leaked call, a move that almost collapsed her government. A group of senators filed a petition with the Constitutional Court arguing Paetongtarn should be removed from office for breaching constitutional provisions that require "evident integrity" and "ethical standards" among ministers.

If the verdict goes against her, Paetongtarn would become the third

Shinwatra to be ousted early as premier, after her father and aunt Yingluck -- both thrown out in military coups. Thai politics has been driven for two decades by a battle between the conservative, pro-military, pro-royalist elite and the Shinawatra clan, whom they consider a threat to the kingdom's traditional social order. As well as precipitating a political crisis, the call -- released in full online by Hun Sen -- plunged Thai-Cambodian relations into turmoil.

Later in June, the border row erupted into the two sides' deadliest military clashes in decades, with more than 40 people killed and 300,000 forced to flee their homes along the border.

### UN chief urges immediate Gaza ceasefire

TOKYO (Reuters): United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, after Israel announced the first steps of an operation to take over Gaza City. "It is vital to reach immediately a ceasefire in Gaza," that was necessary "to avoid the death and destruction that a military operation against Gaza City would inevitably cause," Guterres said in Japan where he is attending the Tokyo International Conference on African Development.

Israel, which has called up tens of thousands of army reservists, is pressing ahead with its plan to seize Gaza's biggest urban centre despite international criticism of an operation likely to force the displacement of many more Palestinians. Israel currently holds about 75% of the Gaza Strip. The war in Gaza began on October 7, 2023, when gunmen led by Hamas attacked southern Israeli communities, killing some 1,200 people, mainly civilians, and taking 251 hostages including children into Gaza, according to Israeli figures. Israel's military offensive on the Gaza Strip has killed at least 60,000 Palestinians, according to enclave's health ministry. Guterres called for the unconditional release of hostages held by Hamas. He also urged Israel to reverse a decision to expand "illegal" settlement construction in the West Bank.

The Israeli settlement plan, which would bisect the occupied West Bank and cut it off from East Jerusalem, was announced last week and received the final go-ahead from a Defence Ministry planning commission. The Palestinian Foreign Ministry said the construction would isolate Palestinian communities living in the area and undermine the possibility of a two-state solution.

### Italy's Ventina glacier melted

ROME (AP): Italy's Ventina glacier, one of the biggest in northern Lombardy, has melted so much due to climate change that geologists can no longer measure it the way they have for the past 130 years. After this year's hot summer, geologists discovered that the simple stakes used as benchmarks to measure the glacier's retraction each year are now buried under rockslides and debris that have made the terrain too unsteady for future in-person visits.

The Lombardy Glaciological Service said that it will now use drone imagery and remote sensing to keep track of the ongoing shrinkage on the glacier, which is located near Sondrio, in the same general area of northeast Lombardy that is hosting some 2026 Winter Olympics events. Geologists say that the Ventina glacier has already lost 1.7 kilometers (1 mile) in length since the first measuring benchmarks were positioned at the front of the glacier in 1895. The melting has accelerated in recent years, with the glacier losing 431 meters (471 yards) in the last 10 years, nearly half of that since 2021, the service said. It's another example of how accelerating global warming is melting and shrinking Europe's glaciers, causing a host of environmental and other impacts. "While we could still hope until the 1980s that there would be normal cycles (of retraction) or at least a contained retraction, in the last 40 years something truly striking has occurred," said Andrea Toffaletti, a member of the Lombardy Glaciological Service.

Italy's mountain glaciers, which are found throughout the Alps and Dolomites in the north and along the central Apennines, have been receding for years, thanks to inadequate snowfall in the winter and record-setting hot summers. Glaciers always melt some in summer, with the runoff fueling mountain streams and rivers. But the hot summers are "no longer able to guarantee the survival of the winter snowpack" that keeps the glacier intact, Toffaletti said. "In order to regenerate and remain in balance, a certain amount of residual snow from the winter must remain on the glacier's surface at the end of the summer."

## Pensioners on frontline of Argentina's politics

BUENOS AIRES (AFP): It has become a tradition Argentina's capital Buenos Aires: each, baton-wielding riot police corral or confront a band of protesters brandishing signs, shopping bags and walking frames. For sure, these veteran "militants" are vocal. Sometimes they are even feisty.

But they are also gray-haired, wrinkled and at times struggle to keep their balance. "For God's sake!" 87-year-old Ricardo Migliavacca shouted during a recent police advance that nearly toppled him. "How disgraceful!" He recovered only with the help of his sturdy blue Zimmer frame. Migliavacca is just one of hundreds of pensioners who have taken part in weekly protests against Argentina's right-wing President Javier Milei. They want a pension increase to soften the blow of Argentina's seemingly endless price increases. But Milei -- who at 54 is still at least a decade away from retirement age -- is not convinced.

The economically ultra-liberal president has twice vetoed moves by Congress to raise pensions. This, after all, is the politician who has brought a chainsaw on stage to demonstrate his cost-cutting zeal. "My task is not to seem good, it is to do good," he said in a recent speech, "even if the cost is being called cruel." During this last year of protests, his government and the police

have been accused of just such cruelty. They have used tear gas, spray, batons, rubber bullets, and water cannon to disperse the pensioners -- and the assorted groups that join them. The government does not report figures on injuries or arrests during the protests. But according to Amnesty International, 1,155 people were injured last year, 33 of them hit by rubber bullets in the head or face. During one recent scuffle, blows were exchanged on the police line.

In a narrow alley, an elderly man writhed on the floor as helpers tried to pour liquid into his tear-gas-seared eyes. A young couple in a glass-walled gym nearby ignored the scene and continued lifting weights. Beatriz Blanco is about to turn 82. She arrived at one protest wearing a shirt reading "gangster retiree" -- the nickname the government gave her for allegedly assaulting police officers. "Watch out, she's dangerous!" jokes a man as he sees her pass. She smiles and waves her walking stick in greeting. In March, the octogenarian was pushed by a policeman and hit her head on the pavement, leaving her lying in a pool of blood.

"I thought I was dead," she said. "Then came the anger and pain of being unable to fix anything." Many of the pensioners have a history of activism that began as students in the 1960s, when Argentina lurched from democracy

toward military dictatorship. "I still maintain that spirit of rebellion," Migliavacca said. But behind the activism, there is also an acute need. Nearly half of Argentina's 7.8 million retirees receive the near-minimum US\$260 a month. That is estimated to be less than a third of the cost of basic goods needed by the elderly.

"You can't live like this. Especially not as an elderly person. People need moments of joy," Blanco told AFP. Since coming to power in 2023, Milei has sought to straighten out Argentina's finances, cutting red tape, curbing inflation, and winning a new IMF bailout. But his cuts have been felt acutely across the public sector: in schools, hospitals, research centers and the social safety net. Milei's remains relatively popular, with an approval rating of around 40 percent, but the pensioners have become one of the most prominent and emotive sources of opposition, according to political scientist Ivan Schuliaker. "The retirees are not showing a willingness to physically defend themselves, yet they are constantly being beaten," he told AFP.

There are worries that the harsh security response to such a vulnerable part of the population could be desensitizing Argentines to political violence. "What this government is doing, no one has done in the democratic era, no one," warned historian Felipe Pigna.

## New Zealand will buy US helicopters

WELLINGTON (AP): New Zealand's government announced new military spending of 2.7 billion New Zealand dollars (\$1.6 billion) to replace aging aircraft, including helicopters it plans to purchase from the United States, senior officials said.

Cabinet ministers unveiling the package cited rapidly growing global tensions and a deteriorating security environment. New Zealand's military spending has trailed that of its larger partners in the Five Eyes intelligence sharing group of countries - which includes the United States, Britain, Canada and Australia - and the bolstered budget reflects a shift in how the remote island nation is responding to strategic competition among major powers in the Pacific Ocean.

"We face the most challenging strategic circumstances in New Zealand's modern history and certainly the worst that anyone today working in politics or foreign affairs can remember," Foreign Minister Winston Peters, who entered Parliament in 1979, told reporters. The purchase of military planes and helicopters was the first procurement announced in a government plan, dis-

closed in April, to double defense spending from 1% to 2% of GDP in the next decade.

The package includes five MH-60R Seahawk helicopters to replace the existing maritime fleet and two Airbus A321XLR aircraft, allowing the retirement of Boeing 757s that are more than 30 years old and were already secondhand when purchased. The helicopters accounted for more than NZ \$2 billion of the spending, officials said. Defense Minister Judith Collins said her government would "move at pace" to procure the helicopters directly through the United States' foreign military sales program instead of going to a wider tender. Cabinet ministers were expected to consider the final business case in 2026, she told reporters in Wellington.

It would take "a few years" to acquire the helicopters, Collins added, because buying new meant New Zealand would need to "wait in line." She denied the choice to buy from the United States was an attempt to rectify the trade imbalance that has seen New Zealand goods targeted for an adjusted 15% levy when arriving in the US

under the Trump administration's global tariffs plan. Collins said she didn't know whether New Zealand's trade minister would seek to use the purchase as leverage when making a case for lower tariffs to US officials. The same helicopters were used by Australia, the US and seven other countries, she said.

The leaders of New Zealand and neighboring Australia this month pledged closer military ties as they are increasingly confronted by great power competition, particularly the rise of China's influence, in the South Pacific Ocean. The region was once neglected by other Western nations, an attitude that has reversed sharply in recent years as the extent of Beijing's attempts to vie for sway with Pacific leaders has become more apparent. That's proved a challenge for leaders in New Zealand, where use of military ships and aircraft has often been primarily in humanitarian and disaster situations. It has also required a fresh sales pitch on military budgets to a country of 5 million people where the need for defense spending in a remote country with few enemies has traditionally been a difficult sell.

## State Department employee fired

WASHINGTON (AP): The State Department has fired a press officer who was responsible for drafting Trump administration talking points about policy toward Israel and Gaza after complaints from the US Embassy in Jerusalem.

Officials said Shahed Ghoreishi, a contractor working for the Bureau of Near East Affairs, was terminated over the weekend following two incidents last week in which his loyalty to Trump administration policies was called into question. Ghoreishi, who is Iranian American, also was targeted following his dismissal by right-wing personality Laura Loomer, who accused him of not being fully supportive of the administration's policies in the Middle East.

According to Ghoreishi and two current US officials, Ghoreishi drew the ire of a senior official at the US Embassy in Jerusalem and then top aides to Secretary of State Marco Rubio for drafting a response to a query from The Associated Press

last week. The question related to discussions between Israel and South Sudan about the possible relocation of Palestinians from Gaza to South Sudan. The draft response included a line that said the US does not support the forced relocation of Gazans, something that President Donald Trump and his special envoy Steve Witkoff have said repeatedly. However, according to Ghoreishi and the officials, that line was rejected by the US Embassy in Jerusalem, leading to questions about policy back in Washington. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal personnel changes. Ghoreishi also said he questioned a statement from the embassy that referred to the West Bank as "Judea and Samaria," the Biblical name for the Palestinian territory that some right-wing Israeli officials prefer. Mike Huckabee, US ambassador to Israel, also has repeatedly backed referring to the West Bank by Judea and Samaria.

The ouster shows the lengths that the Trump administration has gone to ensure what it sees as loyalty to the president and his goals, including a foreign policy approach that has offered overwhelming support for Israel in the war against Hamas. The administration this week also revoked security clearances for 37 current and former national security officials, including many who had signed a 2019 letter critical of Trump that was recently highlighted by Loomer. "Despite a close working relationship with many of my dedicated and hardworking colleagues, I was targeted following two events last week when I attracted the ire of the 7th floor and senior officials in Embassy Jerusalem: stating we are against forced displacement of Palestinians in Gaza as President Trump and special envoy Witkoff have both previously claimed and cutting a reference to Judea and Samaria," Ghoreishi said, referring to the floor where top leaders have offices at the State Department.



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## Golden Dome is a game-changer

**E**ARLIER this year, President Donald Trump announced the Golden Dome, a space missile defense system designed to counter long-range and hypersonic missile threats to the US. The project begins with an initial investment of \$175 billion and is estimated to cost up to \$542 billion over 20 years, potentially reaching trillions. A \$25 billion down payment has already been secured through a Republican spending bill. Gen. Michael A. Guetlein of the US Space Force was appointed program manager, and leading defense companies such as SpaceX, Palantir, Anduril, and Lockheed Martin are preparing for involvement.

This gigantic project is a mix, I would say, of Israel's Iron Dome and President Ronald Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative. Since 2011, the Iron Dome has successfully protected Israel from short-range rockets and, as we witnessed this year, from long-range attacks as well. It also reboots and amplifies Reagan's 1983 SDI, which at the time was nicknamed "Star Wars," and had the goal of placing lasers and interceptors in space to protect the US against Soviet nuclear missiles.

SDI never materialized due to cost, technological limits, and political opposition, yet it had an effect on the morale of the USSR and contributed to the end of the Cold War. Moreover, it transformed the arms race and defensive thinking, inspiring and accelerating the development of many defensive systems already in place, such as the Patriot missile system.

The Golden Dome is, in reality, more than just a space-based missile defense system. It brings order to space and ensures that space is safe. Through a constant monitoring network, it will keep track of objects in orbit and provide surveillance for any hostile actions against US and allied satellites. This is achieved through the deployment of sensors in orbit and what is described as space situational awareness.

In short, sensors will track suspicious maneuvers and enable rapid — now becoming autonomous through AI — responses to any attempt to disable or destroy space assets. This is particularly important as enemies could use direct-ascent anti-satellite weapons to destroy strategic satellites. Moreover, it can monitor space debris, which poses a risk even to commercial space. Hence, the Golden Dome will also act as an important deterrent against space-based aggression. We often forget how dependent our lives are on space. Modern defense, communication systems, and commercial businesses rely on satellites that need protection from sabotage. Militarily, I will only give a short example highlighting the importance of space assets. Without satellite support, the F-35 loses much of what makes it a fifth-generation fighter, becoming less effective and relying on older navigation methods.

We all know that war is also about disrupting everyday life, both civilian and commercial activities, sometimes even before the real conflict starts, as population morale is the first to take the hit. Well, here, too, satellites can affect global internet connectivity, aviation and maritime navigation, and disaster management, as well as financial transactions. The precise timing signals from space are essential to our everyday lives.

Hence enemies destroying or disrupting key satellites not only make defense systems blind, but also affect economies and civilian life. This makes keeping assets in space a top priority across all domains: ground, sea, air, space, and cyberspace. The essential point is not to see the Golden Dome as a focal point of the defense space strategy, or else it would become a space Maginot Line. Let me explain. Between 1928 and 1940, France constructed a network of fortifications along its borders with Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy. This impressive fortification line, built with anti-tank barriers, bunkers, artillery, and machine-gun nests, was supposed to be the ultimate protection and make France impenetrable by any army. The line was rendered useless during the Second World War when German forces invaded through Belgium to go around it. This famous French reference shows that defense alone is not a good deterrent strategy, and it is only the capacity to defeat that creates real deterrence.

Yet, when it comes to space, it is also about claiming the "space" — meaning that a successful Golden Dome, with all the space infrastructure it requires, will most certainly create "rule of law" in space. It will establish the US as the primary guarantor of security in orbit, and this should be welcomed by all Washington's friends and allies. It will allow standards to be set to monitor, protect, and defend all spacecraft and, ultimately, create an effective "traffic monitoring and management" system.

More importantly, it will deter hostile actions, such as nuclear anti-satellite programs, or orbital intersections or collisions — yes, just like in the James Bond film "You Only Live Twice". If peace prevails, and we all hope it does, this will ensure freedom of access for commercial and scientific missions that benefit everyone. Trump is changing the strategic game on Earth and in space, as we saw in his recent meeting in Ukraine, signaling a willingness to act decisively across stages. The US military once fueled the rise of Silicon Valley by funding and developing technologies like semiconductors, computing, and networking. That effort later created a boom in the global economy. In the same way, the Golden Dome could not only shift the balance of power in space for decades to come, but also unleash the real epoch of the space economy. It is a huge challenge. But as I often say: "Never bet against the US."

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## Germany's shift on Israel

Ayhan Simsek

**P**RESSURE is mounting on Germany to take a firmer stance against Israel as it aggressively expands its military offensive in Gaza and continues using starvation as a weapon of war. Following weeks of escalating criticism, Chancellor Friedrich Merz recently announced that he will no longer authorize exports to Israel of arms that could be used in Gaza, triggering divided reactions across the political spectrum.

While pro-Israel advocacy groups criticized the decision, opposition figures and some political analysts characterized it as both insufficient and significantly delayed. According to these experts, Germany needs to align with its European partners in applying coordinated pressure on the Netanyahu government to end the Gaza offensive and ensure unimpeded humanitarian aid access for Palestinian civilians.

Muriel Asseburg, a senior foreign policy expert at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, believes Merz's move, though restrained, sends an important signal to the Netanyahu government that its actions in Gaza and violations of international law will have diplomatic consequences. "Does it come late? Yes, I think so. But I think it will still have an effect. We already see how it's being discussed in Israeli media and in political circles. So, the signal is clearly received," she told Anadolu.

"Israel doesn't have so many friends and supporters in the world anymore. Germany, the country which is the second-largest arms exporter to Israel after the US, has now started to become hesitant in unconditionally backing Israel. That is a signal that is important." Germany has long been a staunch supporter of Israel, with political leaders repeatedly emphasizing the country's responsibility stemming from its Nazi past and the Holocaust. However, this stance began to shift in recent months, particularly after Netanyahu announced a Cabinet decision earlier in August to expand the military offensive, seize Gaza City, and displace its population.

Israel's ongoing assault has already killed more than 62,100 Palestinians in Gaza since October 2023. It has devastated the entire enclave, and along with a blockade on aid, created famine-like conditions that

have led to at least 271 Palestinians dying of starvation and malnutrition, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. According to Asseburg, several factors influenced Merz's recent decision: growing international outcry over the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, increasing criticism from his coalition partner — the Social Democrats — on the government's Israel policy, and the failure of diplomatic efforts for a ceasefire.

"The chancellor and the foreign minister have been in constant exchange with their Israeli counterparts and have tried to convince them to open Gaza for humanitarian aid access. But all this pleading with the government has just led to nothing," she said, referring to Merz's conversations with Netanyahu and Foreign Minister Johann Wadepuhl's visits to Tel Aviv. "The second factor is domestic public opinion. A vast majority of Germans are now saying we should have a harsher policy towards Israel. We cannot continue to support Israel unconditionally in view of what is happening in Gaza."

"The third factor, I think, is the international climate and Germany's closest partners, especially France and the UK, assuming a much tougher stance towards Israel." A recent survey by German public broadcaster ARD revealed a significant shift in public opinion regarding the country's stance on Israel.

The representative poll found that 66% of Germans believe their government should exert greater pressure on Israel regarding its actions in Gaza, with only 24% disagreeing. Significantly, 62% rejected the long-held notion that "Germany bears a greater responsibility than other countries for the protection of Israel due to its historical past," while just 31% supported this traditional position. Still, according to Asseburg, while Merz's recent announcement sends an important message to the Netanyahu government, it does not represent a significant departure from Germany's traditional Israel policy.

Rather than implementing a comprehensive arms embargo or stopping all weapons exports, Merz has only suspended approval of new permits for weapons that might be used in Gaza, she said. The senior expert emphasized that to be taken seriously by the Netanyahu

government, Germany needs to implement further measures in coordination with its European partners. These could include suspending the EU-Israel Association Agreement or imposing sanctions on far-right Israeli ministers.

"Europeans can have much more influence on the government of Israel if they choose to do so. This means they have to act in unison. If they keep acting apart and each one pursues different policies, I don't think they will have enough leverage," she said. "For example, a suspension of the association agreement, or a partial suspension, can be achieved if Germany and Italy agree. So far, they have been blocking that."

While Merz has taken some steps, he remains reluctant so far to impose harsher measures against the Israeli government, citing Germany's historical responsibility and its commitment to Israel's security as part of its "Staatsraeson," or reason of state. Merz made it clear that while Germany would halt approval of new arms exports, Berlin's traditional policy of supporting Israel would remain unchanged. He also expressed skepticism about supporting EU measures such as suspending the EU-Israel Association Agreement, implementing trade restrictions, or imposing sanctions on far-right Israeli ministers.

Martin Kobler, a former German ambassador, underlined that some German politicians often misinterpret the country's historic responsibility toward Israel, viewing it as an obligation to unconditionally support the Netanyahu government's actions. "What we call in German 'Staatsraeson' refers to being on the side of Israel when it comes to the security of Israel. Now, the events in Gaza, however, they are different, they are contrary to international law," the diplomat told Anadolu.

"They created a humanitarian disaster, an apocalypse in Gaza. Gaza is flattened, it is destroyed, all the basic infrastructure, like hospitals, does not work anymore, and they were deliberately targeted. This is clearly going against international humanitarian law and cannot be tolerated."

Kobler was among a group of retired diplomats who sent an open letter to Merz last month, urging more pressure on the Netanyahu government to stop its atroc-

ities in Gaza.

He emphasized that this is not only Germany's moral and legal obligation, but also its responsibility to ensure Israel's long-term security. "I'm very worried as a German that the security of Israel is undermined by what the (Netanyahu) government is doing in Gaza. That is why we are having a more intense discussion in Germany in criticizing the government of Netanyahu, which is supported by ultra-rightists, extremists," he said.

"If Israel violates the most principled, civilized standards of humanity and violates international humanitarian law, this further isolates Israel, and Israel is on the way to becoming a pariah state," Kobler added. The diplomat also raised the issue of complicity, with Berlin facing a case at the ICJ for alleged complicity in genocide in Gaza.

"Those who carry political responsibility in Germany right now have to think about what happens if in two years from now, the International Criminal Court (ICC) or the ICJ come to the conclusion that it was a genocide," he said. He said the German government's critical statements towards Israel are not enough, and they must be backed by concrete actions. He advocated for halting all arms exports to Israel, except those essential for its defense against Iran and Hezbollah.

"If weapons are used for violating the most principled international humanitarian law and are used in the mass starvation of the population of Gaza, we should stop delivering these weapons," he said. Kobler emphasized that the German government can exert greater pressure on Israel by joining European partners who have suggested suspending trade agreements or cooperation.

He argued that Germany should also follow its close ally France and recognize Palestinian statehood, thereby strengthening its commitment to a political two-state solution. Kobler also stressed that Hamas must treat hostages humanely and release them unconditionally to achieve a ceasefire, further arguing that the group must completely withdraw from Gaza's political landscape for a lasting political settlement. "I'm definitely of the opinion one should do it at the beginning (of a peace process), and we should join the French initiative in recognizing the state of Palestine," he added.

## Recognizing the state of Palestine

Dr. Blerim Mustafa

**T**HE anticipated decisions of France and the United Kingdom to recognize the state of Palestine mark a significant diplomatic shift, reinforcing the international consensus that a two-state solution is the only viable path to lasting peace in the Middle East, with global implications. While recognition alone will not alter the realities of occupation, it carries profound legal and political weight — affirming Palestine's right of self-determination and sending a clear message to Israel: the denial of Palestinian statehood is unsustainable and in violation of international law and the prevailing global consensus.

This move aligns with a broader trend in Europe, where frustration over Israel's continued settlement expansion and rejection of meaningful negotiations led several nations to reconsider their positions. The symbolic and legal implications of recognition cannot be overstated: it reinforces Palestine's standing in international law and challenges Israel's occupation, which has been declared by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to be "illegal" in two advisory opinions, in 2004 and in 2024.

Under international law, recognition of a state is a political act that acknowledges an entity's statehood based on Article 1 of the 1933 Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States criteria: a permanent population, defined territory, government, and capacity to enter relations with other states. While Palestine's territorial fragmentation under occupation complicates full state functionality, 148 UN member states have already recognized it, affirming its legitimacy as a sovereign state.

Admittedly, recognition does not end the Israeli occupation or settle matters related to border demarcation between Israel and Palestine, but it strengthens the latter's standing in international forums and legal disputes. It also signals to Israel that its current policies — settlement expansion, annexation threats, and the refusal to engage in good-faith negotiations — are incompatible with global norms and may lead to sanctions.

The ICJ and the UN General Assembly have repeatedly affirmed the principle of Palestinian self-determination and called for compliance with international law regarding the occupation. The ICJ is currently deliberating two significant cases: South Africa v. Israel, which examines the scope of violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including accusations under the 1951 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and an advisory opinion on Israel's legal obligations toward UN agencies, including the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA), operating in the region. Recognition of Palestine by additional Western and European states would reinforce these legal precedents, further isolating Israel's policies under international law.

The case of Kosovo offers a compelling parallel. Despite Serbia's vehement opposition, recognition by a majority of UN members allowed Kosovo to consolidate its de facto statehood,

participate in international institutions, and establish legal precedents that Serbia can no longer overturn. While Kosovo's independence remains contested — given that Russia and China, two permanent UN Security Council members, continue to object — its recognition has normalized its sovereignty in practice.

Similarly, widespread recognition of Palestine would solidify its claim to statehood, making its exclusion from meaningful negotiations increasingly untenable for Israel. Like Kosovo, Palestine may not achieve full UN membership under the UN Charter owing to US exercise of its veto power in the UN Security Council, but diplomatic recognition by influential states would grant Palestine greater leverage in future talks.

France and the UK are joined by other states such as Portugal, Malta, San Marino, and Finland, joining Spain, Ireland, Norway, Slovenia, and Belgium, all of which have already taken steps toward recognition. Even traditionally cautious nations, such as Canada and Australia, have hinted at reconsidering their positions. This momentum reflects frustration with Israel's opposition to a two-state solution and aligns with broader efforts to revive diplomatic efforts. The EU's gradual shift toward recognition underscores that the status quo — perpetual occupation, settlement expansion, and the absence of a political horizon for Palestinians — is unsustainable.

Recognition should not be seen as hostility toward Israel but rather as a reaffirmation of international law. The Oslo Accords were meant to be transitional, yet three decades later, Israel continues to undermine Palestinian self-determination through military control, settlement entrenchment, and the fragmentation of Palestinian territory. By recognizing Palestine, European states underscore that Israel cannot indefinitely dictate terms without consequence.

A two-state solution remains the only framework endorsed by the UN, the EU, and major global powers. Recognition does not replace negotiations but reinforces their urgency. If Israel continues to reject Palestinian statehood, it risks further diplomatic isolation and the erosion of its own legitimacy as a democratic state. Therefore, recognition sends a powerful message: Palestinian statehood is not a concession but a right. As with Kosovo, international consensus can shape realities on the ground. For peace to prevail, Israel must accept that denial is no longer an option.

The expected recognition of Palestine by France, the UK, and other Western states marks a turning point in the conflict's diplomatic landscape. While it will not immediately end the occupation or resolve all disputes, it reasserts the principle that Palestinian self-determination is non-negotiable.

Israel now faces a choice: adapt to the changing international consensus or face growing isolation and the real possibility of sanctions. The two-state solution, though challenged, remains the only viable path to peace. Recognition is not the end of the process — but it is an essential step toward a just and lasting peace under the UN Charter.

## Netanyahu's plan to reoccupy Gaza is a deadly delusion

Hani Hazaimch

**B**ENJAMIN Netanyahu is once again playing with fire — only this time it threatens not just Gaza, but Israel itself, the broader region, and what remains of a fragile international order. The Israeli leader's reckless scheme to reoccupy Gaza is not merely shortsighted; it is criminal in intent, catastrophic in consequence, and dripping with the arrogance of a man who believes he can bend history to his will.

Let us be clear: The idea of reoccupying Gaza is not about security. It is not about peace. It is about one thing and one thing only: Netanyahu's desperate bid to cling to power, evade accountability for his corruption charges, and present himself to the Israeli public as a strongman at a time when his leadership is defined by chaos, failure, and bloodshed. Gaza, once again, is being used as a pawn in his political survival game.

Netanyahu sells the illusion that sending Israeli tanks back into Gaza will somehow bring security to Israel. But history has already written the verdict: Occupation breeds resistance. The decades-long suffocation of Gaza has done nothing but radicalize new generations who see no horizon, no dignity, no life worth living under perpetual siege.

Does Netanyahu truly believe that by reoccupying Gaza, by tightening the noose around 2 million people, he will extinguish their will to resist? On the contrary, he will ignite a firestorm of resistance fiercer than ever before. The Israeli military may occupy land, but it cannot occupy hearts. And the more brutal the occupation, the deeper the rage, the stronger the determination, the longer the conflict burns. Security built on the graves of starving children and bombed-out families is not security; it is barbarism masquerading as defense.

What makes Netanyahu's plan especially vile is his willingness to weaponize humanitarian suffering. Gaza today is already enduring famine conditions. Children are wasting away as food and medicine are deliberately withheld. Hospitals are reduced to rubble. Entire neighborhoods are flattened. And still, Netanyahu talks of "managing" Gaza, as though human beings can be managed like cattle. What he proposes is not management; it is subjugation. It is the calculated use of hunger, displacement, and despair to force a population into submission. It is collective punishment on a scale that meets every definition of a war crime. The Israeli leader dares to cloak his scheme in the language of "stability." But whose stability? Certainly not Gaza's. Not the region's. It is only the stability of his grip on power that he seeks.

The tragedy is not

Netanyahu alone. It is the silence — or, worse, the complicity — of the so-called international community. Washington mumbles about "restraint," but continues to bankroll the very bombs raining down on Gaza. Europe, forever haunted by its own guilt, lectures about "two states," while rewarding Israel with trade deals and diplomatic cover. A reoccupation of Gaza would be the match that lights this regional powder keg. Israel may think itself powerful, but no army, however advanced, can withstand the cumulative fury of millions pushed to desperation.

What Netanyahu offers is not a vision but a nightmare. He would reduce Gaza to an open-air prison policed directly by the Israeli army, stripped of any semblance of autonomy, permanently dependent on Israel's whims for survival. He would condemn generations of Palestinians to lives of humil-

iation and despair, and in so doing, guarantee that Israelis themselves would never know peace. Because peace is not built on domination. It is built on justice. And justice will never emerge from the barrel of an occupying tank. The world must not allow this scheme to succeed. To reoccupy Gaza would be not only a moral abomination but also a strategic disaster that ensures endless conflict. Those who claim to stand for human rights must prove it now, by cutting the weapons shipments, conditioning aid, holding Israel accountable in international courts, and refusing to normalize relations with a government that tramples every principle of humanity.

And for the Israeli people, the question is this: How long will you allow one man's delusions to drag your nation into perpetual war? Netanyahu does not act for your security. He acts for himself. The blood that will be spilled — Palestinian and

Israeli alike — will stain his hands, but history will not forget the silence of those who allowed him to carry on.

Netanyahu's plan is not just a policy, it is a declaration of perpetual war. It is an attempt to suffocate a people into nonexistence. And it is a gamble that will fail, as every attempt to crush the Palestinian spirit has failed before. But the cost of his failure will not be borne by him alone. It will be borne by the starving children of Gaza, the grieving families of Israel, and the stability of an entire region already teetering on the edge.

This is the hour of reckoning. Netanyahu's delusions must be confronted with clarity, courage, and unyielding resistance — political, legal, and moral. The world has a choice: to stand by as Gaza is dragged back into the abyss of occupation, or to draw a line and say, enough. For the sake of justice, peace, and our shared humanity — enough. — Arab News



# What stands in way of a Putin-Zelensky meeting?

Anastasia Tenisheva

**THE possibility of a tête à tête between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky is dominating headlines. US President Donald Trump is pushing for the two leaders to meet following his summit with Putin in Alaska last week and talks with Zelensky and European leaders at the White House on Monday.**

Peace talks between Moscow and Kyiv in 2022 had collapsed, while renewed negotiations earlier this summer also failed to reach a breakthrough. But three and half years since Russia's invasion of Ukraine — which has devastated Ukraine and left tens of thousands dead — will the leaders of the two warring states finally sit down at the negotiating table? The Moscow Times looks at the obstacles that could derail a meeting:

Diplomatic willpower Zelensky and Putin have met face-to-face only once, as part of Normandy Format talks on resolving the war in eastern Ukraine alongside the leaders of Germany and France in December 2019 in Paris. The two have had no direct contact since the start of the full-scale invasion in 2022.

After speaking to Putin by phone on Monday, Trump said that he “began the arrangements for a meeting, at a location to be determined,” between the Russian and Ukrainian leaders. The White House also announced Tuesday that plans for a bilateral summit between the two leaders are now “underway,” with “many options” being discussed. Zelensky indicated he was ready to meet Putin following Monday’s talks in Washington, but said Thursday that he would only meet with the Russian leader after Ukraine’s allies agreed on security guarantees for Kyiv that would prevent a future

Russian attack. Moscow’s position, however, remains far less clear.

The Kremlin has not confirmed whether preparations were in progress or even if Putin would agree to meet Zelensky, saying on Tuesday only that it was “considering the possibility of elevating the level” of direct talks without providing details. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov confirmed Wednesday that Putin had agreed to “think about raising the level” of discussions on Ukraine during a phone call with Trump. He also stressed that any meeting between the two leaders “must be prepared in the most meticulous way” to avoid a “deterioration,” but added that Moscow was “ready to work in any format.”

Ivan Stupak, an adviser to Ukraine’s parliamentary committee on national security, said that while “there is a consensus in Ukraine that the war needs to be stopped,” he believes Russia is unlikely to hold “a meeting for the sake of a meeting” and “will most likely drag out this issue and avoid meeting with Zelensky.” “First, a lot of paperwork must be done, there should at least be an understanding of what we are agreeing on...Only then can a future meeting between the two presidents be planned,” Stupak, a former Ukrainian security services officer, told The Moscow Times.

There is still no confirmed date for a potential meeting. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said on Tuesday that such talks could take place within the next two weeks. The venue also remains uncertain, particularly given that Putin is wanted by the International Criminal Court.

Switzerland’s foreign minister said his country would grant Putin immunity from arrest if he came to

the country for peace talks. Hungary has also offered to serve as a venue. Putin had reportedly suggested holding the talks in Moscow in his call with Trump on Monday, to which Zelensky replied: “No.” Zelensky insists that talks should take place in a neutral part of Europe, with Switzerland, Austria or Turkey seen by Kyiv as suitable options.

Despite having signed a decree effectively banning negotiations with Putin in 2022, Zelensky invited the Russian leader to talks in Istanbul in May. Ukraine’s peace framework, which Kyiv’s delegation brought to bilateral talks in Turkey in June, also proposed a leaders’ summit to agree on key aspects of a peace agreement.

“It doesn’t matter who conducts the talks, even if it is the current head of the [Kyiv] regime. I am even ready to meet, but only if it is a concluding stage — not to sit there endlessly dividing things, but to put a full stop,” Putin said in June. “But that full stop, that signature, must belong to legitimate authorities. Otherwise, you know, the next one will come and throw everything into the trash. That’s not acceptable — we are dealing with serious issues. That’s why I am not refusing — but a lot of work must be done first,” he added.

A key point of contention between Russia and Ukraine is the status of territories captured by Moscow in any peace agreement. Russia currently controls around one-fifth of Ukraine, including most of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions in the east and parts of the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions in the south, in addition to the Crimean peninsula, which Russia annexed in 2014. Kyiv has consistently maintained that it will never recognize Russia’s occupation of its lands.

These territories are enshrined in the constitutions of both countries, further complicating prospects for compromise. Trump suggested on Monday that Ukraine must give up Russian-annexed Crimea and has indicated that a deal would involve “some swapping, changes in land” between the countries. Zelensky said that the question of the occupied territories would be addressed specifically during direct talks with Putin.

The prospect of a Putin-Zelensky summit has emerged as Russia has intensified its offensive on the front lines. Although Russia’s advance has been slow and difficult and the overall front line has barely shifted over the three and a half years of war, “from a military perspective, Russia has more prospects,” Stupak said. The US-based Institute for the Study of War said Russian forces recently advanced in the Donetsk region while also continuing offensive operations in Sumy and Kharkiv as well as limited attacks in Kherson.

Just ahead of the Trump-Zelensky talks in Washington on Monday, Russian strikes killed 14 people across Ukraine, including on an apartment block in Kharkiv city. Russia also launched hundreds of drones and missiles against Ukraine on Thursday, in what Kyiv called the largest attack since mid-July. Maria Snegovaya, a senior fellow on Russia and Eurasia at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, argued that Moscow’s vague statement about “raising the level” of talks in response to a specific proposal for a Putin-Zelensky meeting shows the Kremlin’s real intentions. “The Kremlin is once again buying time in order to continue its offensive,” Snegovaya said.

*The Moscow Times*

# Trump-Europe ties on the mend: Will Ukraine be final stress test?

**AS European leaders joined President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for his return to the White House this week, the unprecedented gathering underscored just how high the stakes in the Russia-Ukraine war have become for the continent’s security. The gathering projected unity in more than one way: Zelenskyy had European heavyweights in his corner after February’s infamous Oval Office dressing down, and the European leaders presented a unified stance on what they expect from any eventual agreement with Russia.**

Then there was the unique spectacle of the cameras, where President Donald Trump gave brief opening remarks and had all the others do the same — Zelenskyy, French President Emmanuel Macron, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, NATO chief Mark Rutte, and Finland’s President Alexander Stubb. Both sides were full of praise for each other, a marked shift from the months of tense exchanges since Trump took office back in January.

However, analysts say the positive atmosphere was just part of the show, as the meeting also exposed deep rifts over ceasefire conditions, security guarantees, and the risk of Ukraine being pressured into territorial concessions. “The summit was unprecedented, with so many leaders showing up on short notice for a meeting with Trump,” Shelby Magid, deputy director of the Atlantic Council’s Eurasia Center, told Anadolu. But she cautioned that the next challenge will be securing guarantees to sustain any peace deal, calling it “the next big test.”

She stressed that beyond substance, the Washington meeting was about symbolism. “This was about optics and substance,” Magid said. “European leaders rushed to Washington to demonstrate unity with Zelenskyy and to be present for discussions direct-

Necva Tastan Sevinç

ly tied to their core security concerns.” Others were less convinced of progress. “There is absolutely zero substance in these talks, and the core of this is Donald Trump,” argued Ryhor Nizhnikau, senior fellow at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs.

According to him, both Europeans and Ukraine are walking on eggshells to avoid provoking the US president. They want to show deference, treating him with “utmost respect and politeness” so as not to trigger him, he added. Europe remains firm that a ceasefire must precede further negotiations. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz declared before the meeting: “I can’t imagine that the next meeting would take place without a ceasefire. So, let’s work on that and let’s try to put pressure on Russia.”

Trump, however, dismissed the need. “I don’t know that it’s necessary,” he said, downplaying one of Europe’s central demands. Zelenskyy, who had previously been vocal in calling for a ceasefire, avoided repeating those demands this time.

For Nizhnikau, this reflected Trump’s shifting stance: “Trump now no longer insists on a ceasefire ... but now he wants full peace, which is much less realistic than unrealistic ceasefire scenarios.” “He actually is aware of that, and that is why he knows that he cannot end this war. And he needs to pretend that basically, it’s not his fault.”

While Trump hinted for the first time that Washington would provide “good protection” for Ukraine, he gave no specifics. Zelenskyy later announced a proposal to buy US weapons worth \$90 billion, including advanced missile systems and aviation support, as part of its security guarantees. NATO chief Rutte said that under UK and French leadership, a group of 30 countries — including Japan and Australia — has been working on developing long-term security guarantees.

When it comes to Trump, Nizhnikau believes European nations

do not trust the US president’s word. “How can you trust Trump’s word if he changes it every day or every week?” he asked. “The gap between the US administration and European allies, the transatlantic rift, is deepening — and this is something (Russian President Vladimir) Putin is very happy to observe,” he added.

The stakes for Europe extend beyond Ukraine, he warned. “If Washington abandons its commitments to Ukraine, how can Europeans credibly believe in Article 5 protection for themselves within NATO?” Nizhnikau asked. Magid echoed this concern, pointing to Russia’s strategy of exploiting divisions. “Russian aggression remains the biggest threat to both security and relations between the US and Europe,” she said.

Monday’s high-level talks eventually shifted to borders and territory, with maps of Ukraine spread across the Oval Office table. One map suggested 20% of Ukraine was under Russian occupation — a figure Zelenskyy rejected as “misleading.” He countered that Russian forces had seized only about 1% of the country’s territory during the first 1,000 days of full-scale war.

The issue of territory could be a major issue as Trump’s “real estate agent” mentality goes against what Ukraine and Europe want, according to Nizhnikau. “Trump ... thinks, ‘Why not have a land swap? But Ukraine can never accept this and the Europeans also understand this,’” he said. “For Zelensky, it is a poisoned chalice — rejecting it makes him an easy target for Trump to blame for not taking a peace deal.”

Ultimately, analysts say Trump is positioning himself to shift responsibility. “Trump will try to sell that by abandoning Ukraine to a certain degree, he will still insist that it’s a European war,” Nizhnikau said. “We do see a difference in approaches — differences not of perception, but of understanding of the problem — and Trump is clearly moving away from the European position.”

# Far-right anger over asylum hotels is destroying the very idea of refuge

Zoe Williams

**WHEN the high court ruled this week that the Bell hotel in Epping could no longer be used to house asylum seekers, the triumph of anti-migrant zealots looked a little unwarranted, or at least premature. Nigel Farage hoped loudly that the ruling would provide “inspiration to others across the country”. Tabloids and GB News called it an all-caps VICTORY, while Epping locals popped champagne on the hotel’s doorstep.**

Meanwhile, the ruling itself felt impermanent and technical more than principled. The judge ruled that Somani, the company that owns the Bell, had not notified the council of its intended use; it was hardly an endorsement of the general proposition, memorably spelled out by Robert Jenrick recently, that “men from backward countries who broke into Britain illegally” pose an active threat to his daughters. And while the victory calls were resounding, there was no answering message of defeat from those who support asylum seekers — nobody thinks hotels are a sound and humane way to accommodate refugees. Liminal, often squalid, eye-wateringly expensive for the Home Office, they hardly scream “welcome”.

Yet the ruling has been seismic, and the victory cries of the right are logical. Within 24 hours, the Home Office’s plans on migration have been put into disarray. It is obliged to house asylum seekers while their claims are being heard, and at the end of March there were 30,000 people living in about 200 hotels. The plan had been to phase out hotels by 2029, a date that made no sense unless its real aim was to kick the whole issue into the next term. Now, the Bell has

to be emptied by 12 September. As other local councils follow Epping’s lead, the government will be left scrambling to disperse people into local authority housing at very short notice, with a duty to keep track of them but no obvious way of doing so.

More than this, the ruling has solidified a sense of legitimate, citizen anger against refugees. Since the Southport riots, there has been a familiar ratchet: hard-right provocateurs generate real life protests, often from great distances, because when you’re organising on Telegram anyone can count as a “local resident”. Demonstrations and rioters themselves are often explicitly Islamophobic — when they don’t muster at an asylum hotel, they gather at a mosque — and are used as proof that this is the natural stance of the average Briton. Commentators parse these explosions as a mixture of hard-right agitating and authentic local feeling — unknowable what the ratio is, they agree sagely — and the anger, being dramatic and observable, grows in stature. It’s now impossible to have a debate about immigration without acknowledging this huge wellspring of fury, and it is simply not the done thing to ask whether the rage is justified. Anger, being authentic, never has to explain itself.

This court ruling is both illustrative of and instrumental in the solidarity of fury as a political instrument. The judge granted the injunction after hearing the local council’s complaints that planning law had been breached in changing the site’s use. But underlying this, the council also cited disruption caused by recent protests. The hotel has been at the centre of controversy since an asylum

seeker was accused of sexually assaulting a 14-year-old girl and concerns were raised about potential future threats. But the concerns can be self-fulfilling: if your accommodation is regularly surrounded by a small, hostile mob that sometimes wants to set fire to it, it’s probably quite difficult to slot into a normal, law-abiding life, or even know what a law-abiding life looks like, in this country you escaped to, having heard it was civilised.

Completely absent in this debate — which apparently we are all too frightened to have, yet we have constantly — is any sense of a better idea. If the problem with refugees is that they arrive illegally, would it help to have more legal routes? If the hotels are the issue, could we not work towards dispersal in the first instance, and much faster processing of claims? Is there no world in which we could engage imaginatively with the violence and upheaval that people are fleeing, and pull together to support them until they’re legally able to support themselves? That seems to be the reasonable expectation with Ukrainian refugees: if we can’t extend the same empathy to those from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and Bangladesh, can anyone at least explain why? Would a refresher in the political context of those countries help? If the problem is the numbers, can anyone explain how many asylum seekers they would like instead? We currently rank fifth when compared to European nations in the absolute number of asylum claims received, and 17th when numbers are adjusted for population — should we be 20th?

Does anyone want to resile from

the 1951 UN refugee convention? That would seem to be implicit in Reform UK’s promise to leave the European convention on human rights, but would any party or organisation that doesn’t want that care to explain how it is executing its duty towards refugees, and plans to do so in the future? The problem with anger as a political instrument — well, one of the problems, alongside the violence — is that it’s never called upon to articulate or constructive. It would undermine its own strength if it were.

There was another element of the campaign that led to this ruling, which is subtle but important: the erasure of the category of refugee and asylum seeker. When you make the focus of your argument a hotel and its planning status, on the surface this is a battle over place. But if you take away the refuge someone is seeking, are they a refugee? If you take away the protection granted to them by the state, there is no asylum to claim. How, then, do we define these people? Without a political definition, do they exist? Even though the issue is very different, it’s not tactically dissimilar to the legal campaign waged against trans people, resulting in April’s ruling that everyone has to use the toilets and other facilities of their biological sex. It doesn’t say you have no right to live as trans; it’s just unfortunately impractical for you to do so unless you stay at home. Do you still exist, do you still have rights? The problem with anger in politics is that combustion is the only way to expend the built-up energy. It’s much easier to keep things humane and civilised in the first place. But it’s too late to wish we had done that — an injection of humanity is the only way to cool things down.

# Russia is the new dividing line on Britain’s Right

Daniel Johnson

**THE Right has a problem with Russia. With his usual succinctness and sagacity, Charles Moore last week gave expression to an anxiety that has been exercising many conservatives: “If perverted liberalism leads to neo-Marxism, could not perverted patriotism lead to neo-fascism?” Could Moore be right? Nigel Farage is our equivalent of Oswald Mosley, who also trumpeted his patriotism — though Farage is a more serious and more successful politician than Mosley ever was. That makes him also much more dangerous. Farage has a long record of excusing or downplaying the threat posed by Putin.**

He actually defended the Trump administration’s bullying of Zelensky in the Oval Office. We may be sceptical about the “Coalition of the Willing”, but at least Nato’s European allies are now rearming on an unprecedented scale and presenting Putin with a united front. Would that be happening under PM Farage? Pull the other one, or, as he might say,

With JD Vance and his British ally James Orr in mind, Moore mused: “How did the national conservatism of Edmund Burke get mixed up with the Putinist opportunism of Viktor Orban’s government in Hungary?” In response, Dr Orr protested indignantly that he, Vance and other National Conservatives were in no sense apologists for Putin. Yet he claims that more people are prosecuted for

free speech offences in Britain than in Russia. I’m not sure the late Alexei Navalny would agree. Orr champions the “principled realism” of the “New Right”, arguing that “the time has come to rally behind politicians who will put Kent before Kyiv”.

Let it first be said that this is an argument among people of goodwill, most of whom probably agree more than they disagree. British conservatives, whether “Old” or “New”, are in favour of freedom (notably of speech and of the press), King and country, the rule of law and parliamentary democracy. Religious or not, they cherish the Judeo-Christian foundations of our society and state. Abroad, conservatives tend to support other nations who broadly share our values, particularly if they are forced to defend themselves, at the risk of being accused by Orr of suffering from “Ukraine Brain”. Finally, conservatives rely on history as a guide in war and peace, even if (as Orr claims) “Right-wing Zoomers” sneer at them as victims of “World War Two Brain”.

Having played a minor part in the fall of the Berlin Wall, I plead guilty to Second World War, Cold War and Ukraine brain. This is the historical context of today’s politics and diplomacy. Any attempt to play down the continuity and relevance of these conflicts is as foolish as it is unconservative. And dressing up an abdication of moral

responsibility for Ukraine as “principled realism” strikes me as at best wrong-headed, at worst a betrayal of our island story. Alas, that is exactly what is meant by “putting Kent before Kyiv”. Defending Kent is not a matter of fortifying the Channel coastline. The latter-day Hitlers and Napoleons threaten our way of life without setting foot here. If we sacrifice other peoples to appease the monstrous ideology propagated by Putin, we will be incapable of defending ourselves. It is actually Kyiv that is defending Kent, not the other way round.

The late Sir Roger Scruton, the patron saint of the National Conservative movement, understood all this better than his acolytes. Having devoted much of his life to helping dissidents in the former Soviet empire, he knew who the enemy was: the ex-communist secret policeman who is now trying to rebuild that empire. But Scruton’s political romanticism has been co-opted by Putin’s chief ally in Europe, Viktor Orban. His goulash authoritarianism has helped to sanitise Putin’s dictatorship — a soft cop, hard cop routine. The nationalist Right in Europe and the Maga Right in America have danced to their tune, seeking to diminish Zelensky’s status as the symbolic hero of the free world. They promote their allies with money and influence. Elon Musk’s meddling in the German

election failed to stop the anti-Russian conservative Friedrich Merz being elected, but the Trump loyalist Kristi Noem helped the hardline nationalist Karol Nawrocki to win the Polish presidency.

Reform’s intellectual praetorian guard is a motley band, ranging from the former academic and social media influencer Matt Goodwin to a new Millbank-based think tank, the Centre for a Better Britain (CBB), chaired by the aforementioned Orr. They have a blueprint: the Heritage Foundation’s Project 2025, which has set Trump’s agenda. Reform’s in-house thinkers hope to play an analogous role in a Faragist future. They will doubtless dismiss any similarities between Trump’s ersatz authoritarianism and the Putinist original. Yet Russia remains a problem for the Right, not least in Britain. In one corner, Kemi Badenoch and the Conservatives, including most centre-Right intellectuals, remain staunch allies of Ukraine. They reject Putin and all his works. Meanwhile Farage and his camp lean towards authoritarian solutions at home and an isolationist policy abroad. My guess is that the British public, given adequate time and a level playing field, will opt for Kemi’s inclusive patriotism, which precludes any hint of proto-fascism, rather than Farage’s exclusive nationalism, which does not. Will the field actually be level, though?

**US President Donald Trump’s meeting with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin delivered exactly what Moscow wanted — no deal and no further sanctions. Trump, who had threatened “serious consequences” if no immediate ceasefire was reached, instead retreated empty-handed. The result was a diplomatic win for Putin, with only the vague prospect of a peace process that leaves Russia free to seize more land at no cost. With Trump unwilling to take a harder line on Russia, Europe’s only choice is to turn the tables on Washington, taking the initiative and intensifying the pressure on Moscow.**

For Ukraine and Europe, the only relief was that Trump did not strike a territorial concession deal with Putin in pursuit of a short-term political victory. But the press conference made clear that such a deal in exchange for a ceasefire was never on Putin’s agenda. The Kremlin leader emphasized the need to address what Moscow calls the “root causes” of the conflict — namely Ukraine’s independent statehood and Euro-Atlantic future. Convinced that Russia is winning and that Kyiv will eventually crack, he showed no interest in compromise.

Faced with Putin’s hardline position, Trump dropped the immediate ceasefire as his central objective — a move that directly contradicted the approach agreed with Ukraine and European leaders before the summit. Yet this reveals Europe’s underlying weakness: a cycle in which Trump sets the strategic goals, while European governments limit themselves to providing the means to achieve

Juraj Majcin

those goals, from the Coalition of the Willing to the new scheme of financing US weapons through NATO.

Such a division of labor can work. It did during the Cold War, when US leadership steered the West to victory but it relies on a strong transatlantic bond and genuine trust, both of which now appear increasingly fragile. And if Trump unilaterally shifts the strategic objective in Ukraine from a ceasefire to an illusory full-scale peace deal, what purpose will these European-crafted mechanisms serve?

The lesson of the Alaska Summit is clear: Trump is unwilling to make Moscow pay for its aggression against Ukraine, no matter how many ultimatums he issues. The only viable path for Europe is to seize the initiative, demonstrate leadership to Washington and increase pressure on Moscow.

In this context, it is encouraging that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will be joined in Washington on Monday by several European leaders, including German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, Finnish President Alexander Stubb, French President Emmanuel Macron, and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. Their presence sends a powerful message that Ukraine is not alone and that the EU regards Kyiv’s fate as an integral part of its own security. However, it is not enough for the leaders merely to exchange views or receive Trump’s account of the situation. They should also come prepared to put forward concrete solutions.

This is where symbolism must give way to sub-

stance. Europe must start acting with confidence, as it “has the cards” to play a more active role. Europe already provides more military aid to Ukraine than the US, whose latest package is nearly exhausted. Moreover, Washington is increasingly shifting the financial burden of US weapons onto European allies. The Coalition of the Willing led by France and the UK should not wait for a ceasefire but deploy in a non-combat role to boost Ukraine’s defense away from the frontlines by providing intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, boosting air defenses to protect Ukrainian critical infrastructure and civilian areas, as well as assisting with training of Ukrainian military and providing logistical support. Europe should also stop wrangling over frozen Russian assets, seize them outright and channel the funds directly into Ukraine’s war effort.

At the same time, the EU must recognize that its foreign and security policy machinery is unfit for an era of great-power competition and urgently reform it, starting with the slow and ineffective unanimity rule on sanctions and other decisions. Without such change, Europe risks sliding into even greater irrelevance and resigning itself to the role of a secondary player, even on its own continent.

The gravest danger for Europe is that Putin will read both Europe’s perceived weakness and Trump’s reluctance to confront Moscow as a green light for further aggression, eroding the NATO deterrence that has preserved peace on the continent for 76 years. Addressing these weaknesses is essential not only to save Ukraine but also to prevent a wider war.





# KPBOIT launches Aasan Karobar Reform to make investment easier



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Industries Department and KP Board of Investment (KP-BOIT) with support from Sustainable Energy and Economic Development (SEED) - UK funded programme, has launched a major reform package aimed at transforming the province's business environment, boosting investment, and improving ease of doing business. Part of the reform are the "KP Investment Guides for Industries 2025," which were officially launched today by Advisor to KP CM on Information and Public Relations, Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif, Advisor to KP CM on Finance, Muzammil Aslam, Vice Chairman of KPBOIT Hassan Masood Kunwar, Secretary Industries, Commerce & Technical Education Department, Masood Ahmed, and the SEED Programme.

A brief presentation by the SEED team to give an overview of the Investment Guides for Industries 2025 are step-by-step manuals that help businesses set up and expand in KP. The guides cover the full range of processes, including company registration, licenses, permits, utilities, land access, tax compliance, and sector-specific requirements. Designed for both local and international investors, the guides turn complex procedures into clear, navigable steps, helping businesses save time and focus on growth.

The guides are backed by the Aasan Karobar Bill 2025, recently presented in the provincial assembly. The Bill provides the legal foundation for KP's one-window Aasan Karobar Portal, making it mandatory for all departments to process registrations, licenses, certifications, and permits digitally. With features such as time-bound approvals, real-time digital tracking, automatic escalation of delays, grievance redress mechanisms, legal recognition of digital approvals and e-payments, the Bill is a major step forward in ensuring transparency, accountability, and investor confidence.

Speaking at the launch as a Guest Speaker Barrister Saif said: "This reform marks a new era for investment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. By cutting bureaucratic hurdles and introducing simple, reliable systems, we are creating an environment where businesses can thrive, create jobs, and contribute to the province's growth." While addressing the participants, Barrister Saif also expressed his heartfelt concerns about the recent flood situation in different parts of the province. He assured that the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is fully committed to providing relief and rehabilitation support to the affected communities.

He stated that despite the challenges caused by natural calamities, the government is determined to continue its reform agenda for eco-

nomie growth and sustainable development.

As a Chief Guest and Key Note Speaker, Vice Chairman KPBOIT, Hassan Masood Kunwar emphasized the significance of the Aasan Karobar Act by stating, "The reform will transform KP economically and improve business processes by giving investors clarity, predictability, and confidence. With streamlined procedures and transparent systems, we are opening the door for both local and international investors to unlock the province's full potential." The Vice Chairman applauded the SEED and his own team for their full support, cooperation and coordination in this initiative.

The Secretary Industries, Mr. Masood Ahmed stated that the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, under the vision of ease of doing business, has always prioritized creating an enabling environment for investors and entrepreneurs. The Aasan Karobar Bill is a landmark step in this journey. It not only simplifies processes but also ensures transparency, predictability, and efficiency in facilitating businesses across multiple sectors.

Together, the Investment Guides for Industries 2025 and the Aasan Karobar Bill 2025 mark a turning point in KP's investment climate, turning the vision of ease-of-doing-business into a reality.

At the end Advisor to CM on Finance, Mr. Muzammil Aslam expressed his views and stated that KP is blessed with immense potential - from natural resources and agriculture to tourism, mining, energy, and information technology. What was needed was a robust framework to translate this potential into investment and economic growth.

Through this Bill, and with the support of all stakeholders, we are moving towards creating a competitive, business-friendly ecosystem in the province.

The event was attended by government officials from KPEZDMC, SMEDA, development partner SEED Team, who appreciated the efforts of KP-BOIT for publishing the Investment Guide for Industries 2025 as a step towards facilitating industries and investors in the province.



DHAKA: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal presenting a souvenir to Bangladesh's Adviser for Food, Ali Imam Majumdar during meeting on Friday.

## Soneri Bank and MG Motors join hands

Introduce lowest auto financing rate with instant processing

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Soneribank has announced a special collaboration with MG Motors Pakistan, offering customers the most competitive auto financing package in the industry under the conventional and Islamic financing facility.

With an unprecedented financing rate starting from a rate of 1 Year KIBOR + 2%, Soneri Bank and MG financing offer sets a new benchmark in affordability and convenience for auto consumers. It also offers Insurance rate of 1.5% with tracker, 100% waiver in processing fee and 100% waiver in early settlement and balloon payment penalty.

The offer is available on select MG models including the MG HS and MG HS Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle (PHEV),



catering to customers who seek a perfect balance of modern design, advanced technology, and eco-friendly mobility.

Speaking about the collaboration, Syed Asif Ahmed, General Manager, Marketing Division, MG

Motors Pakistan, said: "This partnership with Soneri Bank further strengthens our vision of making premium mobility accessible for more people in Pakistan. Customers now have the opportunity to enjoy MG's cutting-

edge technology and eco-friendly vehicles, while benefiting from the industry's lowest financing rates in a fully Shariah-compliant manner. It's a win-win for innovation, affordability, and customer convenience."

## Wall St jumps more than 1% after Powell hints at September rate cut

NEW YORK (Reuters): Wall Street's main indexes climbed more than 1% on Friday after U.S. Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell pointed to a possible interest-rate cut at the central bank's next policy meeting during his Jackson Hole Symposium speech.

Powell's comments opened the door to a rate cut at the Fed's September 16-17 meeting, but also underlined the importance of the jobs and inflation data that will be available by then.

"Chair Powell was able to talk about the balance of risk shifting and therefore the potential... shifting of policy would be appropriate," said Art Hogan, chief market strategist at B Riley Wealth.

"Leaning into the fact that the labor market weakness is clearly the driver, as opposed to concern over the core goods price increases that we've seen because of tariffs...

the clear message to the market is September is now very live."

Traders boosted bets on a September rate cut after Powell's comments, now placing a nearly 90% probability on a reduction, versus about 75% before Powell's remarks.

At 10:19 a.m. ET, the Dow Jones Industrial Average (.DJI), opens new tab rose 667.07 points, or 1.49%, to 45,452.57, hitting an all-time high.

The S&P 500 (.SPX), opens new tab gained 86.80 points, or 1.36%, to 6,456.97, and the Nasdaq Composite (.IXIC), opens new tab advanced 352.99 points, or 1.67%, to 21,453.31.

All 11 S&P 500 sub-sectors traded higher, with rate-sensitive real estate (.SPLRCR), opens new tab jumping 1.8%, while consumer discretionary (.SPLRCD), opens new tab climbed almost 2%.

An index tracking chip stocks (.SOX), opens new tab gained 3.7%, while

most megacap growth stocks also jumped. Tesla (TSLA.O), opens new tab led gains with a 5.2% rise.

If current gains hold, the S&P 500 is set to snap a five-day losing streak after a broad selloff in heavyweight technology stocks kept U.S. equities pressured this week.

The Dow and the S&P 500 are on track for mild weekly gains, while the Nasdaq is set for marginal weekly declines.

U.S. stocks have rebounded sharply from their April lows - when markets were rattled by President Donald Trump's trade tariff announcements - and have been getting back up to record highs recently.

A spate of resilient earnings, optimism around trade deals between the U.S. and its trade partners and growing chances of interest-rate cuts have been some of the main gain drivers.

Earlier in the day, UBS Global Wealth

Management lifted its year-end target for the S&P 500 for the second time in two months, betting on corporate earnings strength, easing trade tensions and expectations of interest-rate cuts.

Among other top movers, Intuit (INTU.O), opens new tab dropped 6.2% after the TurboTax-maker forecast first-quarter revenue growth below analysts' estimates due to sluggish performance at its Mailchimp marketing platform.

Workday (WDAY.O), opens new tab shed 4.4% after the human resources software provider provided an in-line outlook for the current quarter.

Advancing issues outnumbered decliners by a 12.14-to-1 ratio on the NYSE and by a 6.3-to-1 ratio on the Nasdaq.

The S&P 500 posted 21 new 52-week highs and no new lows, while the Nasdaq Composite recorded 101 new highs and 30 new lows.

## Alibaba.com launches trade assurance 2.0 Celebrates Pakistan's top exporters at KEL Awards 2025

SIALKOT (APP): Alibaba.com, a leading global B2B e-commerce platform, honoured Pakistan's top exporters at the KEL Awards 2025 while introducing its enhanced Trade Assurance 2.0 service to strengthen the country's role in global trade.

The updated service offers exporters reduced transaction fees, free withdrawals, higher order and credit limits, and additional payment options. "Pakistan is a high-potential supplier market, and Trade

Assurance 2.0 is designed to help local businesses secure higher-value orders and expand globally," said Summer Gao, Head of Global Supply Chain Services at Alibaba.com.

Top honours went to Muhammad Usman Humayun (Gray Rocks Enterprise), Haider Ali (IMPEX Pakistan), and Muhammad Azam Rahmat (Mangoes Fashion), while Muhammad Wasim (Blue Hands International) received the People's Choice Award. Sharing his success

story, Azam Rahmat recalled how his two-person apparel business grew into a global exporter after joining Alibaba.com in 2021, achieving over 200 per cent annual growth and landing major international orders.

Berry Ma, Head of Pakistan Business at Alibaba.com, said the awards reflect the resilience and innovation of local SMEs, adding, "These finalists prove that Pakistani businesses can seize global opportunities with the right digital tools."

## Weekly inflation goes down slightly

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed a nominal decrease of 0.01 per cent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on August 21, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

The SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 329.11 points as compared to 329.15 points during the past week, according to the PBS data.

As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 2.30 per cent. The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups.

The SPI for the lowest consumption group of up to Rs 17,732, however, witnessed an increase of 0.20 per cent by going up to 318.59 from last week's 317.94 points.

The SPI for consumption groups of Rs 17,733 to 22,888 decreased by 0.01 percent, whereas it increased by 0.15 percent and 0.22 percent for consumption groups from Rs 22,889-29,517 and Rs 29,518-44,175, respectively, while for the consumption group above Rs 44,175, it decreased by 0.02 percent.

During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 18 (35.29%) items increased, 08 (15.69%) items decreased and 25 (49.02%) items remained stable.

The items, which recorded major increase in their average prices on a week-on-week basis included electricity charges for q1 (9.01%), diesel (4.46%), pulse moong (1.71%), potatoes (1.15%), bananas (0.92%), pulse mash (0.88%), pulse gram (0.66%) and pulse masoor (0.45%).

## Tesla raises price of most-expensive Cybertruck by \$15,000 in US

NEW YORK (Reuters): Tesla (TSLA.O), opens new tab has raised the price of its most-expensive Cybertruck pickup truck model by \$15,000 in the United States despite softer-than-expected sales and recalls.

The sharp increase follows a long-delayed rollout in which the pickup has struggled to meet Tesla's early promises, with sales so far trailing expectations.

The Cyberbeast variant, which now costs \$114,990, comes with a new "Luxe Package" that includes Supervised Full Self-

Driving and free access to its Supercharger network. Prices of other Cybertruck models were unchanged.

The pricing of the model is well above CEO Elon Musk's 2019 pitch of a roughly \$40,000 starting price. But when it was launched in late 2023, Tesla set the base model at \$60,990, more than 50% higher than the earlier target. Rival models such as Ford's F-150 Lightning and Chevrolet's Silverado EV generally offer lower entry prices on certain trims, fueling competition as Cybertruck prices climb.

Tesla has also been offering hefty discounts of around \$10,000 on some Cybertruck units in inventory.

Musk previously said Tesla had the capacity to produce more than 125,000 Cybertrucks annually, with a potential to reach about 250,000 in 2025, while also warning of a difficult production ramp. The pickup has underperformed expectations, with sales representing a small fraction of the company's overall deliveries and demand fading amid repeated recalls and quality issues.



## Around \$426.995 mln food commodities exported in July 2025

ISLAMABAD (APP): Food group exports reached \$426.995 million during the first month of the current financial year (2025-26), the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

Food group exports showed a decline of 10.25 percent from \$475.766 million during the same month of last year (July 2024-25).

The food commodities that contributed to positive growth in trade included fish and fish preparations, the exports of which grew by 18.29 percent, from \$205.745 million to \$224.448 million.

The other food commodities that contributed to positive growth included fruits, the exports of which increased by 43.63 percent, from \$40.357 million to

\$57.965 million whereas the exports of tobacco rose by 786.63 percent, from \$0.450 million to \$3.990 million.

The exports of spices increased by 23.64 percent, from \$5.462 million to \$6.753 million; while meat and meat preparations up by 9.80 percent, from \$36.849 million to \$40.461 million.

The food commodities that contributed to negative growth in trade included rice, the exports of which decreased by 18.29 percent, from \$205.745 million to \$168.110 million.

The exports of vegetables dipped by 44.95 percent, from \$28.884 million to \$15.900 million; oil seeds, nuts, and kernels by 27.24 percent, from \$5.787

million to \$4.211 million, whereas the exports of all other food items decreased by 2.04 percent, from \$109.388 million to \$107.159 million.

On month-on-month

basis, the exports of food commodities, however, increased by 16.13 percent in July 2025 when compared to the exports of \$367.690 million in June 2025, PBS reported.

نوش بنام عوام الناس، بڑے فروش مشترک یا جاتی ہے کسی زیرمعدولی احمد جو کہ ایک عدد پانچم 224 ستمبر کی رقم 160 سکاؤنڈز تقریاً ادا ہے جن کو ان دنوں شپ مالک ہیں نے مذکورہ جائیداد کیلئے بڑے ریزرو اختیار نامہ عام خاص نمبر 542 نمبر مورخہ 28-2-24 کی اور پانچ دوللہ فارغان کو اختیار نامہ خاص مقرر کیا ہے اب گورنار جائیداد مذکورہ بڑے فروش مشترک کے لئے ایک ایک بیک ادا ہے مقررہ سال کے لئے ایک ایک بیک ادا ہے مقررہ سال کے لئے ایک ایک بیک ادا ہے مقررہ سال کے لئے ایک ایک بیک ادا ہے

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In brief

Qalandars trials to be from Sept 2

KOHAT (APP): The Open Talent Hunt Cricket trials are being held under Lahore Qalandars (a leading cricket franchise of PSL) in collaboration with the district administration at and Kohat Sports Complex (KSC) under the supervision of a 14-member international selectors team from September 2, 2025 (Tuesday) — Boys' Trials September 3, 2025 (Wednesday) — Girls' Trials These are open trials and the age limit for participation was from 15 to 25 years, the official sources has said. This is a golden opportunity for young players to showcase their talents at the national level. The official team of Lahore Qalandars will be present on the spot to select the players.

Raja nominated as spokesperson for PSB

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) has nominated senior journalist Muhammad Shafique Raja, presently serving with the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP), as its Spokesperson. According to a notification, the APP has conveyed its no objection to Shafique Raja performing the additional responsibility of PSB Spokesperson alongside his regular duties at APP. The nomination has been made by PSB keeping in view the forthcoming South Asian Games (SAG) and the need for effective media coordination. Shafique Raja has around two decades of experience in journalism, including extensive reporting on the sports beat.

Trials for National Youth games today

ISLAMABAD (APP): The trials to select Sindh's boys' and girls' basketball teams for the upcoming National Youth Games will be held on Saturday. According to Karachi Basketball Association (KBBA) Secretary General Yaqoob Qadri, the under-16 trials for both categories will take place at the LOB Basketball Court, DHA Karachi, with the support of the Sindh Sports Board and Sindh Olympic Association, said a press release. He said the selection will be carried out through the Marka-e-Haq Under-16 3x3 Basketball Championship, which will serve as a platform to assess players' skills. Based on their performance, Sindh's boys' and girls' teams will be finalized to compete in the National Youth Games, scheduled to be held in Islamabad from September 6. Qadri added that the championship and trial process will help identify and prepare the most promising young players, enabling them to represent Sindh with pride at the National Youth Games. The KBBA has urged all affiliated clubs, schools, and sports academies to ensure maximum participation in this important selection event.

Man City defender Dias signs deal to 2029

LONDON (Agencies): Manchester City defender Ruben Dias has signed a two-year contract extension. The 28-year-old's previous deal had been set to expire in 2027 but his new deal will take him to 2029, with the option of a further 12 months. The Portugal international joined City from Benfica for a fee of €65m in 2020 and was named Premier League player of the year at the end of his first season. The defender has helped City to four league titles, the Champions League, the EFL Cup and the FA Cup during his five years at Etihad Stadium.



MACKAY: Lungi Ngidi had Marnus Labuschagne caught behind.

Breetzke, Ngidi star as SA crush Australia to win ODI series

MACKAY (AFP/APP): Matthew Breetzke slammed a superb 88 and speedster Lungi Ngidi claimed five wickets as South Africa crushed Australia by 84 runs to win the second one-day international and the series in Mackay on Friday. The Proteas took out the opening game by a thumping 98 runs, making the third and final match on Sunday a dead rubber. World champions Australia have now lost the past five ODI series against South Africa, with their batsmen again failing to fire. After skipper Aiden Markham won the toss and opted to bat, Breetzke crunched eight fours and two sixes to continue his top form since making his debut this year. He has posted a century and three half-centuries in his first four ODIs. Tristan Stubbs was also impressive in making 74 before they were dismissed in the final over for 277, with Adam Zampa taking 3-63 and Cameron Green holding four catches. Josh Inglis blitzed 87 in Australia's reply, but no one else rose to the occasion

and they were dismissed for 193 in the 38th over. Ngidi ended with 5-42. "It's a great feeling, of course, never an easy feat coming to Australia and wrapping up the series in two games," said Markham. "Really good from the boys." South Africa rattled Australia early despite being without off-spinner Prenelan Subrayen, who was cited for a suspect action during the first game, and injured pace spearhead Kagiso Rabada. Travis Head lasted just nine balls before being taken at mid-wicket off Nandre Burger, while the out-of-touch Marnus Labuschagne failed again, out for one. Skipper Mitchell Marsh lashed four boundaries in a quickfire 18 but he too fell cheaply before Green and Inglis began to rebuild. They put on 67 but Green departed for 35, caught and bowled by spinner Senuran Muthusamy. Alex Carey (13) and Aaron Hardie (10) didn't last long but Inglis battled on until Ngidi enticed an edge and he was caught by wicketkeeper

Ryan Rickelton, spelling the end for Australia. "Disappointing," said Marsh. "I thought as a collective we pegged them back beautifully with the ball, but as a batting unit we just didn't get the job done tonight." Earlier, South Africa started tentatively as Xavier Bartlett bagged both openers inside the first six overs. The paceman had Markram caught by Head at mid-wicket without scoring. He then tempted Rickelton (eight) to poke at a seaming ball, with wicketkeeper Inglis taking a fine diving catch. But Breetzke relieved the pressure when Hardie came on, slamming the quick for two sixes and a four in one over to steer them to 56-2 after the 10-over powerplay. He then built a breezy 67-run stand with Tony de Zorzi (38), and shared another 89-run partnership with Stubbs before skying Nathan Ellis to Carey in the deep. Stubbs stuck around as wickets fell until he slogged Zampa down the ground and Green got underneath it, before a late flurry from the tail.

Paul will hurt Davis in mismatched bout: Khan

LONDON (Agencies): Amir Khan says Jake Paul is "very bad for boxing" but has warned the YouTuber-turned-boxer is "going to hurt" Gervonta 'Tank' Davis in their upcoming exhibition bout. The former world light-welterweight champion told BBC Sport the huge size and weight difference between the pair makes the fight, which takes place on 14 November in Atlanta, a dangerous mismatch. Paul, 28, will face undefeated 30-year-old lightweight world champion Davis, who has won 30 of his 31 fights, with 28 knockouts, in an exhibition that will not count towards either man's professional record. "Jake Paul, in my opinion, is going to hurt Gervonta Davis," Briton Khan said. "Davis is a tiny little man compared to Paul. I think it's a big mismatch." The weight disparity between the two fighters is stark - Paul weighed in at 200lbs for his last

bout, while Davis campaigns at 135lbs. There is also a significant height and reach difference, with 6ft 1in Paul standing six inches taller and having a nine-inch reach advantage. "It shows to me that Tank's acting desperate by taking a fight like that," Khan said. "One day someone is going to get hurt so badly. No-one wants to mess about in the MMA cage but they're taking boxing so lightly and they're taking it as a joke." 'Paul is bad for boxing, but I don't think the fight happens' Bolton's Khan, who also won Olympic silver at lightweight in 2004, appeared stunned when BBC Sport told him the fight - which will be shown live on Netflix - had been confirmed. "Is it really happening? What? Wow. You just shocked me there, I had no idea. That's crazy, bro," Khan said. While the contracted weight, number of rounds and size of gloves for the

exhibition are yet to be confirmed, Khan cast doubt on whether the fight will even take place. "I don't think it happens, but if it does happen, Gervonta, being as good as he is and he's an amazing fighter, he'll end up getting hurt," Khan said. "I don't think Davis can hurt Paul." Khan also took aim at the wider role in the sport of Paul, who outpointed 39-year-old former world champion Julio Cesar Chavez Jr in June, taking his professional record to 12-1. He also beat a 58-year-old ex-world champion Mike Tyson by decision last November. "I think people like Jake Paul are very bad for boxing, to be honest with you," Khan added. "Fighting an old man like Mike Tyson and trying to punch his head in. The way they promote things and talk rubbish is disrespecting the sport. I can't believe the boxing bodies, because of the funds they are getting, let it happen."

Briton Jones beats Hartono to reach first US Open

NEW YORK (Agencies): Francesca Jones reached the US Open for the first time in her career as she defeated Arianne Hartono in the third qualifying round. The 24-year-old earned a 6-2 6-4 victory in one hour 20 minutes, and will join fellow Britons Emma Raducanu, Katie Boulter and Sonay Kartal in the women's singles main event which begins on Sunday. Jones broke serve in the opening game as a nervy Hartono made four unforced errors, before the British number four held twice and broke once more to go 4-0 up in just 16 minutes. Although Hartono, 29, improved as the set progressed - she hit 13 winners compared to her opponent's four - the Dutchwoman was made to pay for her 13 unforced errors. The second set went with serve until the third game, when Jones - top seed in the qualifying draw - fought back from 40-15 down to secure her third break of the day.



World number 187 Hartono immediately hit back with a break of her own as Jones became a little passive, but the Briton tightened her footwork and broke once again to wrestle back control of a topsy-turvy set. She finished the match with 10 consecutive points on serve before she sprinted over to her team in celebration. An increased prize pot meant the Bradford-born world number 86 has won \$110,000 (£81,238) for reaching the first round.

Pakistan's Firasat, Ejaz win bodybuilding golds in Thailand

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's Firasat Ali and Ejaz Ahmed secured two gold medals at the 57th Asian Bodybuilding Championship 2025 in Thailand, defeating strong opponents from India, Afghanistan and other countries. Firasat Ali, who once worked as a bicycle puncture repairman in Multan, claimed the top position in the 75kg junior category by outclassing India's Bashan Dutt, Hoai Bam Riki and Feroz, along with Afghan contestant Baitullah Zadrar. In the masters category, Ejaz Ahmed delivered another impressive performance by overcoming athletes from Vietnam, China, Malaysia, India and Mongolia to earn Pakistan its second gold medal in the event. Pakistan Bodybuilding Federation Secretary General Sohail Anwar in a statement, hailed the achievement, saying both athletes had raised the national flag high in Thailand. "By clinching two gold medals, they have made the country proud, and we are confident that our players will continue to excel at international level," he said.

Zia Mashwani to compete in Road to BRAVE 100

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani professional MMA fighter Zia Mashwani will compete in the upcoming 'Road to BRAVE 100' event in DHA, Lahore, on August 24 against an opponent from Iran Saman Moradmam. I'm a two-time national champion and an international title holder, proudly representing Pakistan on the global stage in BRAVE Combat Federation, he told APP. Recognized as Pakistan's No.1 bantamweight fighter, he is also the first athlete from the country to make his professional debut in BRAVE Combat Federation. Mashwani has ardently represented Pakistan within the Featherweight class of fighters under the auspices of BRAVE CF since 2018, achieving notable victories that underscore his exceptional skills and dedication to the sport. Mashwani Warrior is not only a renowned MMA fighter but has unequivocally showcased his exceptional grappling abilities on two distinct occasions. "I hold the title of a two-time gold medalist in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu at the prestigious Pakistan Grappling Challenge," he said. Mashwani in his seventh professional bout, held amidst the esteemed setting of Gladiator Battle in Thailand, showcased exceptional skills by delivering a sensational knockout triumph. His relentless determination and strategic prowess prevailed as he vanquished a formidable French adversary, earning well-deserved accolades for this extraordinary achievement.

Pakistan Shaheens beat Nepal in last-ball thriller

ISLAMABAD (APP): A brilliant death-bowling display by left-arm spinner Faisal Akram helped Pakistan Shaheens beat Nepal by one run at the DXC Arena in Darwin on Friday evening. The win confirms Shaheens' place in the semi-finals, scheduled to take place on Sunday, 24 August. According to details, chasing 145 to win, Nepal were well on course to cross the line when they took 17 runs off Mohammad Salman's third over, the 16th of the innings. Requiring 37 runs from four overs, Mohammad Wasim Jnr conceded 10 runs each in the 17th and 19th overs, while Faisal gave away nine runs in the 18th. Needing eight runs from the final over, 22-

year-old Faisal conceded only six to help Shaheens secure victory by one run. Faisal, who is the joint top wicket-taker in the event with 14 wickets, ended with figures of two for 29 in four overs. Right-arm fast bowler Wasim also claimed two wickets. Earlier, after opting to bat first, Pakistan Shaheens lost wickets at regular intervals and were 74 for seven in 12.3 overs when captain Muhammad Irfan Khan was joined by Mohammad Wasim Jnr. The pair stitched together a crucial 40-run stand for the eighth wicket to help Shaheens post 144 for nine in their allotted 20 overs. Coming in at number nine, Wasim scored 23 off 22 balls, including two fours and a six. Before him, Abdul Samad con-

tributed 26 off 25 balls, hitting one four and one six. The 22-year-old Irfan top-scored for his side with an unbeaten 42 off 26 balls, striking three fours and a six. For Nepal, Sompal Kami was the most successful bowler, returning three for 30, while Dipendra Singh Airee and Nandan Yadav picked up two wickets apiece. Scores in brief: Pakistan Shaheens 144-9, 20 overs (Muhammad Irfan Khan 42 not out, Abdul Samad 26, Mohammad Wasim Jnr 23; Sompal Kami 3-30, Dipendra Singh Airee 2-15, Nandan Yadav 2-32). Nepal 143-7, 20 overs (Rohit Kumar Paudel 52, Dipendra Singh Airee 41, Mahamad Asif Sheikh 27; Mohammad Wasim Jnr 2-28, Faisal Akram 2-29).

Yasir bags bronze medal in Asian Throwing C'hips



ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's javelin thrower Yasir Sultan, representing the Athletics Federation of Pakistan, brought pride to the nation by winning the bronze medal in the men's javelin throw final of the 2025 Asian Throwing Championships held in Mokpo, Korea. In a thrilling contest,

Yasir secured third place with his season's best throw of 77.43 meters. The gold medal went to Pathirage of Sri Lanka with a brilliant throw of 82.05m, while Naganuma of Japan claimed the silver medal with 78.60m, said a press release. Among other finalists, Zhu of China finished

fourth with 76.32m, followed by Iwao of Japan at 75.63m in fifth place. Gafner of Kazakhstan achieved a personal best of 75.62m to secure sixth place, while Ogura of Japan took seventh with 74.39m, and Wang of China finished eighth with 73.49m. Chairman South Asian Athletics Federation and Vice President Asian Athletics, Maj Gen (R) Muhammad Akram Sahi, hailed Yasir's achievement as historic, saying, "Pakistan now proudly has two world-class javelin throwers shining on the international stage. The Athletics Federation of Pakistan must collaborate with the Pakistan Sports Board to provide foreign training opportunities for talented athletes like Yasir Sultan."

Eze move a sign of Arsenal's 'ambition', says Arteta



LONDON (AFP): Arsenal's move to win the race to sign Eberechi Eze is a sign of the Gunners' ambition to end a 22-year wait to win the Premier League, said manager Mikel Arteta on Friday. Eze appeared to headed to the other side of north London and a move to Tottenham from Crystal Palace until Arsenal pounced to reportedly close in on a £60 million (\$81 million) deal plus £7.5 million in add-ons. The arrival of the England international would take Arsenal's spending in the transfer window to around £260 million following the signings of Viktor Gyokeres, Christian Mosquera, Martin Zubimendi, Kepa Arrizabalaga, Christian Norgaard and Noni

Madueke. Arsenal have finished second in the Premier League for each of the past three seasons and last won a trophy five years ago. "We are showing the ambition that we are here to win major trophies and to keep evolving and improving every single year and that comes with demands and those demands are clear," said Arteta ahead of Leeds' visit to the Emirates Stadium on Saturday. "We want to be in front in the league, not just chasing or reacting or being behind, but in front of it and every decision that we make in every area of the club is to achieve that." The move for Eze came just hours after Arsenal learned that Kai Havertz

faces a spell on the sidelines due to a knee injury. However, Arteta denied the two were related. "We are not reacting to anything," added the Spaniard. "We've been very prepared and understanding what we could do and we have decided this is the moment to do it." Eze was not in the Palace squad that beat Fredrikstad in the Eagles' Conference League play-off on Thursday, but Arteta does not believe he will be registered in time to face Leeds. The 27-year-old began his career at the Arsenal academy -- he said he cried for a week when he was let go -- and reportedly desperate to return to his boyhood club. "The better the feeling, the stronger the feeling, I think the better," said Arteta. "It brings a different edge, a different will and emotion to what you do. I think that always brings something extra." Arsenal began their quest for the Premier League title by winning 1-0 away to Manchester United on the opening weekend of the campaign.

Fit-again Rodri still 'best in the world' for Guardiola

MANCHESTER (AFP): Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola said Ballon d'Or winner Rodri is fit to return against Tottenham on Saturday and remains for him "the best player in the world." The Spanish midfielder missed the majority of last season after suffering an anterior cruciate ligament injury against Arsenal in September. Rodri made his return towards the end of the campaign before a setback saw the 29-year-old miss parts of pre-season and last weekend's 4-0 win at Wolves to begin City's Premier League campaign. "He's still so far the best player in the world until we elect a new one in a few months," said Guardiola at his pre-match press conference on Friday. "I don't have any doubts about his potential and quality. "Just consistency at training, weeks, training, games, minutes and after everything will be fine."

Rodri's comeback is a major boost to City's chances of winning back the Premier League title after finishing a distant third last season. There were encouraging signs for Guardiola in the convincing win at Molineux as new signings Tijjani Reijnders and Rayan Cherki scored. Goalkeeper James Trafford also started his first senior game for City in his second spell at the club. But Guardiola said he is still to decide who will start in goal against Spurs with Ederson, who has been linked with a move to Galatasaray, now back and available. "The new players bring a new energy, new everything. I've changed four or five or six times (backroom) staff and it's tough but always they bring a new energy and ideas. "Players are the same and James brings his youth and desire to play at the club he was born and grew in. "We're happy for the perform-

ance, but it's just the first game. (We need to) just be consistent in the way we play and improve in the way we have done and we have to do better against Spurs." City defender Ruben Dias also signed a two-year extension to his contract on Friday, keeping the Portuguese international at the Etihad until 2029. "I am incredibly happy. City are where I want to be -- at the top of the sport, competing for trophies," said 28-year-old Dias, who joined the club from Benfica in 2020. "The club's ambition aligns perfectly with mine and as a footballer there is nothing better than that. "I love Manchester -- it is my home now -- and I love the Manchester City fans. "When I think about the trophies we have won and the way we have played our football during my time here, I couldn't imagine playing anywhere else."





## In brief

### ANF foils smuggling bid

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) on Friday foiled an International drug smuggling attempt and arrested three accused, including two women, at Islamabad International Airport. According to an ANF spokesman, during the checking, as many as 83 capsules filled with heroin were detected in the stomachs of a man's mother-in-law and wife, who were going to Saudi Arabia for Umrah. 12 capsules filled with heroin were recovered from the accused's wife, and 71 capsules filled with heroin from his mother-in-law. The quantity of heroin recovered from the stomachs of both women was 549 grams. ANF's timely action has foiled an attempt to defame the country at the international level, he said. The accused have been transferred to the ANF police station, and cases have been registered under the Narcotics Control Act.

### CPO suspends SI on corruption charges

RAWALPINDI (APP): City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Hamdani has suspended a sub-inspector of Pirwadhai Police Station on the charges of corruption. According to the Rawalpindi Police spokesman, CPO Hamdani took action against SI Ashraf on the complaint about his alleged involvement in corrupt practices. Besides issuing a charge sheet against the suspended official, he also ordered Senior Superintendent of Police-Operations to hold an inquiry against and submit a report. The CPO observed, "Those officials who damage the dignity of the department are not among us and we will hold them accountable." Corruption or abuse of authority would not be tolerated at all, he added.

### IRSA releases 276,300 cucecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 276,300 cucecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 299,500 cucecs. According to the data released by IRSA, Tarela 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 165,400 cucecs and 165,000 cucecs, respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1218.10 feet, which was 168.10 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 29,800 cucecs and 7,000 cucecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 287,400, 417,900, 447,900 and 353,700 cucecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 39,900 cucecs of water released at Nowshera and 44,000 cucecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

### 3 drug paddlers received 1 year sentence

RAWALPINDI (APP): Three drug traffickers, including a female have been sentenced to a combined 27 years in prison and fined Rs. 380,000.0 by local courts. According to the details, Khurram Shehzad was sentenced to 09 years in prison and fined Rs. 100,000.0 after Waris Khan Police arrested him in April 2025 with 1.52 kilograms of hashish. Similarly, Awal Gul received 09 years imprisonment and a Rs. 80,000.0 fine following his arrest by Wah Cantt Police in June 2025 with 1.94 kilograms of hashish.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates, Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al-Zaabi, calls on Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, in federal capital. —APP Photo

## FIA launches AI-Based App to ease immigration: Naqvi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has announced the launch of an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based application developed by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to simplify immigration processes and combat human trafficking. The pilot project will be initiated at Islamabad International Airport under the Minister's directives.

During his visit to the FIA Headquarters in Islamabad, Naqvi chaired a high-level meeting attended by FIA Additional Director Generals, Directors, and Zonal Directors who joined online. The session reviewed progress on earlier decisions aimed at modernizing the agency's operations.

Officials briefed the Interior Minister on the new AI-driven application, which will streamline

immigration procedures and enhance security against human trafficking. Naqvi lauded the initiative, describing it as "a timely necessity" that would benefit both travelers and law enforcement agencies.

"This step will not only help prevent human trafficking but also save passengers from long queues," the Minister said. Naqvi directed the immediate release of required funds to improve FIA's IT infrastructure and ordered the urgent upgradation of the FIA Headquarters building. He further instructed the Capital Development Authority (CDA) to hand over newly allotted land for the FIA Academy without delay. To address staff shortages, he directed that recruitment against all approved vacant posts be initiated immediately.

"I will ensure the provision of all necessary resources, but along with that, you must also deliver performance," Naqvi emphasized. FIA Director General Raja Riffat Mukhtar briefed the Interior Minister on organizational reforms, informing him that amendments to the FIA Act had been completed, while the digitization process was progressing on a priority basis. He noted that the agency had successfully transitioned to an e-office system within a short period. Additionally, all FIA notices will now be issued with QR codes to ensure transparency and efficiency. The Interior Minister's directives mark a significant step towards modernizing the FIA with cutting-edge technology, aiming to strengthen immigration controls, enhance efficiency, and curb human trafficking in Pakistan.

## Chairman WAPDA visits Mohmand Dam project

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) Lt Gen Muhammad Saeed (Retd) on Friday visited Mohmand Dam Hydropower Project, being constructed across River Swat in Mohmand district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and reviewed construction progress.

The Chairman was accompanied by Member (Finance) Naveed Asghar Chaudhry, Member (Water) Syed Ali Akhtar Shah and Member (Power) Muhammad Arfan Miana, said a press release. GM/PD Mohmand Dam Engr Asim Rauf Khan and representatives of the consultants and contractors were also present on the occasion.

During the visit, the Chairman reviewed in detail the construction progress on various work fronts, which included spillway, powerhouse, main dam, diversion tunnels inlet, upstream coffer

dam and power tunnel.

The Chairman was briefed about the site-wise progress, timelines and completion schedule of the remaining works. He was apprised that construction activities on more than a dozen sites are continuing side by side. River diversion system of the project successfully passed the recent flood peaks in River Swat during the current high-flow season. Filling of main dam has also started in May this year following excavation of the right and left abutments and dam pit.

After completion of the main dam, electricity generation from the project is scheduled in December 2027. After the site visit, the Chairman presided over a meeting at the project office. Underlining the importance of project's on time completion, the Chairman urged upon the contractors to expedite construction activities by deploying additional resources. He directed the project team, the consultants

and the contractors in particular, to finalize an accelerated plan to complete the project as per the timelines. The Chairman also asked the contractor to speed up quarry development and filling of the main dam.

It is important to note that Mohmand Dam is the 5th tallest concrete-face-rock-fill dam in the world. Being a multipurpose project, it will store 1.29 MAF water to irrigate 18,237 acres of new land in Mohmand and Charsadda districts besides supplementing irrigation supplies to 160,000 acres of existing land. Mohmand Dam will also significantly contribute in controlling flood damages in downstream areas including Charsadda, Peshawar and Nowshera. With an installed capacity of 800 MW, Mohmand Dam will produce 2.86 billion units of clean, green and affordable electricity every year. It will also provide 300 million gallons water per day to Peshawar for urban use.

## Rising enrollments put pressure on govt schools

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad's public schools are under growing strain due to rising enrollment from an increasing population and a preference for government schools, though officials acknowledge the challenge and cite ongoing efforts to expand facilities.

According to the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE), around 423 public schools and colleges cater to more than 200,000 students in the capital. With Islamabad's population growing from about 800,000 in 1998 to more than 2 million by now, many classrooms now accommodate 40 or more students, against the international benchmark of 30 students per class.

Parents say the trend reflects both financial realities and trust in public institutions. "Private schools are charging up to Rs. 30,000 a month. For families like ours, government

schools are the only choice. At least our children get proper teachers and basic facilities here," said Nadeem Khan, a parent from G-9. Another parent, Saima Bibi from I-8, noted that while teachers are hardworking, overcrowded classrooms make it difficult for weaker students to receive adequate attention, urging authorities to open more sections in such schools.

The government's introduction of a school bus service under the Prime Minister's Education Reforms Programme has also played a role in increased enrollments. In 2017, the FDE received 200 buses, with 70 handed over in the final tranche. Although some were initially idle due to staffing or budget gaps, over 90% have since been made functional, including a dedicated "Pink Bus Service"

operating 22 buses specifically for the pick-and-drop of students and staff.

"Earlier, I could not afford daily transport for my children. Now, with the school bus, I send all three without worrying about safety or cost," said Muhammad Imran, a father from Bhara Kahu. Officials acknowledge that this boost in accessibility, which is a success in promoting attendance, has also indirectly added pressure on already crowded classrooms.

Government officials, however, emphasize that steps have been taken to address the situation. "The Prime Minister's Education Reforms Programme has upgraded dozens of schools with new classrooms, labs, and furniture. The government is committed to ensuring every child in Islamabad gets quality education," said the Government Educationist.

### Section 144 imposed in Murree till Sept 15

RAWALPINDI (APP): The District Administration Murree has imposed Section 144 in the Murree district from August 17 to September 15, 2025 in view of the threat of dengue epidemic. The administration, in a notification, warned the public of legal action for violation of Section 144, urging them to play their full role in preventing the spread of dengue by following precautionary measures.

Meanwhile, a per the instructions of the District Administration, awareness was provided to the public by mosque Imams in their Friday sermon regarding the anti-dengue campaign. The people were informed not to let water stand in homes and offices; to keep clean water storage containers, tanks and drums covered; and avoid throwing garbage in public places.

Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner Murree Agha Zaheer Abbas Shirazi chairing a special meeting of the District Emergency Response Committee at Rural Health Centre Phagwari directed to accelerate the awareness campaign to eliminate dengue.

## NA Speaker terms Israeli atrocities a test of world's moral conscience

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Friday strongly condemned the brutal aggression of Israeli forces in Gaza and the atrocities being committed against the innocent Palestinian people.

In a statement, he said that since October 7, 2023, more than 60,000 innocent Palestinians have been martyred, including a large number of children, women, and elderly persons.

The Speaker said that the occupying Israeli forces have targeted schools, hospitals, places of worship, and refugee camps in Palestine—acts which he described as extremely inhumane and immoral.

He further noted that Israel's blockade of life-saving medicines, food, and other humanitarian aid is

deeply tragic and shameful.

As a result, thousands of innocent children and elderly people have lost their lives due to hunger and the lack of medical facilities. He stressed that these atrocities against the Palestinian people constitute a blatant violation of human rights and international law.

He added that, as a result of Israeli aggression in Gaza, thousands of children have been orphaned and rendered destitute, while the criminal silence of the international community continues to embolden Israel to commit further brutalities with impunity.

Speaker urged the United Nations to take immediate and practical measures to enforce a ceasefire in Palestine and to ensure a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian issue in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions.

He reiterated that Pakistan firmly supports the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. He reaffirmed Pakistan's longstanding position that an independent Palestinian state should be established with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Speaker also emphasized that the Parliament and people of Pakistan will continue to raise their voice for the Palestinian cause at every regional and international forum, and will stand shoulder to shoulder with the oppressed people of Palestine. He offered prayers for the departed souls of the martyrs of Israeli aggression, for patience and fortitude for their bereaved families, and for the swift recovery of the injured.

## IPP calls for creation of new provinces

ISLAMABAD (APP): Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) has formally called for the creation of new provinces in the country, aimed at improving governance, public service delivery and overall administrative structure.

According to the statement issued on Friday after the Party meeting, it has been proposed that the existing four provinces may be divided further into three administrative regions each North, South, and Central.

It has been mentioned that the current identity and name of the provinces can be retained as well. This step, the Party asserts, is essential to address the growing population and modern governance challenges more effectively.

In a Party meeting chaired by IPP President & Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan, this demand

has surfaced in the larger public interest. The meeting was attended by Minister of State Aun Chaudhry, Punjab President Rana Nazir Ahmed Khan, along with other senior office bearers and Members of the Assembly.

Talking in this regard, IPP President Abdul Aleem Khan emphasized that the rapid population growth has made the establishment of new provinces unavoidable.

He said this initiative will bring Government services closer to the masses, enabling state institutions to perform their duties more effectively.

He further stated that the creation of new provinces in Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan will ensure timely access to basic facilities for citizens, while High Courts, Chief Secretaries and Inspectors

General of Police will be better positioned to discharge their responsibilities.

He further pointed out that, currently, citizens are compelled to travel long distances to reach the Provincial Secretariats and that the establishment of new provinces will provide direct relief to the general public.

Abdul Aleem Khan underlined that for the past 25 years, the issue of provincial division has remained limited to political rhetoric without any practical measures, leaving people disillusioned.

He stressed that the time has come to build a national consensus and move forward through mutual consultation to pave the way for new provinces so that public expectations are met and the country becomes stronger both politically and economically.

## Shanghai spirit in action: Experts discuss SCO's strategic roadmap at ISSI

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The China-Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted a seminar on August 22, 2025, titled "SCO's 'China Year 2025': Upholding the 'Shanghai Spirit'." Ambassador Farhat Ayesha, Pakistan's National Coordinator for SCO, delivered the keynote address, while Ambassador Khalil Hashmi, Pakistan's Ambassador to China, was the Guest of Honor. Other speakers included Ambassador Babar Amin, Pakistan's former National Coordinator for SCO, Dr. MA Bin from Fudan University China, Dr. Ma Zheng from Sun Yat-sen University China, and Dr. Hassan Daud Butt from Bahria University.

In his welcome remarks, Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Director General ISSI, underscored the SCO's remarkable evolution into one of the world's most comprehensive and dynamic multilateral platforms, calling it a compelling example of multilateralism in action.

He emphasized that in an era of intensifying geopolitical tensions, dialogue, and cooperation within the SCO framework. She stressed that China's leadership has strengthened the SCO's standing as a vital multilateral platform and expanded its scope towards new areas such as poverty reduction, climate resilience, digital economy, and connectivity. She underlined Pakistan's strong commitment to the SCO since becoming a full member in 2017 and highlighted the deep alignment between Pakistan's foreign policy objectives and the principles enshrined in the UN Charter, the SCO Charter, and international law.

Ambassador Babar Amin highlighted China's instrumental role in facilitating Pakistan's integration into the SCO and noted the upcoming Tianjin Summit as the largest-ever



the confidence that the upcoming 25th SCO Summit in Tianjin, China, on August 31-September 1 would adopt a long-term development strategy and other documents, charting the SCO's course for the next decade and reinforcing its role in promoting peace, stability, and prosperity across Eurasia.

In her keynote address, Ambassador Farhat Ayesha noted that SCO's "China Year 2025" marked a defining moment in the organization's trajectory. She praised China's far-sighted approach and active role in constructive engagement, dialogue, and cooperation within the SCO framework. She stressed that China's leadership has strengthened the SCO's standing as a vital multilateral platform and expanded its scope towards new areas such as poverty reduction, climate resilience, digital economy, and connectivity. She underlined Pakistan's strong commitment to the SCO since becoming a full member in 2017 and highlighted the deep alignment between Pakistan's foreign policy objectives and the principles enshrined in the UN Charter, the SCO Charter, and international law.

Ambassador Babar Amin highlighted China's instrumental role in facilitating Pakistan's integration into the SCO and noted the upcoming Tianjin Summit as the largest-ever

gathering of SCO members. He appreciated China's efforts in advancing cooperation aligned with President Xi Jinping's Global Development Initiative, covering poverty alleviation, food security, health, climate change, industrialization, digital economy, and connectivity.

Dr. MA Bin underlined that the SCO was entering a new era amidst heightened geopolitical competition, stressing the importance of strengthening security, economic cooperation, and people-to-people bonds, especially youth engagement. Dr. Ma Zheng emphasized the four pillars of SCO's development — security, mutual development, neighborly relations, and fairness in international affairs — and lauded China's central role in shaping the organization's trajectory. Dr. Hassan Daud Butt noted the SCO's resilience in a fragmenting global order and welcomed the Azerbaijan-Armenia peace pact as a step toward enhancing regional connectivity.

Guest of Honor, Ambassador Khalil Hashmi highlighted the SCO's growing significance as a leading regional organization built on the values of mutual trust, equality, dialogue, and shared development embodied in the 'Shanghai Spirit'. He noted that under President Xi Jinping's leadership, the

SCO had gained fresh momentum with an enhanced focus on cooperation, connectivity, digital transformation, and green development. Ambassador Hashmi emphasized Pakistan's strong commitment to the SCO as a vital platform for countering terrorism and extremism, ensuring peace and security, and advancing sustainable development. He underlined the centrality of CPEC as not only a bilateral undertaking but also a bridge for wider SCO regional integration. Reaffirming the 'iron brotherhood' between Pakistan and China as the cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy, he expressed confidence that the upcoming Tianjin Summit would renew collective commitments to regional peace, prosperity, and the 'Shanghai Spirit'.

Earlier, in his introductory remarks, Dr. Talat Shabbir, Director CPSC, underscored the SCO's enduring relevance in ensuring regional stability, fostering economic cooperation, and strengthening cultural linkages.

The seminar concluded with a vibrant interactive session. The event was attended by a large number of diplomats, practitioners, academics, think-tank experts, students, business community representatives, and members of the media.



Road projects worth 6m afs kick off in Daikundi

NEILI (Pajhwok): Work on two construction projects costing six million afghanis has begun in central Daikundi province, officials said on Friday. Ghazanfar Kazemi, the governor's spokesman, said the projects are being implemented by the provincial Directorate of Public Works. He added that they involve graveling a 3-kilometer road in the Tapa Ladogag area of Pato district and repairing 20 kilometers of asphalt shoulder from Kohna Deh village in Neili.

Former soldier killed in Paktika

PAKTIKA (Amu tv): A former Afghan soldier was shot dead Thursday in front of his mother in Paktika province, local sources told Amu. The incident took place near a Taliban checkpoint in Kharikot district, the sources said. The victim, identified as Rahmatullah, had been disabled after losing a hand and a foot in a past explosion during his service. Witnesses said the gunmen were unidentified and opened fire on him in front of his mother, leaving the family devastated.

Panjshir governor calls for unity, avoiding discord



PARAKH (Pajhwok): The governor of central Panjshir has said unity and solidarity are vital for the survival of governments, stressing that the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) possesses these qualities ensuring its strength and continuity. According to a statement from the governor's office, Hafiz Mohammad Agha Hakim, accompanied by officials, visited Paryan district on Thursday to review local problems, proposals and

residents' views. Addressing a public gathering, he underlined that only administrations founded on unity and consensus can endure, adding that the IEA is the outcome of the Afghan people's sacrifices. He urged citizens to refrain from actions harmful to Islam, the Islamic system and the homeland, and instead contribute to national unity and prioritization of important matters. Hakim also assured that efforts to provide employment opportunities —

especially for youth — were underway. Meanwhile, Ziaulhaq Hanafi, head of the Panjshir Ulema Council, said the Islamic system stemmed from the people's sacrifices. "This system is not distant from the people; it should be appreciated, and officials must be obeyed," he added. Fazl Khuda Mubarez, a local elder, called for more attention to the employment of fresh university graduates, while voicing Paryan residents' support for the IEA.

Officials burn over 13,000kg of smuggled narcotics

K A N D A H A R (TOLONews): Local officials in Kandahar say that since last year, they have seized 13,332 kilograms of narcotics that were being smuggled into the country through Spin Boldak from Pakistan. During the burning of these drugs in Spin Boldak district, officials stated that the confiscated substances included opium, hashish, opium derivatives, tablets, crystal meth, and chemicals used in drug processing. Esmatullah Yaqub, the director of the counter-narcotics department of Kandahar Police Command,

said: "The drugs being burned in front of you today total 13,332 kilograms, most of which were brought from across the Durand Line." Asadullah Jamshid, the spokesperson for Kandahar Police Command, added: "Over the past year, narcotics including mainly opium, hashish, and opium derivatives were seized in Spin Boldak by the counter-narcotics department." Thirty people have been arrested in connection with these drugs. Citizens have called on security officials to increase efforts to eliminate narcotics from society. Bahram, a resident of

Kandahar, said: "Our children have been ruined by these substances, and the new generation is becoming addicted. It's a good step to burn them. We must work on creating job opportunities and increase support for people." Another Kandahar resident, Sayed Mohammad, said: "These drugs enter through the Spin Boldak gate. It's a good initiative by the authorities to ban and now destroy them. We are happy." According to officials, with the eradication of drug cultivation in Kandahar, drug trafficking has significantly decreased.



Construction projects launched at Logar University

PUL-I-ALAM (Pajhwok): Two construction projects worth 51 million afghanis have been launched at the University of central Logar province by the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), officials said on Friday. The inauguration ceremony of the projects was held on Thursday, attended by Minister of Higher Education Sheikh Neda Mohammad Nadeem, along with provincial officials and university representatives. Speaking at the ceremony, the President of Logar University, Mawlawi Ziaul

Ahmad Sarim, said the projects include the construction of internal university roads, 1,200 meters long and seven meters wide, in a solid and proper manner, as well as the development of green spaces within the campus. He added that the projects are expected to be completed within the next six months at an estimated cost of 51 million Afghanis by the MoHE. Meanwhile, the Governor of Logar, Qari Salahuddin Ayubi, emphasized the need for the MoHE to pay greater atten-

tion to the construction sector of Logar University. Minister Nadeem also noted that the university has recently made significant progress and that efforts are being made to implement projects based on the needs and requests of the faculty and students. He urged faculty and students to give teaching and learning higher priority than ever before. It is worth noting that last week, Logar University was upgraded from an institute to a full-fledged university by the MoHE.



Kabul rejects UN, Iranian claims of terrorist presence in Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLONews): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has dismissed the concerns of the United Nations Security Council member states regarding the presence of ISIS, Al-Qaeda, and other terrorist groups in Afghanistan as baseless. The deputy spokesperson of the Islamic Emirate emphasized that these countries should not attempt to portray Afghanistan as unstable without providing evidence and documentation.

Hamdullah Fitrat stated: "To all parties expressing concerns in this regard, we say they should not attempt to depict Afghanistan as unstable without evidence and reasons. There is no proof for this claim. Our question is: Who benefits from spreading these concerns without evidence and reasons? Instead of doing this, they should try to understand the existing realities of Afghanistan." Earlier, Iran's permanent representative to the United Nations, in a rare

statement during a UN Security Council meeting, claimed that some elements of international terrorist groups have been transferred from Syria to Afghanistan. Amir Sa'ed Iravani stressed that this matter poses a direct threat to Afghanistan's neighbors and regional stability. He stated: "There are serious concerns based on credible reports indicating that some foreign terrorist elements and militants have been transferred from

Syria to Afghanistan, posing a direct threat to Afghanistan's neighbors and regional stability. We emphasize that all countries must fully adhere to international law in the fight against all forms of terrorism." Edris Mohammadi Zazai, a political analyst, shared a similar view: "In Syria, Israel, or Yemen, where certain issues have escalated, and even incidents within Iran itself, Iran has a hand in all of these, not Afghanistan."

These rarely-expressed statements by Iran's UN representative about the transfer of terrorist group elements from Syria to Afghanistan come as the country's foreign minister also reiterated a day earlier that, according to Tehran, the conditions for the recognition of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan have not yet been met. Abbas Araghchi identified border security issues as one of the obstacles to recognizing the Islamic Emirate.

Tractor trailer falls into river in Helmand, 12 dead



HELMAND (Ariana News): A trailer attached to a tractor fell into river in Afghanistan's southern Helmand province on Friday, resulting in the deaths of 12 people, including women and children, local officials said.

Hafiz Abdul Bari Rashid Helmandi, Director of Information and Culture in Helmand province, told Ariana News that the victims were traveling from Garmser to Nawah district. While crossing the river by ferry, the tractor's trailer

fell into the water. According to him, 3 women and 9 children lost their lives in the incident, and 4 other children were injured. Helmandi added that security forces arrived on time and managed to rescue 14 people.

Relatives demand justice for Herat tragedy



HERAT (TOLONews): At the 400-bed Sardar Mohammad Daud Khan Specialized Hospital in Kabul, heartbreaking stories are emerging in connection with the deadly incident in Herat. Families of the victims are waiting here to receive the bodies of their loved ones, body parts, or any recognizable remains after identification. They are calling for a serious investigation and accountability for this bloody incident. Yamin Rastin, a relative

of the victims, said: "I have lost five members of my family. We demand this incident be pursued because it is said that the bus was overloaded with passengers." All victims of the Herat tragedy, including women and children, were migrants returning from Iran. Some families say that although several bodies of their relatives have been identified, a number of their loved ones remain missing. Farhad, another relative of the victims, said: "The list includes the names of

three of our deceased, but five others are still missing — two children, two women, and one man. They are among those burned. We hope that our loved ones' bodies will be handed over to us." Hospital officials said all the victims were transported to Kabul by air. According to them, most of the bodies are unidentifiable and are planned to be buried collectively. Brigadier General Tahir Ahrar, the Health Commander of the Ministry of Interior, said: "Unfortunately, there are martyrs and bodies whose faces are impossible to identify, as everything is burned. Therefore, in accordance with the guidance of scholars and Islamic principles, they will be buried together in one cemetery." This comes two days after a deadly traffic accident in Herat claimed the lives of nearly 80 people, including women and children.

Herat sees rise in grape production, but farmers face challenges

HERAT (TOLONews): During the grape harvest season, the annual Grape, Fig, and Honey Festival was held by the Directorate of Agriculture and Irrigation in Herat. Farmers and orchard owners showcased their year-long efforts here for three days, hoping to find a suitable market. Bashir Ahmad Ahmadi, head of the extension department at the Herat Agriculture Directorate, said: "There are over 40 booths here displaying agricultural and animal products. The goal of this exhibition is to market agricultural products so we can find a suitable market for them." According to officials from the Herat Directorate of Agriculture, grape production, along with other fresh fruits, has increased this year. Even though orchards have yielded their produce, farmers are concerned that their fruits are not being exported. They say grape and fruit prices in domestic markets are very low, leading to losses rather than profits. Abdullah Mohmand, a grape grower, told TOLONews: "Our agricultural economy as orchard owners is collapsing. Although grape yields have increased, there is no market. Even converting grapes into raisins for export is currently facing issues."



Another Herat-based farmer, Nisar Ahmad, said: "This year the grapes are good, and the harvest is better, but there's no market. We're forced to turn them into raisins. If we had a market, cold storage, and the ability to export, it would benefit the orchard owners greatly." Local officials in Herat say the export gates for fresh fruits especially grapes have not yet opened this year. Officials from the Herat Chamber of Agriculture and Livestock say

raisins are expected to be exported to several countries. Bashir Ahmad Bahaduri, head of the chamber, said: "Fresh fruits haven't been exported this year, or if they have, it has been in very limited amounts. We hope this year's raisin crop can be exported to countries that are interested in Afghan raisins." According to statistics from the Herat Directorate of Agriculture, there are 14,500 hectares of vineyards in the province.





ISLAMABAD: High Commissioner-designate of Sri Lanka, Rear-Admiral H.L.A. Don Fred Senevirante, presenting his credentials to President Asif Ali Zardari during ceremony held at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## PHC issue notices in Senator Azam Swati case

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has issued notices to the federal government, FIA, and other authorities, seeking their responses on a petition filed by PTI Senator Azam Swati regarding enlisting him in Probational Identification List (PNIL). The court has directed the respondents to submit their replies by September 9.

PHC two-member bench comprising Justice Waqar Ahmad and Justice Kamran Hayat Miankhel heard the case. Senator Swati's lawyer informed the court that the petitioner name was included in the PNIL despite a court order for its removal from ECL. The lawyer argued that despite the court's directive to allow Swati to travel abroad, the authorities did not comply, leading to the filing of a contempt of court petition.

The lawyer highlighted that the court had directed the removal of Swati's name from any list that restricts his travel. Justice Waqar Ahmad remarked that the contempt of court petition would be heard alongside this case, and the court had already summoned the DG FIA in the contempt case.

PHC has consolidated both cases and directed the federal government to submit its response. The hearing has been adjourned until 9th September. After the hearing, Senator Azam Swati expressed his views on the recent court decisions, particularly regarding the bail of PTI founder. He praised the court's decision as a victory for justice and human rights.

Senator Swati emphasized that PTI would stand by any member facing legal challenges and criticized the government's actions against party members, including Ailima Khan. He demanded the immediate release of Ailima Khan's son, stating that the action against her began with him.

**Court seeks govt response on Early Warning System installation:** The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has issued notices to the federal and provincial governments, the meteorological department, and other respondents seeking their responses on a petition regarding the installation of an early warning system for flood control in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Friday.

PHC two-member bench comprising Justice Waqar Ahmad and Justice Kamran Hayat Miankhel heard the case. The petitioner's lawyer, Muhammad Hamdan, informed the court that recent cloud bursts, landslides, and rains had caused significant financial and human losses across the province due to the lack of an early warning system.

## 393 human lives perished in recent floods: PA told

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assembly was informed here Friday that 393 including 300 men, 53 women and 40 children were perished in the province during recent floods.

Minister for Relief, Naik Muhammad told the house that 423 houses were destroyed, 1288 were damaged partially and 50 schools were destroyed completely while 216 schools were damaged partially.

The minister informed the house Buner was the most affected district where 193 men, 30 women and 18 eighteen children lost lives in floods. It was told that 36 men killed in District Shangla, 423 houses were destroyed completely, 1288 damaged partially, fifty schools were destroyed and 216 schools were damaged partially. As many as 18

houses were destroyed, 27 houses damaged partially, while 66 houses were destroyed in Swat and 218 were damaged partially.

He said that provincial government stands with affected families in this hour of distress and added that Chief Minister has announced two million rupees for those who lost lives and Rs.500000 has been announced for injured.

Earlier, MPA, Shafi Jan said that flood has destroyed 1000 kilometer and 80 percent of major roads have been opened for vehicular traffic. He also appreciated the performance of concerned departments in emergencies during floods.

Member Provincial Assembly treasury benches, Abdus Salam discussed illegal appointments being made on 66 vacant posts in health department

Mardan. Speaking on a calling attention notice, he said that District Selection Committee approved 66 vacant posts in October 2021 but 222 appointments were made on these posts.

He said that appointments are illegal and against the existing rules and regulations adding that employees are facing problems in disbursement of salaries due to these illegal appointments. He demanded of government to conduct probe into the matter and said that system should be devised to stop such irregularities in future. He also demanded to send the matter to standing committee for necessary action. Deputy Speaker, Suriya Bibi who was presiding over the proceedings, send the matter to standing committee on the recommendation of law minister, Aftab Alam.

## New Pakistan emerges after Marka-e-Haq victory: Tarar

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaulah Tarar on Friday said the nation stood as a resolute force in the face of Indian aggression, declaring that a "new Pakistan" has emerged on the global map through its triumph in the Marka-e-Haq.

Speaking at an event organized by the Council of Newspapers Editors (CPNE), Tarar said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had spotlighted the Pahalgam incident during his address at Kakul, with his call for an investigation receiving widespread international support. In response to Indian hostilities, the Prime Minister convened the National Security Council, made key decisions-particularly on the water issue-and the armed forces fully implemented those directives.

Tarar praised Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir for crafting a successful war strategy, lauded Air Chief Marshal Zaher Ahmed Babar Sidhu and his Shaheens for their historic aerial defense, and commended Admiral Naveed Ashraf and the Pakistan Navy for their readiness to revive the legacy of "Operation Dwarka" if needed.

He noted that while some had written off Pakistan, divine grace elevated the nation's dignity and honor. Pakistan, he said, continues to defy negative expectations, standing

resilient and proud on the global stage. Criticizing Indian media, Tarar said it had become a subject of global ridicule for spreading blatant falsehoods, including fabricated claims of attacks on Karachi and Lahore ports. He emphasized that Pakistan's strategic preparedness, led by Field Marshal Munir, ensured a swift and decisive response to Indian provocations.

Tarar asserted that India's narrative of a "Rising India" had collapsed, its pride and arrogance reduced to dust. The Minister commended the Pakistani media for its vital role in advancing foreign policy and countering Indian propaganda during the conflict. He highlighted its contribution to national unity and diplomacy, stating that Pakistan's strength lies in truth, while India's narrative is built on misinformation.

He also praised CPNE for its responsible journalism and unwavering solidarity, suggesting its wartime cabinet deserves national recognition and medals for promoting Pakistan's stance. Tarar described his recent Sitara-e-Imtiaz award not as a personal achievement, but as a tribute to the collective efforts of the media, the ministry, and other institutions. "This award belongs to everyone who played a part-it is a shared honor," he said.

Reaffirming his support for CPNE, Tarar pledged full cooperation and a

steadfast partnership through every challenge. He underscored the government's commitment to strengthening media institutions and promoting responsible journalism nationwide. He further highlighted Pakistan's strategic coordination-led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Air Chief Marshal Zaher Ahmed Babar Sidhu, and Admiral Naveed Ashraf-which ensured the Pakistan Navy was fully equipped to respond decisively to any Indian provocation.

Tarar said the victory marked a resurgence for Pakistan, with global recognition of its success. He noted that during his international visits, he witnessed a marked improvement in Pakistan's global standing and respect. Recalling the nation's response to India's nighttime aggression, Tarar said Pakistan launched missile strikes after Fajr prayers, symbolizing unity as a "Bunyanun Marsoos"-a solid, unbreakable wall.

He also shared a wartime media initiative led by Badar Shehbaz, Media Coordinator to the Prime Minister, in which Pakistani national songs were broadcast on Indian YouTube channels. The campaign drew massive viewership and sparked backlash in India, where the government faced criticism for inadvertently promoting Pakistani content despite an official media ban.

## UAE envoy bids farewell to Dar

F.P. Report

DUBAI: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar received a farewell call from the Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al-Zaabi, on the completion of his tenure in Pakistan.

The Deputy PM/FM praised the Ambassador's valuable contribution to further strengthening Pakistan-UAE relations and expressed hope for the continuation of close cooperation between the two countries. He also conveyed his best wishes to Ambassador Al-Zaabi for his future assignments. Both sides also discussed avenues to further enhance bilateral cooperation in diverse fields during the farewell meeting.

**Pakistani student shines in UAE:** Pakistani student Fatima Ajmal secured straight A\* grades in all IGCSE and A-Level subjects, earning top recognition across the UAE. Daughter of journalist Saadia Abbasi, she also captains her school's basketball team.

## Lt. Gen. BD Army calls on CJCSC

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Lieutenant General Md Faizur Rahman, Quarter Master General, Bangladesh Army called on General Sahir Shamsad Mirza, NI, (M), Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (JCSC) at Joint Staff Headquarters, Rawalpindi.

During the meeting, both sides discussed the prevailing security environment in the region and laid emphasis on shared resolve for enhancing existing cooperation in defence and security domain. Chairman JCSC highlighted the rising trajectory of bilateral relations between both the countries and identified new avenues of defence cooperation.

The visiting dignitary lauded the professionalism of Pakistan Armed Forces and acknowledged their sacrifices in fight against terrorism.

## Ex-Sri Lankan President held

COLOMBO: Former Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe has been arrested and appeared in court over allegations he misused state funds while in office, police say.

Wickremesinghe, 76, who led the country during a devastating 2019-2024 economic crisis, had been investigated over a visit he made to London to attend his wife's graduation, local media reported on Friday. Police confirmed his arrest for alleged misuse of public funds. "Former President Ranil Wickremesinghe has been arrested and produced in court. We are awaiting the court directive to decide what further steps need to be taken," a police spokesperson said.

Later on Friday, a court in Sri Lanka's capital Colombo, ordered Wickremesinghe to be held in custody until August 26 when a fresh hearing will be held into the allegations. Sri Lanka's anticorruption units have led a crackdown since President Anura Kumara Disسانayake came to power in September on a promise to fight corruption. A Wickremesinghe ally from his United National Party (UNP) proclaimed his innocence and suggested the case was politically motivated. — Aljazeera

# 60 killed as Israel escalates attacks on Gaza City

## Israel vows to destroy Gaza City if Hamas doesn't disarm, free hostages

JERUSALEM (AFP): Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz vowed Friday to destroy Gaza City if Hamas did not agree to disarm, release all remaining hostages in the territory and end the war on Israel's terms. "Soon, the gates of hell will open upon the heads of Hamas's murderers and rapists in Gaza — until they agree to Israel's conditions for ending the war, primarily the release of all hostages and their disarmament," the minister posted on social media. "If they do not agree, Gaza, the capital of Hamas, will become Rafah and Beit Hanoun," he added, referring to two cities in Gaza largely razed during previous Israeli operations.

The statement came after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said late Thursday that he had ordered immediate negotiations aimed at freeing all the remaining hostages in Gaza. Netanyahu added that the push to release the hostages would accompany the operation to take control of Gaza City and destroy the Hamas stronghold. Earlier this week, the defense ministry authorized the call-up of roughly 60,000 reservists to help seize Gaza City. "These two matters — defeating Hamas and releasing all our hostages — go hand in hand," Netanyahu said in a video statement, without providing details about what the next stage of talks would entail. Mediators have been waiting for days for an official Israeli response to their latest ceasefire proposal, which Hamas accepted earlier this week. Palestinian sources have said the new deal involves staggered hostage releases, while Israel has insisted that any deal see all the captives freed at once. Israel's plans to expand the fighting and seize Gaza City have sparked an international outcry as well as domestic opposition.

seize Gaza City, which could start within days.

While many Israelis fear an assault could doom about 20 captives deemed to be alive, Netanyahu maintains the offensive is the surest way to free captives and achieve the war objective of destroying Hamas. Al Jazeera correspondent Tareq Abu Azzoum said that while Gaza City was being pounded especially hard, Israeli attacks were continuing relentlessly across the Gaza Strip. "It was another deadly night in Gaza, and this morning is marked by grief and unbearable pain, clearly written on the faces of victims' relatives and emergency responders who spent the night rushing to calls across the Strip," Abu Azzoum said, reporting from the central city of Deir el-Balah.

"For Palestinians on the ground, these military actions send a clear signal that no matter where they move, no corner of Gaza is spared from any potential Israeli attack." An Israeli

drone strike on a makeshift tent in the southern city of Khan Younis killed one woman and four children, sources at the Nasser Medical Complex said.

Another Palestinian was killed and others were injured after the Israeli army struck the Jabalia al-Balad area of northern Gaza, according to sources at al-Shifa Hospital. Of the dozens killed in Israeli attacks across Gaza on Friday, five were people who were seeking aid, medical sources said. One Palestinian aid seeker was killed and others were injured in an Israeli shooting near the Netzarim Corridor in central Gaza, according to medical sources at the northern Gaza's al-Awda Hospital.

Since May 27, when Israel introduced the new aid distribution mechanism run by the controversial United States-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), the Health Ministry estimates at least 2,036 aid seekers have been killed. — Aljazeera

## Glacier burst wreaks havoc in GB's Ghizer

F.P. Report

GILGIT: A glacial lake outburst in Gilgit Baltistan's (GB) Ghizer district has once again unleashed flooding and caused widespread destruction, leading to the creation of artificial lake, officials said on Friday. GB government spokesperson Faizullah Firaq confirmed that the glacier burst at Tali Das in the Gupis area of Ghizer triggered flooding and destruction.

He said that multiple villages were submerged, causing severe financial losses. However, no loss of human life has been reported yet. According to the district administration, landslides have completely blocked the Gilgit-Shandur Road. Landslides occurred from two directions in the Tali Das stream, cutting off the Raushan village. Ghizer's additional deputy commissioner reported that a landslide in Raushan, Tali Das, had completely blocked the flow of the Ghizer River since 3am, with more communities being affected by the floodwater. However, timely warnings to residents ensured that no lives were

lost.

In a statement, rescue incharge Raja Ajmal said as many as 200 affected people had been shifted to Sumal and Yangal areas. He said rescue operation was underway to pull out six people from Rawshan drain. The rescue incharge said water has started flowing after six hours-long blockage of Ghizer River, reducing the flooding risk for low-lying areas. GB Home Minister Shams Lone said that although the flood had caused devastation in Ghizer once again, no loss of life had been reported so far. He added that reports had emerged of some people being stranded, for which helicopters had been requested. A Force Command Northern Areas commander has already dispatched a helicopter on an emergency basis for rescue efforts.

Meanwhile, the government spokesperson said that over 50 people have been rescued so far. He said the glacier outburst has blocked the river flow in the region, causing water to back up and form a large lake, putting nearby settlements at risk of submergence. He also confirmed

that the GB chief minister was personally monitoring the situation. The Pakistan Meteorological Department has predicted fresh spell of rain in parts of country from tomorrow (Saturday).

The recent calamity comes as Gilgit Baltistan continues to struggle with the aftermath of earlier flash floods that have battered the region since July. Thousands remain without clean water, power and road access, while repeated disasters have swept away houses, destroyed agricultural land and displaced families. Overall losses in the mountainous region are estimated at around Rs30 billion with at least 39 people, including tourists were killed in rain-triggered incidents. According to the Met Office, GB is likely to receive rain, wind and thundershowers from August 23 to 27, with isolated heavy falls expected in Diamer, Astore, Ghizer, Skardu, Hunza, Gilgit, Ghanche and Shigar. The Met Office has warned that landslides and mudslides may disrupt roads in vulnerable hilly areas during this period, advising authorities and residents to remain on high alert.

# Trump's military deployment in US capital stirs fear, confusion

WASHINGTON: Outside Union Station in the US capital, bored-looking soldiers linger near two large armoured vehicles as commuters and tourists snap photos of the unusual scene.

Inside the century-old transportation hub, a dozen National Guard soldiers pace the marble floors, appearing to be armed only with zip-tie handcuffs. Their presence has not directly disrupted traffic, but the Trump administration's deployment of federal forces — part of its takeover of city policing — has left Washington, DC, residents fearful and confused. Randy Kindel, a 48-year-old Air Force veteran, called the deployment a "show".

"It's disrespectful to our troops to have to invade their own country essentially and be pitted against their own citizens," Kindel told Al Jazeera

outside Union Station. He said he witnessed an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raid in neighbouring Maryland during which the immigration agents had their own film crew. Last week, the Department of Homeland Security released a video of golden-branded ICE trucks with President Donald Trump's name on the back featuring a rap song that says: "My heart so cold I think I'm done with ice."

"This is a reality show for them," Kindel said. "It's a f\*\*\*\*\* idiocracy." Throughout Washington on Thursday, soldiers were seen going up and down the escalators at metro stations, chatting among themselves and loitering on street corners. "From what I've seen and heard, many of the troops are standing around, many of them out in the elements, not supported with proper equipment or

vehicles — frankly looking bored," Washington Council member Zachary Parker told Al Jazeera. "This is a manufactured crisis made up by the Trump administration for their own political gain," Parker said.

Trump said the federalisation of Washington's policing was necessary and aimed to combat what he described as rampant crime in the city. But official data show that crime has seen a sharp decline in the US capital over the past few years, hitting a 30-year low in 2024, according to the US Department of Justice. Parker warned that Trump's move in Washington should not be taken lightly by the rest of the country.

He said that, at best, the Washington takeover may be an attempt to make Trump look tough on crime and distract from issues the

US president is facing. "A darker view of this moment is that this is a precursor of militarising American cities and streets and confronting American citizens with military might," the council member told Al Jazeera. "I think we ought to take this moment very seriously — both those of us here in DC, but Americans writ large."

Since the federal takeover began last week, the Trump administration has centred the issue in its public messaging. For example, as of Friday morning, seven of the past 10 posts on X by Attorney General Pam Bondi were about Washington, DC.

Bondi has been sharing daily updates about arrests made in the city — a total of 719, including 40 on Thursday. Washington police arrested an average of 56 people daily last year, according to city data. The

Justice Department, which did not respond to Al Jazeera's request for comment, has not specified whether the arrests were made entirely by federal agents or whether they include law enforcement action by Washington's Metropolitan Police Department.

But local TV channel ABC 7 News quoted federal officials as saying the numbers included arrests by all agencies in the city. It's also not clear whether the detention of undocumented immigrants is included in the tally. Arrests made by ICE were only distinguished in Bondi's daily announcements on Thursday and Friday. But Trump and his aides are talking up the arrests as a considerable feat.

On Thursday evening, Trump rode around Washington with law enforcement officers in a show of

control and defiance against critics of the crackdown. "We've had some incredible results. ... It's like a different place. It's like a different city. It's the capital. It's going to be the best in the world," the US president told soldiers and law enforcement officers. Vice President JD Vance and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth also visited Union Station on Wednesday, where they ordered burgers at a fast food restaurant as protesters chanted against them.

Trump first suggested federalising law enforcement in Washington after an employee of his cost-cutting Department of Government Efficiency was assaulted during a carjacking early this month. On Friday, Hegseth ordered National Guard troops in Washington to start carrying firearms, according to the Pentagon. — Aljazeera