

Earthquake shakes Zhob F.P. Report

ZHOB: A 4.5 magnitude tremor rattled Zhob district in Balochistan and neighboring regions on Saturday, triggering alarm among inhabitants. The seismic activity, recorded at a depth of 150 kilometers by the Seismological Center, prompted residents to evacuate their dwellings. As of the latest reports, there have been no confirmations of injuries or structural harm.



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Field Marshal reviews security situation

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Army Chief Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir visited Turbat, Balochistan, to review the security situation and assess ongoing development initiatives in the region, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement.

According to the military media wing, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI(M), HJ, Chief of Army Staff, visited Turbat, Balochistan. The visit aimed to review the prevailing security situation, assess development initiatives, and reinforce coordination between military and civil institutions for the stability and prosperity of Balochistan.

Chief Minister and Chief Secretary Balochistan

along with other officials were also present at the occasion. COAS was given a comprehensive brief on the security dynamics including threat perspective and successful operations against Fitna al Hindustan, ongoing development projects, and efforts to enhance socio-economic conditions in southern Balochistan.

During interaction with CM Balochistan and representatives of the civil administration he highlighted the need for good governance, infrastructure development, and the importance of inclusive, people-centric progress. He emphasized the significance of joint civil-military efforts in addressing the challenges faced by the people of Balochistan and reaffirmed unwavering sup-

port for all initiatives aimed at improving the Southern Balochistan's socio-economic development.

Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir reiterated the Pakistan Army's resolve to stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of Balochistan in their pursuit of peace, prosperity, and sustainable development. During his interaction with troops, the COAS appreciated their high morale, operational readiness, and unflinching commitment to safeguarding national sovereignty. He commended their role in ensuring peace and stability in the region under challenging circumstances. Upon his arrival, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir was received by Corps Commander Balochistan.

Court grants remand of Imran's nephew

F.P. Report

LAHORE: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Lahore on Saturday granted a five-day physical remand of Sher Shah, a nephew of former prime minister and PTI founder Imran Khan, to the police in the Jinnah House attack case.

ATC judge Mazhar Ali Gill heard the case. The police had requested a 30-day physical remand of the suspect. The investigation officer (IO) in the case told the court that Sher Shah was involved in the attack on the Jinnah House since he was present at the site at the time of the attack along with Hassan Niazi. "There exists footage in which the suspect could be seen amongst the crowd, which had gathered at the Jinnah House on May 9," he added.

DSP Javed Asif, on the occasion, played in the courtroom a video in which Sher could be seen inciting the PTI workers and supporters to vandalize and burn the House. The IO further said that the suspect still had to undergo a photogrammetric test. "Apart from that, his social media account also has to be scrutinized."

Salman Akram Raja, Sher's lawyer, who gave arguments on the occasion, said that the police were harassing Imran Khan's family members. "My client has been implicated in a false case. Only yesterday, Sher was not wanted by the police in any case. He had come to court yesterday to show solidarity with his brother, who is already in police custody, when he was arrested while he was on his way back home." What else, the counsel went on to say, could be the proof of Sher's innocence that he was arrested 27 months after the May 9 incident. He prayed to the court to acquit his client in the case.

CTD busts major RAW network

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan's Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) announced on Saturday that it has uncovered a large network of India's intelligence agency RAW operating inside Sindh.

Senior officials revealed that the network was behind the targeted killing of a citizen in Matli, Badin, on May 18, 2025. Additional IG CTD Sindh Azad Khan and DIG briefed reporters, confirming that multiple suspects had been arrested and evidence directly linked the group to RAW. According to investigators, the operation was masterminded by Sanjay Sanjeev Kumar alias Fauji, an Indian agent currently residing in a Gulf state. He allegedly hired Salman, a resident of Sheikhpura, to execute the plan.

Officials revealed that RAW provided significant funding for the murder plot. The arrested suspects—who conducted reconnaissance in Matli—were found with weapons, motorcycles, and mobile phones used in the crime. CTD Sindh said this was not the first time RAW had carried out operations inside Pakistan. In a similar 2018 case, an innocent citizen was killed in Matli, which was followed by immediate propaganda in Indian media.

Investigators noted that RAW has previously carried out covert killings and intelligence operations in other countries as well, highlighting the transnational nature of its activities. Azad Khan emphasized that CTD's role is limited to investigation, while the federal government will now take the matter further at policy and diplomatic levels. He added that better prosecution has been planned to ensure strict punishment for the culprits, while names of potential future targets were also found during interrogations.



TURBAT: Chief of Army Staff, Field Marshal Asim Munir sitting next to Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti during his visit to Balochistan.

Dar hails new phase of Islamabad-Dhaka 'partnership'

DHAKA: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Saturday hailed the "new phase of reinvigorated partnership" between Pakistan and Bangladesh in a landmark visit to the nation on Saturday, the first state visit by a foreign minister in 13 years.

FM Dar arrived in Dhaka on Saturday for an official two-day trip. Addressing a press conference at the Pakistani High Commission in Dhaka, he extended an invitation to everyone in the gathering to visit Pakistan to engage with their counterparts and contribute to this "new phase of our reinvigorated partnership". "Our hearts are open and our intent is most sincere," FM Dar noted. The deputy PM said he wanted to underscore the federal government's "strong desire to forge a cooperative and forward-looking relationship with Bangladesh".

Dar said Pakistan was committed to engaging with all stakeholders, including the government, political parties, academia, civil society, media and the youth for the realisation of common goals, including peace, progress and prosperity of the two nations and the region. He said his visit came at a time when the region and the world were undergoing a "rapid transformation", adding that the challenges of climate change, economic volatility, global inequality and security threats threatened everyone.

"We must work together to create an environment where youth from Karachi to Chittagong, Quetta to Rajshahi, Peshawar to Sylhet and Lahore to Dhaka joined hands to face these challenges and realise their shared dreams." He said he was glad to note that bilateral relations had witnessed many positive developments in the past year and there was "significant progress in almost all streams of bilateral cooperation" with an increase in the frequency of high-

level exchanges, institutionalised mechanisms of bilateral engagements were being revived, economic and commercial cooperation was gaining momentum, educational and academic collaboration was being explored and cultural exchanges were also taking place.

"In a nutshell, today, our bilateral relations are characterised by a new energy and fresh enthusiasm." He said the developments reflected the desire of both countries to move forward and tap the potential for greater bilateral cooperation for the benefit of their people. The foreign minister also noted that the two nations enjoyed a commonality of views on many regional and international issues, such as the revival of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc).

FM Dar said Pakistan appreciated Bangladesh's role in Saarc's conception and stressed that South Asia, home to "nearly a quarter of humanity", could not afford to lag behind in regional cooperation and integration. "We are hopeful that Saarc will be reinvigorated and our distances will shorten. I sincerely believe that the future of bilateral relations should be characterised by a forward-looking approach based on mutual respect and insulated from external pressures.

"It is our collective responsibility to ensure that our children inherit a relationship that is fraternal, cooperative and filled with affection and opportunities." The foreign minister said he was looking forward to his engagements with the Bangladeshi leadership during his trip. He said it was a "great honour" to be in the Bangladeshi capital at the government's invitation and expressed his gratitude for the welcome afforded to him and his delegation.

"This evening is special as it brings together a broad spectrum of prominent personalities from politics, academia, business community and

media," he said, adding that he valued the opportunity to interact with them. He said Pakistan and Bangladesh enjoyed a "multifaceted relationship" that was rooted in shared history, common faith and cultural similarities. "We are two vibrant and dynamic and resilient nations. Our countries are home to the proud people who have faced enormous challenges with dignity and forbearance."

FM Dar said the bilateral relationship between the two countries was not only political but also grounded in cultural, spiritual and familial ties that stemmed from "centuries of shared traditions, Islamic heritage, social norms, linguistic connections and literary expressions". The foreign minister said the above "threads of commonalities were woven into the very fabric of our two societies", adding that "notwithstanding the twists and turns of history, the people of Pakistan have fraternal sentiments towards the people of Bangladesh and hold them in the highest esteem."

"We recognise and respect the sovereign choices of the Bangladeshi nation and believe in a future where our relations are defined by not what divides us but what unites us."

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar also received a delegation of National Citizen Party (NCP) led by Akhtar Hossain. During the discussion, DPM/FM appreciated the NCP leadership's vision for reform and social justice. He emphasized the need for greater interaction between the youth of Pakistan and Bangladesh. For their part, the delegation members apprised the DPM/FM of different facets of countrywide political mobilization in 2024. The two sides also discussed possibilities to promote cultural exchanges between Pakistan and Bangladesh in the days ahead. — Agencies

Bilawal hand over ownership papers to flood-hit victims

F.P. Report

LARKANA: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has said that the people's government in Sindh is honoring the commitments made by Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto to the people. He added that she cared as deeply for the progress of the nation's daughters as she did for its sons.

According to a press release issued by the Media Cell, Bilawal House, the PPP Chairman expressed these views while speaking with flood-affected families during a ceremony to hand over ownership documents of newly built and under-construction houses being provided by the Sindh Government for families affected by the 2022 floods. The event was held in Village Khair Muhammad Brohi, Union Council Waris Dino, Taluka Ratodero, Larkana.

On the occasion, PPP Women's Wing Central President and Member of the Sindh Assembly (MPA), Faryal Talpur, also accompanied Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari recalled that it was the solemn pledge of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto to provide the people with 'Roti, Kapra Aur Makan' (bread, clothing, and shelter). "I am deeply pleased that the PPP government in Sindh is honoring that promise, and that your homes have either been completed or are nearing

completion," he added. He further said that the Sindh Government is making every possible effort to ensure the swift completion of houses for flood-affected families, while also guaranteeing that the ownership rights of these homes are transferred without delay in the names of the women of the households.

He also congratulated all the women present at the event who were handed ownership documents of their newly constructed homes. Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari pointed out that, alongside the mega project of constructing houses for 2.1 million flood-affected families, the Sindh Government is also equipping each of these homes with free solar power facilities. He further announced, "Another landmark initiative of the Sindh Government is about to be launched, through which proper wash facilities will also be added to these houses. It is the commitment of the Pakistan Peoples Party that across Sindh, wherever these new homes are being built, families will be provided not only with solar power but also with dignified and sustainable wash facilities."

Meanwhile, Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari visited Zangeja village in Taluka Ratodero, where he extended condolences to the martyred Sindh Police Constable Munir Ahmed Soomro Shaheed,

as well as to his father Gulam Qadir and other family members. He offered prayers for the elevation of the martyr's rank in the hereafter and paid tribute to his sacrifice in the line of duty. PPP Sindh chapter President Nisar Ahmed Khuhro, Political Secretary to the Chairman Jameel Soomro, members of the Assembly, and other party leaders were also present.

NDMA dispatches aid shipment to Gaza

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Saturday dispatched another 100-ton relief consignment to Gaza, marking the 19th shipment and raising Pakistan's cumulative humanitarian aid to 1,915 tons.

The latest consignment from Alkhidmat Foundation, comprising flour, ready-to-eat meals, cooking oil, jam, and fruit cocktails, was sent via a chartered flight from Allama Iqbal International Airport, Lahore, to Gaza through Al Arish, Egypt. The operation was coordinated by NDMA under the directive of the Prime Minister. A send-off ceremony was held at the airport, attended by Speaker of the Punjab Assembly Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan, along with officials from NDMA and Alkhidmat Foundation.

PTI forwards names to Imran for Punjab Opp leader

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has forwarded five names to the incarcerated party founder, Imran Khan, for consideration for the position of Opposition Leader in the Punjab Assembly. The political committee of PTI proposed the names of Moin Riaz, Ali Imtiaz, Ejaz Shafi, Sheikh Imtiaz, and Rana Shehbaz for the post.

The party founder, Imran Khan, will select one final name from the list. It is pertinent to know that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf must finalize and nominate the Opposition Leader before the upcoming Punjab Assembly session. Earlier, PTI suspended the nomination of the leader of the opposition in the National Assembly and Senate. The party's political committee has said that the nomination of Mehmoody Khan Achakzai and Azam Swati as leaders of the opposition in the NA and the Senate has been halted.

"No new nominations will be made until the appeals of Omar Ayub and Shibli Faraz are decided," PTI committee said. PTI Secretary General Salman Akram Raja said that the party leadership is standing by the side of the present opposition leaders. "PTI's founder has proposed new names as opposition leaders," Salman Akram said.

Two large lakes formed by glacial outburst in G-B

F.P. Report

GILGIT: Two large lakes have emerged following glacial outbursts in Gilgit-Baltistan's (GB) Ghizer district following flooding caused by heavy rain this month, regional officials said on Saturday.

A glacial burst, or glacial lake outburst flood (glof), refers to an outburst of water from a glacial lake which could lead to severe flooding downstream. At least 200 people were rescued after a glacier burst in GB, blocking the Ghizer River a day prior. Due to yesterday's glacial burst, water containing debris and heavy stones fell into the river and stopped it from flowing for eight to nine hours. "The water remained standing, causing river water to spread for seven kilometres and become an artificial lake," provincial government spokesperson Faizullah Faraq told media.

Meanwhile, the GB Disaster Management Authority (GBDMA) said that the Ghizer River changed course in the district on August 4 and began flowing over the Gilgit-Chitral Road. "A lake measuring 2,000 feet long and more than 50 metres wide has emerged in Khatam village as a result of the flood debris, due to which the Gilgit-Chitral Road is still closed," GBDMA district official Ghufuranullah Baig told media.

PM issues orders regarding flood situation

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Saturday issued special orders regarding flood situation in Ghizer area of Gilgit Baltistan due to Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF). He appreciated the rescue teams and local volunteers for early evacuation of all residents of the area to safe places in view of the flood situation. He instructed National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and district administration to continue rescue operations in the affected areas of Ghizer. He ordered to intensify relief activities in the affected areas in view of the upcoming two spells, so that the affectees can be taken to safe places.

The Prime Minister directed all concerned authorities to be fully prepared for relief operations in the lower parts of the country in view of the flood situation in the coming days. A national campaign will be launched to stop construction around rivers, streams and natural water courses, he added. He said it was national duty to help the people affected by the recent rains and floods. After rescuing and assisting the victims, the rehabilitation work will be started, he remarked. He stressed that provision of medical aid and relief materials to all the affectees should be ensured at all costs. The Prime Minister directed the NDMA to maintain contact with all provincial disaster management authorities in view of the flood situation in Guddu, Sukkur, G.S Wala and other places at the Indus and Sutlej rivers. He paid tribute to Wasiat Khan, a resident of Ghizer area of Gilgit Baltistan, for informing the government of the flood in advance. While risking his own life, he informed the residents of his village about the GLOF in advance, making it possible to avoid any loss of life, he added.

"This lake has affected a small settlement nearby, with trees and a large area of land have been submerged," Asraruddin Asrar, a prominent social figure from Ghizer, told media that lakes being formed by natural floods in the area were an ongoing phenomenon for a long time. "Khalti

Lake was formed in the 1980s; it still exists and has a great reputation in the area as a tourist attraction," he said. "Sost Lake came into existence in the 1990s, and a lake was also formed at Haim last year as a result of floods. The largest number of lakes is found in Ghizer district."



DHAKA: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, met with a delegation from Bangladesh Nationalist Party, led by its Secretary General, Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.

Road infrastructure restored in flood affected areas: Tarar

Saqib Mushtaq

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar said on Saturday that national highways in flood affected areas of KP and Gilgit-Baltistan had been fully restored whereas out of 60 affected feeders, 52 were now fully functioning now.

In a media talk over flood situation, he said that under the directives of Prime Minister, the National Disaster Management Authority was working to overcome the crisis in calamity-hit areas. He said that the NDMA was in contact with provincial governments and provincial disaster management authorities

and district management.

Tarar said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif visited Buner along with Field Marshal Asim Munir where a briefing was given on relief efforts. He said that Minister for Power Sardar Awais Leghari was in the KP and supervising power restoration process.

He said out of 60 feeders affected in Swat, Shangla, Buner and Swabi, 52 have been restored and work on restoration of remaining 8 is continued. He said that Swat-I division has been fully restored, Pir Baba and Malikpur 90 per cent restored. He said that Karakoram Highway and Buner-Khwazakhela

Highway were open for traffic. Similarly, Astore bridge on Jaglot-Skardu Road was operational now, he told. The minister said that NDMA, FWO and Pakistan Army were helping provincial governments in opening provincial roads now.

He said on the instructions of the Prime Minister, Federal Minister for Communications Aleem Khan, Secretary Communications and Chairman NHA supervised roads restoration work in calamity-hit areas of KP and GB. He said a crisis situation was created in Goopis tehsil of GB but due to heroic efforts of many, the people of the area were shifted to safer places.

Amir Muqam emphasizes character building of youth

PESHAWAR (APP): President of Pakistan Muslim League (N) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Federal Minister Engineer Amir Muqam here Saturday said that the youth are the future of Pakistan, and their proper training has become a crucial need of the time.

He was addressing an important seminar titled "Awareness, Guidance, and Positive Role Among the Youth" organized by the PML-N Youth Wing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Gulbahar, Peshawar.

In his key note address, Federal Minister Engineer Amir Muqam said that such conventions by the Youth Wing are vital to keep the youth engaged and provide them with necessary guidance.

He lamented that, unfortunately, in the past 13 years, the provincial government of PTI failed to provide any training to the youth, which resulted in tragic incidents like those of May 9, 2023.

The Federal Minister said that the youth were used against state institutions, with messages inciting attacks on Radio Pakistan and encouraging the takeover of Islamabad.

Without naming PTI founder, he added, "They were misled merely to please one individual, whereas what was truly needed was for the youth to serve the people during natural disasters like floods."

Engineer Amir Muqam called the young workers of PML-N fortunate, stating that they have visionary leaders like Nawaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz for their training.

"You are the ones who will lead Pakistan tomorrow; we must guide you in the right direction," he said.

He also referred to the recent flood situation in the province, saying that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif held special meetings regarding Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and assigned responsibilities to the concerned ministers.

Engineer Amir Muqam said that electricity would be fully restored in the affected areas within two days, and the rehabilitation work is progressing rapidly.

He also highly praised the role of the Pakistan Armed Forces, highlighting that they are on the front lines during the flood crisis.

He said, "Our forces have always protected the nation without caring for their lives. When tensions arose between Pakistan and India, everyone realized that these forces are our true protectors."



PESHAWAR: Commuters passing through a road during heavy downpour of monsoon season at Saddar Road.

PHC grants stay against actualisation of RLNG from industries

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has granted stay order in a writ petition challenging the imposition of cost actualisation charges on Re-gasified Liquefied Natural Gas (RLNG) in March 2025 for RLNG consumed during the period April 2015 to June 2022.

The petitioner industries have contested the retrospective application of cost

actualisation charges by Oil & Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) to be billed to consumers through utility bills by Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL).

The lawyers Barrister Ibrahim Khan Afridi and Lawangeen Khan Advocate argued that the imposition of such charges nearly a decade after the initial consumption period is both arbitrary and without legal justification.

They further argued that retrospective implementation of Section 43B for a period prior to the year 2022, a provision inserted into the Oil & Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) Ordinance, 2002 vide an Amendment Act in 2022, is violative of the fundamental rights of the petitioners and against the intention of the legislature.

PHC divisional bench comprising of Justice Waqar Ahmad and Justice

Kamran Hayat Miankhel, restrained SNGPL from recovery of the contested charges and disconnection of gas supply to the petitioners.

PHC also issued notices to the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA), the gas utility involved, and the Ministry of Energy (Petroleum Division), directing them to submit their responses within a fortnight of the hearing.

Govt taking concrete steps for safeguarding rights of teachers

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Science and Information Technology, Dr. Shafqat Ayaz, along with Provincial Minister for Higher Education Mena Khan Afridi and Advisor to the CM on Finance Muzzamil Aslam, attended a ceremony held at the Agriculture University Peshawar. The event was organized by the Universities Intellectuals Forum (UIF) in collaboration with the Higher Education Department for the distribution of the pensioners' fund.

Addressing the ceremony, Dr. Shafqat Ayaz stated that the government is taking concrete steps not only for the promotion of education and research but also for safeguarding the rights of teachers and pensioners. He said the timely provision of the pensioners' fund is an acknowledgment of the valuable services of retired teachers and employees, and the process will continue in a more effective manner. At the conclusion of the ceremony, funds were distributed among pensioners.

Later, Dr. Shafqat Ayaz and Provincial Minister for Higher Education Mena Khan Afridi visited Islamia College Peshawar, where they met with representatives of different student organizations and students. On this occasion, Dr. Shafqat Ayaz advised the students to ensure full support and assistance to those coming from far-flung areas for admissions so that they do not face difficulties.

He urged the student organizations to avoid internal disputes and differences, stressing that issues should be resolved through dialogue and mutual understanding to maintain a peaceful and positive academic environment.

The students expressed happiness over the presence of Dr. Shafqat Ayaz and reaffirmed their commitment to focus entirely on education and building a better future.

Dr. Shafqat Ayaz emphasized that education is the real strength that can not only bring individual success but also enable youth to play a pivotal role in the development of the country.

He said the youth must rise above differences and dedicate themselves to knowledge and research, as the future of Pakistan depends on their positive vision and hard work.

Privatization isn't the solution - Reforms are the real remedy to public school woes

Dr. Inayat ur Rehman

Through print, electronic and social reports, it is being suggested that the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa plans to hand over several public schools to private management. Officials argue that this will improve quality, transparency, and efficiency. At first glance, the initiative may appear attractive. But in reality, the core problems of government schools lie elsewhere, and privatization risks ignoring them altogether.

Burden of Poverty on students. Government schools provide education mainly to children from the poorest households. These children attend school in the morning and work in the evening to support their families. For them, education is a fragile opportunity often overshadowed by the burden of survival. Unlike their counterparts in private schools who receive tuitions and parental support, government school students are left behind through no fault of their own.

Overlooked Teachers Public school teachers are often portrayed as underperforming. Yet the reality is that many of them are highly qualified and experienced. The real problem is not the absence of ability but the absence of support systems - a lack of check and balance, poor monitoring, and weak parental engagement. Blaming teachers alone is both unfair and misleading.

The PTC Dilemma The Parent Teacher Council (PTC) was originally envisioned as a bridge between schools and communities. However, in practice, it has been reduced to a body that primarily handles financial matters such as construction and petty funds. Its role in academic improvement remains negligible. Worse still, many PTC members are themselves uneducated and unfamiliar with the classroom environment. How can a person who has never experienced a structured learning process contribute meaningfully to academic reforms? Without proper eligibility criteria and training, PTCs risk becoming symbolic rather than transformative.

The Risk Ahead Initially, the government promises to pay per-student fees to private operators as part of the new arrangement. But one can easily foresee a time when, due to financial constraints, the government withdraws and asks students to pay directly. Such a shift would effectively exclude the poorest children, defeating the very purpose of public education.

Addressing the Real Issues Privatization is not the solution. The real remedy lies in: Empowering government schools with a transparent check-and-balance system. Removing political influence from appointments, transfers, and school management. Activating PTCs in their true spirit, ensuring their role goes beyond finances. Setting eligibility criteria for PTC members so they are capable of contributing meaningfully to education. Forming independent committees of education experts, free from political pressures, to guide all reforms. After all, the same children, the same teachers, and the same buildings will remain even after privatization. If the system itself is not improved, changing the label of management will not make any real difference.

The crisis in government schools is not about ownership, buildings, or teachers, but about governance and systemic weaknesses. Privatization may temporarily shift responsibility, yet it cannot cure the deep-rooted issues of weak accountability, political interference, and the absence of expert-driven decision-making. What is urgently required is accountability, expert involvement, strong community engagement, and the strengthening of parent-teacher councils with transparent check-and-balance mechanisms. By removing political influence and empowering independent experts to guide reforms, government schools can be transformed into true centers of learning and hope for the underprivileged children who need them the most.

Farewell ceremony holds for AAOs

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A farewell ceremony was organized in honor of the Assistant Accounts Officers who retired from District Accounts Office Swat. The ceremony was held to bid farewell to Assistant Accounts Officers Muhammad Ishaq and Jamil Ahmad, who were retiring from the office.

The event was attended by District Comptroller of Accounts Swat, Nishad Ali, District Accounts Officer Swat, Sajid Khan, and other officers and officials.

During the occasion, DCA Nishad Ali, DAO Sajid Khan, Chairman Swat Editors Association, Mushtaq Ahmad, and Zishan Ahmad praised the retiring Assistant Accounts Officers and stated that their services to the department would always be remembered.

Addressing the ceremony, the retiring Assistant Accounts Officers Muhammad Ishaq and Jamil Ahmad appreciated the cooperation they received from the department's officers and officials during their tenure and said that they were leaving with fond memories.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the retiring Assistant Accounts Officers were presented with gifts, and a collective prayer was offered for their happy and healthy life ahead.

Committee formed to assess damage caused

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Directorate General of Archaeology, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, has formed a committee to assess the damage caused to archaeological sites and museums in the province due to the recent floods and rains.

Experts and officers of the Archaeology Department will visit flood-affected areas across the province and directly assess the damage to historical sites. Based on the recommendations of the committee, restoration and protection plans for archaeological sites in their original condition will be prepared.

The committee will make recommendations for long-term plans for disaster prevention and damage reduction.

The recent rains and floods in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have damaged houses, educational institutions and other government buildings. In this context, instructions have been issued to send a detailed report on the possible impact of archaeological sites and museums across the province to the provincial government within a week.

A committee has been formally formed in this regard. On the instructions of the Director General, Department of Archaeology and Museums, Dr. Abdul Samad, teams have been formed for Malakand Division, Hazara Division, Mardan, Swabi and Buner.

These teams will estimate the damage to archaeological sites and museums at the respective locations and provide all relevant information in documentary form to the Directorate General of Archaeology and Museums within the stipulated time. According to a letter issued by the

department, teams comprising Mohid Gul (Curator), Amanullah (Assistant Director) and Fazal Ahad (Work Supervisor) have been formed for Malakand Division, Syed Niaz Ali Shah (Curator) and Muhammad Munir (Archaeological Conservator) for Hazara Division, Niaz Wali (Field Supervisor) and Muhammad Tayyab for Mardan, while Gul Nabi (Field Officer) and Arshad Khan (Sub Engineer) for Swabi and Buner, which will be required to submit a detailed report of the affected sites within a week.

According to the DG Antiquities, the historical and cultural heritage of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was facing threats due to the recent floods.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is taking more steps to protect and restore its historical heritage.

Smart moves can build stronger academia

Waseem Hassan

Pakistan has remarkable research potential and talent, yet a gap persists between academic training and industrial relevance-a gap that can be narrowed without significant financial resources.

Updating curricula to reflect the evolving needs of pharmaceuticals, agrotech, and biotech sectors does not always require costly interventions. Universities can revise course content with industry experts, ensuring students gain practical skills such as patent literacy-learning to read and analyze patents-within existing coursework. PhD students can be guided to frame their research around real industry problems through mentorship and dialogue with local businesses.

Practical exposure is critical and need not rely on expensive programs. Initiatives like factory visits or guest lectures from professionals can provide invaluable insights. Departments can form informal partnerships with companies for internships or collaborative projects, even at a small scale. Industry experts may co-supervise research or contribute to curriculum design, keeping academic work aligned with local challenges.

Innovation thrives when students are encouraged to explore patent databases and adapt expired or underutilized patents locally. Universities can nurture this by supporting practical applications of theses and entrepreneurship knowledge-sharing platforms, all achievable with minimal cost.

Strong policy and collaboration frameworks also depend more on communication than funding. Industry advisory boards can be established using existing networks. Government and institutions can facilitate dialogue and recognition, encouraging companies to engage by highlighting mutual benefits rather than offering financial incentives. Career offices can maintain contact with businesses to align student research with industry needs.

Evaluating research success should prioritize societal impact over publication counts. Tracking PhD outcomes-patents, products, or start-ups-can be done through systematic record-keeping and alumni follow-ups without costly systems. This data can guide future priorities.

Engaging industry leaders as mentors can be encouraged through recognition and non-monetary appreciation. Laboratory and innovation culture improvements can begin with better use of existing facilities. Cross-disciplinary collaboration among departments requires communication and joint initiatives rather than new labs.

Finally, incentives within academia should reward innovation and societal relevance over publication volume. Recognizing patent registration, start-up support, and industry collaboration in career progression requires policy change more than funding. Departments that foster start-ups can be acknowledged through awards or public recognition, cultivating a culture that values impact over quantity. Above all, focusing on quality over quantity in PhD training ensures limited resources are directed to researchers with real-world potential.

These proposals are not criticisms but a practical blueprint for transformation, mindful of Pakistan's financial constraints. The talent, ambition, and infrastructure already exist; what is needed is alignment-connecting research with economic opportunities and societal needs through cost-effective strategies.

Smile Emporium a beacon of hope for Afghan refugee women, local community

Humayun Khan and Farishta Ahmadi

PESHAWAR: On Dalazak Road in Peshawar, there stands a small but influential beacon of hope, Smile Emporium. For Afghan refugee women and girls, as well as women from the host community, it has become more than merely a training center; it serves as a sanctuary where fractured spirits are mended, skills are cultivated, and new aspirations are fostered.

Many women who pass through its doors have endured lengthy journeys of adversity. Some fled their homes in Afghanistan, carrying only trauma and uncertainty. Others from the host community have grown up amid poverty, struggling to support their families with limited opportunities. For both groups, life has closed



many doors.

Smile Emporium was established to reopen these doors. Inside, the sound of sewing machines echoes stories of women weaving new beginnings. Young beauticians acquire styling skills with confidence. Embroidery needles uphold cultural heritage while also shaping livelihoods.

Courses in art, craft, and digital literacy transform imagination into opportunity.

For Zahra, a young Afghan refugee, the digital

skills being acquired are more than mere lessons; she states, "This is not just a skill, it is my key to the future," with pride.

For Hina, a Pakistani girl from the host community, embroidery has become a pathway to independence. "I want to support my family and instruct other girls," she affirms, her eyes brimming with determination.

Within this space, Afghan and Pakistani women sit side by side, no longer distinguished as refugees or hosts, but as sisters sharing laughter, skills, and ambitions.

The center's influence is already evident. Some of its initial trainees have launched their own enterprises, supporting their families and financing their siblings' education. Items produced at the center are sold, not only to sustain operations but also to provide women with market exposure.

Manager Sana states proudly, "My greatest moment was when our trainees became businesswomen themselves. That was proof that our model is effective."

The Founder Salbia claimed that Emporium also measures success through skills acquired, employment gained, confidence restored, and most critically, the ripple effect of empowered women uplifting entire households.

Nevertheless, the journey is not devoid of obstacles. Initially, Smile Emporium faced funding shortages and community mistrust. Convincing families to permit women to participate was a significant hurdle. Even now, balancing limited resources with increasing demand remains a formidable challenge.

Expansion plans are underway; however, many women continue to await such opportunities.

What renders Smile Emporium a commendable model is its participatory methodology, where women are not merely trainees but active participants in decision-making. Skills are selected according to market demand to ensure sustainability. Rapid adaptation, such as transitioning classes online during disruptions, has prevented many from dropping out. Most notably, the Emporium harmonizes tradition with innovation, preserving embroidery and crafts while connecting them to contemporary markets.

As dusk settles along Dalazak Road, the center emits a gentle glow that extends beyond the neighborhood. It conveys a message: when women are provided with the tools, trust, and a secure environment, they can reconstruct not only their own lives but entire communities.

Manager Sana succinctly states, "Women and Afghan refugees are at the core of our mission; empowering them is our primary goal. If I could alter one aspect, it would be to commence sooner, to reach more individuals in need."

Over the next five years, Smile Emporium aspires to expand into new regions, introduce advanced digital skills, and establish an online platform for women's work to attain global reach.

In this context, every stitch, brush stroke, and keystone constitutes more than mere work; it is evidence that hope surpasses fear. When women ascend, families, communities, and nations ascend in tandem.



In brief

Tribesmen hold protest F.P. Report

WANA: Six days of failed negotiations for the recovery of Private Public School Principal Rehmatullah Wazir have triggered widespread protests in Wana, as teachers and students took to the streets, blocking all major entry and exit points of the town. According to sources, the principal's WhatsApp account is currently being used by the kidnappers. However, despite the availability of modern technology, authorities have so far failed to trace its location — a development that has fueled public anger and frustration. Following the breakdown of talks, demonstrators staged sit-ins across the main bazaar and surrounding routes, bringing traffic in the city to a grinding halt. During the protest, negotiations were held between the demonstrators and District Police Officer (DPO) Tahir Shah. The DPO assured the crowd that the kidnapped principal would be safely recovered soon.

Police arrests six alleged culprits F.P. Report

LARKANA: Police has intensified its operations against criminals, in which the police conducted operations in different areas and arrested 6 suspects involved in street crime and crimes, while weapons, cash and 07 stolen and snatched motorcycles were recovered from the arrested suspects. According to the details, under the supervision of DSP Haidari Ahmed Bakhsh Rahujo, Ali Goharabad police arrested three absconding accused Jameel Jatoi, Jani Jatoi and Manan Jatoi, while in the second operation, Ali Goharabad police also recovered Rs 20,000 stolen cash from citizen Ali Dino Odho and handed it over to the owner. In the third operation, SHO Haidari Police Station SI Ashfaq Ahmed Shar, under the supervision of DSP Haidari Ahmed Bakhsh Rahujo, arrested Qalandar Bakhsh Gopang, a declared accused in a theft case, who has been found involved in various incidents. In the fourth operation, Mahota police, under the supervision of DSP Aqil Fahad Irshad Mughal, arrested active criminal Intiaz Jalbani from Mahota Bridge area along with an unlicensed pistol and bullets and registered a case under the Sindh Arms Act. While SHO Airport Police Station Sub-Inspector Liaquat Ali Khajjar, under the supervision of DSP Aqil Fahad Irshad Mughal, arrested wanted accused Sarfaraz alias Jaggu Abro from Bagi Bridge.

Rules in driving licenses F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: Deputy commissioner Lakki Marwat has asked the relevant officials to ensure adherence to the rules and regulations before issuance of driving licenses to citizens. During a surprise inspection visit to the driving license centre at the District Headquarters Complex Tajazai, he said that issuing driving licenses to those who lacked driving skills was actually equivalent to giving people a license to kill on roads. He said that his administration would not tolerate irregularities in issuance of driving licenses and in case any official found involved in issuing a driving license to any individual without appearing in the driver test would face stern action. "The road safety is directly linked to safe driving and it is the prime responsibility of relevant officials to ensure no unskilled driver could get the license", he maintained.

KP Minister reviews relief efforts in Buner

F.P. Report

BUNER: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs, Syed Fakhar Jehan, visited the flood-affected areas of Ganshal, Jabagai and Ganshal Maira in district Buner today. During the visit, he inspected the relief camps established for the affected, reviewed the facilities being provided, interacted with the local population, and listened to their concerns.

On the occasion, the Minister also distributed compensation cheques among the affected families and supervised the ongoing rescue operation for three missing persons in the area. He held meetings with the rescue teams and local volunteers, acknowledging and appreciating their dedicated services.

Speaking to the people, the Provincial Minister said that in this difficult time, we stand shoulder to shoulder with our people and on the directives of the Chief



Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, all possible measures are being taken for the relief and rehabilitation of the flood victims.

He added that he is personally monitoring the entire process to ensure that the needs of the affected

families are addressed promptly and comprehensively. The minister further stated that the government would never leave the people alone in their time of distress and would continue to stand by them until their complete rehabilitation.

Media urged to amplify family planning breakthroughs

F.P. Report

QUETTA: In collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), The Population Council, convened the Meeting of the Media Coalition on Population under the theme "Seizing the Moment – New Developments in the SRH Landscape in Pakistan: The Catalyst Role of Media."

The meeting brought together leading journalists, religious scholars, and medical experts to discuss how the media can accelerate progress on family planning and reproductive health. In his opening remarks, Ikram ul Ahad, Deputy Manager of Communication, Population Council, highlighted some of the major developments in recent months in taking forward the population management, including the Council of Islamic Ideology's Joint Declaration affirming the permissibility of birth spacing in Islam related to mother and child health outcomes, the Prime

Minister's announcement of a high-level committee on population, the removal of sales tax on contraceptives, and the passage of a National Assembly resolution recognizing population growth as a pressing national challenge. "We are at a defining moment where political leadership, religious consensus, and fiscal facilitation are aligning. The media must seize this moment to amplify voices from Parliament, religious forums, and communities, and translate these breakthroughs into public awareness and accountability," he said.

Providing a policy and systems perspective, Dr. Ali Mir, Senior Director, Population Council, emphasized the need to build on recent milestones while acknowledging persistent challenges. "The momentum we see today is

the result of years of groundwork, yet stark disparities remain across and within provinces. Shedding light on the media's role, Dr. Mir added.

"True behavior change requires influencing deeply rooted gender norms, social customs, and critical gaps in SRH service availability continue to act as binding constraints. Here, the media can play a vital role in challenging norms, reshaping perceptions, and fostering sustained change."

He emphasized the need of creating equitable availability of health and education services for all. Speaking from a religious perspective, Allama Tahmeed Jaan Al-Azhari, Executive Director of the International Research Council for Religious Affairs (IRCRA), described the recent Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) ruling as a turning point. "The CII's declaration; affirming that birth spacing is essential for maternal and child health and aligned with Islamic teachings; provides the moral clarity Pakistan has needed," he said.

Drawing on Islamic principles of Meezan (balance), he added, "Islam not only permits but encourages deliberate intervals between pregnancies to safeguard women's health and family well-being. This ruling is a powerful tool to dispel misconceptions and elevate informed religious discourse." Offering evidence and public health evidence, Dr. Saima Zubair, FRCOG, Information Secretary of the Society of Obstetricians & Gynecologists of Pakistan (SoGP) and Senior Vice President of the Pakistan Academy of Family Physicians (PAFP), highlighted the urgency of action and the media's role.

"Pakistan endures a maternal mortality rate of about 180 deaths per 100,000 live births and an infant mortality rate of 64

per 1,000. Nearly 3.8 million unintended pregnancies each year lead to unsafe abortions, endangering women's lives," she noted. Dr. Zubair added that spacing births by at least 24 months can reduce neonatal mortality by up to 50%.

"Family planning is not just about preventing pregnancies; it is about saving lives, enhancing health, and empowering women," she emphasized. In his concluding remarks, Dr. Ghulam Farid Khan, Programme Analyst M&E (SRH), UNFPA, said, "Meeting the unmet need for family planning is key to reducing unintended pregnancies and unsafe abortions while upholding the dignity and health of women and families. The media's role will be vital in breaking taboos, correcting myths, and ensuring these services reach every community."

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

NHA launched clearance operations

F.P. Report

SHANGLA: To ensure access to ongoing relief activities in Tehsil Puran, District Shangla, the National Highway Authority (NHA) has launched emergency operations and clearance activities on off-net roads. According to officials, the process of restoring road connectivity in the affected areas is being carried out on a fast track so that relief goods and teams can reach the victims without delay.

Lady technician gives bath to 70 female martyrs at THQ hospital F.P. Report

BUNER: Madam Parwana, a brave female medical technician of Buner Tehsil Hospital Pacha Kalay Pir Baba, is the real hero who cleaned the bodies of more than 70 female martyrs in the recent flood tragedy, gave them bath in the Islamic manner, wrapped them in shrouds and respectfully placed them in coffins.

An exclusive interview with this Journalist she noted the earrings, bracelets and finger rings on their bodies were noted to the relatives. She allowed one or two male relatives to come in so that the modesty of the female martyrs could be taken care of. Thus, when the male relatives identified the bodies of their respective martyrs, they were handed over to them after completing the paperwork by staff members.

Madam Parwana told that initially the women residents of the hospital premises helped her in this work, but when the number of bodies increased, after two or four bodies, they could not bear. These women started vomiting and left for homes, but she herself persevered.

According to her, when the number of bodies reached 30 she called the trained lady staff from nearby and also called own clinic staff and continued till 12 midnight on first day (15th August). Madam Parwana has revealed that on the first day, it was easy to identify the female martyrs, but on the second, third, fourth and fifth days, the identification was done by relatives using their earrings, bracelets, rings or small pieces of clothes. She regretted, unfortunately, some of them could not be identified, so they were kept in the snow.

Madam Parwana made a special mention of the family of Dr. Noor Muhammad, a religious scholar associated with the Tablighi Jamaat, who brought several pairs of ready-made clothes, chadors and shrouds from home, in which the female martyrs were just covered. Madam Parwana praised the women of nearby houses for donating their clothes and chadors too. She appreciated the hospital's MS and all the staff members who dealt and helped the 179 martyrs at THQ Pacha Kalay in the sudden tragedy.

Madam Parwana further told the bodies of the martyrs were received in emergency but within minimal resources, all of them were cleaned according to Islamic practices, given a bath and shroud, and handed over to their loved ones in coffins. She praised the police personnel on duty who dealt in a good manner with angry and worried crowd, searching for their martyred women, children, and adults and protected the hospital staff, especially the female chief medical technician and her colleagues engaged in the service.

Tareen Foundation launches relief operation in KP

F.P. Report

BUNER: A relief operation has been initiated by the Lodhran Pilot Project under the instructions of Jahangir Khan Tareen to support the recovery of communities affected by recent floods in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Jahangir Khan Tareen has announced PKR 50 million in aid for the flood-affected families.

The Lodhran Pilot Project is actively distributing essential supplies, including rations, medicines, food, blankets, bedding, and kitchen sets to affected families in Bunir, Bajaur, Swabi and Swat. Relief operation by LPP will provide relief goods to over 5000 families.



In his statement, Jahangir Khan Tareen said, "No effort will be spared in assisting our flood-affected brothers and sisters. In this time of hardship, I stand with them fully. Supporting flood-affected Pakistanis

requires a joint national effort, and everyone must play their part in aiding recovery." This initiative reflects a strong commitment to immediate relief and long-term rehabilitation for communities devastated by natural disasters.

Vacant key posts paralyse female education office

Haleem Asad

LOWER DIR: Routine affairs at the district education office (female) in Lower Dir have come to a standstill as key administrative posts remain vacant, causing serious inconvenience to schoolteachers and the general public.

Teachers and their relatives told reporters during a visit to the DEO (female) office here that the posts of district education officer, deputy DEO and assistant district officer were lying vacant, leaving hundreds of visitors returning without redressal of their grievances.

Muhammad Idrees and Muhammad Irshad of Osakai said they had come to submit an urgent application regarding a girls' school in their area in the DEO female office, but no official was available to entertain their request. They noted that the deputy DEO's post had long been vacant, while the DEO Ms Reehana Yasmin was recently transferred and her successor had yet to take charge.

"We have been told that her successor is not ready to take charge in the Lower Dir district," they said, adding that surprisingly the outgoing officer had not formally handed over

charge to any other junior officer in the office, crippling the office's day-to-day business. Several other complainants also voiced similar concerns.

The visitors urged the provincial education authorities and the minister for elementary and secondary education to take immediate notice of the matter and fill the vacant posts without delay. They warned of launching street protests with students and parents if the issue was not resolved within a week.

Free medical camp: A free medical camp was organised at the in Lower Dir with the support of the health department and the National Commission for Human Development (NCHD), officials said. The camp was arranged by rehabilitation officer Nisar Ahmad in collaboration with NCHD Dir (Lower), where inmates of the centre were provided free medical checkups and medicines. Participants also discussed the literacy centre already established at the institute.

The event was attended by NCHD assistant directors Muhammad Asad Khan, Murad Bukhari, Ishfaq Ahmad and Shahid Raheem, while District Education Officer (male) Ilyas Khattak joined as

chief guest along with Deputy DEO Fayyazuddin. Speakers appreciated the efforts and services of the rehabilitation officer and his team. At the end, Nisar Ahmad expressed gratitude to the organisers and participants.

Welfare cheques distributed: District Police Officer (DPO) Abdul Salam Khalid on Friday distributed welfare fund cheques among police officials in Lower Dir. According to a police spokesperson, a total of Rs1.695 million was disbursed, including medical assistance for 16 personnel and dowry support for eight others.

Speaking at the ceremony, the DPO said police officers and constables were the department's most valuable asset and their welfare was a top priority of the district police. He added that practical steps were being taken to address the financial difficulties of personnel so they could perform their professional duties more effectively. He further said that all applications were processed strictly on merit to ensure that every deserving official received their due right. The DPO reaffirmed that such welfare initiatives would continue in the future as well.

ANP to protect rights of Pakhtuns, says Hoti

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Former Chief Minister and central leader of the Awami National Party (ANP), Ameer Haider Khan Hoti alleged that reports were emerging of a secret deal and compromise with the prisoner No.804.

"After Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf's rallies, protests, and threats, its leadership has reached the conclusion that nothing is possible without a deal. But we have already made a clear and open agreement with the Pashtuns that we will go to the last extent to ensure their rights, protection, and a peaceful environment," he said.

He blamed that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief minister Ali Amin Gandapur abandoned his workers to face tear gas and baton charges, and while he him-

self wearing a shroud, made dramatic reappearances—once emerging from the mountains of Mansehra and then again from Peshawar after diving into Islamabad.

He added that the unending terrorism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province was due to the open enmity of General (retired) Faiz Hameed's group towards the Pashtuns, aimed at capturing their resources. The release of thousands of terrorists had become a question mark for the entire world. Due to this, the writ of the government was nowhere to be seen in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, he lamented.

He emphasized that for regional peace, it was essential for both Pakistan and Afghanistan to resolve all its issues through meaningful diplomacy and traditional Jirgas. He demanded that

families affected by floods should receive a minimum of one lakh rupees (Rs. 100,000) in relief-aid per family.

The ex-chief minister KPK and central leader of Awami National Party (ANP) Mr. Ameer Haider Khan Hoti expressed these views while addressing his party workers' convention held here on Saturday at the hujra of Khudai Khidmatgars in UC Mian Isa /Lund Khwar, organized by the Awami National Party. The convention was also addressed by ANP's central leader Haji Farooq Khan, ANP Mardan district president Imran Mandori, General Secretary Fazl-ur-Rehman Bin Yamin, Takht Bhai tehsil president Mian Nasrullah, former assembly candidate Jamal Nasir, and others.

Livestock sector: Another casualty of devastated floods

SWAT (APP): As the floodwaters surged through the picturesque valleys of Swat and Buner, they left behind a trail of destruction, crumbling homes, submerged roads and shattered humans lives. But among the most overlooked victims of this wide spread devastation is a life-line that sustains thousands of rural families i.e livestock.

When the warning sirens wailed through flood hit Manglawar Swat in the early hours of August 15, 55-year-old shepherd Rehat Shah sprang from his bed. He knew the sound too well as it echoed memories of the 2022 floods. But this time, nature's fury struck harder and deeper. "I rushed to my cattle farm and reached in 30 minutes in bicycle normally take two hours on foot. The water was already 10 feet high," he recalled, his voice trembling. "Forty-five goats and sheep were all gone. Swept away like leaves in a storm."

With the help of his sons, Shah managed to recover 20 animals. But 12 of them succumbed to illness days later, leaving behind not only an empty shed but a deep emotional and financial void. His loss? Over one million rupees. "I had been saving for months to perform Umrah this October," he said, staring at the remains of his destroyed cattle shed. "Now all I have is mud, loss, and broken dreams."

The floods have impacted more than just individuals rather they have struck at the very heart of rural life in northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where livestock is more than an asset but is the foundation of survival. In nearby Barikot, livestock trader Shahid Yousafzai lost five prized Azakheili buffaloes, a rare breed known for its resilience and milk productivity. For his family, the milk income paid school fees, covered utility bills, and even funded medical emergencies.

"Now, there is nothing," said Yousafzai, glancing at the vacant enclosure where his animals once stood. "We are left to beg or borrow. I don't know how I'll get through next month." With livestock herds decimated across Swat and Buner, milk and dairy product prices have surged. In Mingora, residents Bashir Khan and Usman Ali voiced frustration over the inflated rates.

"Milk is now being sold at Rs260 to Rs280 per litre," said Bashir, "compared to Rs240 before the floods. Yogurt prices have risen too. The district administration has failed to enforce price controls." The inflation has compounded the misery of those already grappling with loss of property, mobility, and access to basic needs.

In the aftermath of the natural calamity, both the federal and provincial governments have mobilized relief and rehabilitation operations. With at least 427

lives lost and entire villages submerged across Swat, Buner, Shangla, Dir, and Bajaur, officials are calling it one of the worst flood disasters in recent memory. Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur announced a multi-billion rupee relief package, which includes Rs 2 million compensation for families of the deceased, Rs 500,000 for the injured, Rs 1 billion Food Stamp Scheme, offering Rs 15,000 to every affected family, Rs 5 billion for immediate relief and Rs 20 billion supplementary grant for reconstruction.

Special provisions have been made to compensate livestock owners, as confirmed by Aftab Ahmed, Director of Livestock KP. "We have begun a comprehensive survey of livestock losses," he said. "The district administration is involved to ensure no deserving farmer is left out. Compensation will be distributed fairly." The real-time data on casualties, damaged homes,

livestock loss, and infrastructure is being compiled using a centralized digital app developed by the Planning and Development Department.

Utility services are also gradually being restored, with 65% of mobile network coverage back online, and teams from PESCO and other provincial agencies working round the clock to bring power and water back to normal. Experts like Dr. Gulzar Rehman, an environmentalist, warned that such disasters will only become more frequent unless Pakistan urgently invests in climate-resilient infrastructure, afforestation, and regulated urban development.

"Many of the areas hit this year were still recovering from the 2022 floods," he said. "It's not just about rebuilding. It's about preparing for a future where such events are the norm." In the flood-hit tourist town of Pir Baba Buner, Muhammad Sajid, 46, said he

watched in horror as the water stream emanated from Elam mountain range devoured homes in the night. "By morning, everything including livestock and cattle was gone."

While praising rescue efforts by authorities, Sajid, are pleading for more than just tents and rations besides fooders for alive livestock. "We need medicines, clean water, and a long-term plan for livestock," he said. "This may happen again next year. What then?" As the water recedes and the extent of damage becomes clearer, the real test for the government and aid agencies will be to restore livelihoods, not just rebuild infrastructure. Livestock, the quiet backbone of rural life, must not be forgotten in the rush for recovery. Rehat Shah, looking over the empty patch of land that once held his animals, had just one question. "Will anyone help us start over?" Only time and political will—will answer that.



Is historically arid Beijing ready for a wetter future?

BEIJING (Reuters): During last month's deadly floods in Beijing, rural hotel owner Cui Jian and his guests spent the night stranded on a rooftop in torrential rain before rescuers battled through metre-high mud and silt to get to them the next day. Beijing's mountainous northern Huairou district and neighbouring Miyun district received a year's worth of rain in a single week, triggering flash floods that devastated entire villages and killed 44 people in the deadliest flood since 2012.

The authorities' most serious weather warning came too late for most villagers in Huairou, who were already asleep by the time it was issued. "In the past, they closed scenic areas and campsites, evacuated tourists and relocated villagers. If you warn people in time, good, but if not, it's a natural disaster," said Cui, whose 10 properties in the same Huairou district village, which he had spent 35 million yuan (\$4.87 million) renovating, were submerged. The floods exposed weaknesses in the rural emergency response infrastructure for Beijing, whose urban core is surrounded by several rural districts. But they also revealed how historically-dry Beijing, home to 22 million people, remains insufficiently prepared for what experts say will be an increasingly wet future. The Chinese capital has experienced three deluges since 2012 that forecasters said could only happen once every 100 years, and climate experts warn there is a growing risk of disasters on a previously unthinkable scale. Chinese experts are increasingly calling for city planners to prioritise "ecological resilience" given the disastrous effects of climate

change. "The current understanding of the climate crisis and its future challenges is insufficient, which naturally leads to insufficient deployment and planning," said Zhou Jinfeng, Secretary-General of the China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation. China's ministries of housing and environment, and the Beijing city government, did not respond to faxed requests for comment.

While two Beijing districts devastated by floods in 2023 have issued long-term reconstruction plans prioritising "climate-adaptive city construction" and proposing measures to improve rural flood control systems and upgrade infrastructure, the vast majority of recently-commissioned infrastructure projects in the capital do not prioritise climate adaptation in their plans. A Chinese government database showed only three Beijing infrastructure projects in the past five years whose procurement tenders mentioned "ecological resilience", while several hundred tenders mentioning "climate change" were mostly related to research projects at state scientific institutes in Beijing.

Ecological resilience refers to measures such as restoring natural river embankments, reducing the use of concrete and other hard materials and excessive artificial landscaping, as well as increasing biodiversity, according to Zhou. In a shift away from decades of breakneck urbanisation that propelled China's economic growth, a top-level urban planning meeting in July emphasised building "liveable, sustainable and resilient" cities.

Mid-July is typically when northern China's rainy

season starts, but this year it had its earliest start since records began in 1961, while several Beijing rivers experienced their largest-ever recorded floods. Citywide rainfall in June and July surged 75% from a year earlier, official data showed. This is due to the "significant northward expansion of China's rain belt since 2011" linked to climate change, the director of China's National Climate Center told state-owned China Newsweek, marking a shift towards "multiple, long-term, sustained cycles of rainfall" in the traditionally arid north. China's policymakers have taken some steps to combat urban flooding. "Sponge city" projects have been underway across the country since 2015, transforming concrete-laden megacities with hidden drainage infrastructure such as permeable asphalt pavements, sunken rain gardens and modernised sewage systems. The concept, originating in China, refers to mimicking a sponge's ability to absorb and release rainwater. In Beijing, recently-built projects include flood control pumping stations, riverside parks and manmade lakes. China spent more than 2.9 trillion yuan (\$403.78 billion) on more than 60,000 "sponge city" infrastructure projects in 2024, according to official data.

Authorities aim to have covered 80% of urban areas in all cities by 2030, although many provinces and major cities are behind schedule. In Beijing, new "sponge city" projects worth at least 155 million yuan have begun this year, according to a Chinese procurement tender database. Currently, 38% of Beijing's urban areas meet "sponge city" standards, media reports say.

Two Haitian police killed when drone accidentally explodes

PORT-AU-PRINCE (Reuters): Two Haitian police officers were killed and two others seriously wounded when an explosive drone accidentally detonated at a SWAT base near Haiti's capital, authorities in the Caribbean nation said.

Directed by Prime Minister Alix Didier Fils-Aime, a task force has since March been operating explosive-laden "kamikaze" drones to help police fight powerful armed gangs that have taken control of most of the capital. A private military company run by Blackwater founder Erik Prince is also taking part in the drone operations.

The prime minister's office said in a statement the accident took place in the hillside town of Kenscoff - a flashpoint in the conflict due to its strategic location overlooking the diplomatic hub of Petion-Ville. "A kamikaze drone, transported by residents in good faith, exploded on the site, killing two police officers and seriously injuring two others," his office said in a statement. Citing several unnamed sources, the Miami Herald reported that six officers were hurt in the blast. The prime minister's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Local residents found the drone after its operators lost contact with the device due to poor weather, it reported, and brought it to nearby police. Shortly after, it exploded. Haiti's national police said an investigation had been opened.

"We are taking all measures to ensure a thorough investigation into this tragedy," Fritz Alphonse Jean, a member of Haiti's transitional presidential council, said on social media. Armed groups began attacking Kenscoff at the start of this year. Rights groups report mass killings, rapes, arson and kidnappings, and thousands have fled their homes. Earlier this month, a three-year-old boy and seven staff were kidnapped from a local orphanage, including Irish missionary Gena Heraty. Over 3,100 have been killed in the conflict in the first half of this year, according to UN reports.

Authorities arrest 13 suspects

MEXICO CITY: Mexico City Mayor Clara Brugada has announced that authorities arrested 13 people for their alleged roles in the May attack that killed two high-ranking officials in the Mexican capital. Brugada did not identify the suspects, but she said three were involved directly in the shooting.

"In this operation, 13 people were arrested, including three people who directly participated in the murder, and others related to the logistical preparation of the event," she told reporters. The daytime shooting of two of Brugada's top aides by gunmen on motorbikes shocked the city, seen as a relative pocket of safety compared to the rest of the country. The victims were Brugada's personal secretary Ximena Guzman and adviser Jose Munoz. "In memory of our colleagues and out of respect for their families and friends, this government will not rest until the truth is known and justice is served," the mayor said in a social media post. After the shooting, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum, a Brugada ally who previously served as the capital's mayor, vowed that her government would ensure that "justice is served." "We express our solidarity and support for the families of these two individuals who have worked in our movement for a long time," Sheinbaum said in May. "We know them, we stand with their families, and we will give her [Brugada] all the support the city needs from the Mexican government." For decades, Mexico has been struggling with high crime rates and murders, including violence against political and security officials as well as journalists.



GAZA CITY: Palestinians salvage items from the rubble of homes destroyed in Israeli strikes on the southern Zeitoun neighbourhood.

Antarctic climate shifts threaten 'catastrophic' impacts globally

NEW YORK (AFP): Abrupt and potentially irreversible changes in Antarctica driven by climate change could lift global oceans by metres and lead to "catastrophic consequences for generations", scientists warned.

More broadly, a state-of-knowledge review by a score of top experts revealed accelerating shifts across the region that are often both cause and effect of global warming, according to a study published in Nature. "Antarctica is showing worrying signs of rapid change across its ice, ocean and ecosystems," lead author and Australian National University professor Nerilie Abram told AFP. "Some of these abrupt changes will be difficult to stop."

Shifts in different facets of Antarctica's climate system amplify each other and have accelerated the pace of warming globally as well, she said. The study looked at evidence of abrupt change -- or "regime shifts" -- in sea ice, regional ocean currents, the continent's ice sheet and ice shelves, and marine life. It also examined how they interact. Floating sea ice does not add to sea level when it melts. But its retreat does replace white surfaces that reflect almost all of the Sun's energy back into space with deep blue water, which absorbs the same amount instead. Ninety percent of the heat generated by man-made global warming is soaked up by oceans. After increasing slightly during the first 35 years that satellite data

was available, Antarctic sea ice cover plunged dramatically over the last decade.

Since 2014, sea ice has retreated on average 120 kilometres (75 miles) from the continent's shoreline. That contraction has happened about three times faster in 10 years than the decline in Arctic sea ice over nearly 50. The "overwhelming evidence of a regime shift in sea ice" means that, on current trends, Antarctica could essentially become ice free in summer sooner than the Arctic, the study found. This will speed up warming in the region and beyond, and could push some marine species toward extinction.

Over the last two years, for example, helpless emperor penguin chicks perished at multiple breeding grounds, drowning or freezing to death when sea ice gave way earlier than usual under their tiny feet. Of five sites monitored in the Bellingshausen Sea region in 2023, all but one experienced a 100 percent loss of chicks, earlier research reported. Unlike sea ice, ice sheets and the ice shelves to which they are connected are on -- or supported by -- land. The world would need to heat up by five degrees Celsius compared with pre-industrial levels to melt the entire Antarctic ice sheet, which would lift global oceans an almost unimaginable 58 metres (nearly 200 feet).

But global warming to date -- on

average about 1.3C -- is fast approaching a threshold that would cause part of the ice sheet to generate at least three metres of sea level rise, flooding coastal areas inhabited today by hundreds of millions, the study said. "Unstoppable collapse of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet is one of the most concerning global tipping points," said Abram. "The evidence points to this being triggered at global warming well below 2C." Another potential risk is the collapse of the Antarctic Overturning Circulation, a system of ocean currents that distribute heat and nutrients within the region and globally. A "rapid and substantial slowdown" of the currents has already begun, and evidence from the previous interglacial period -- between two ice ages -- before our own, 125,000 years ago, points to an abrupt stagnation of the system under conditions similar to those seen today.

"This would lead to widespread climate and ecosystem impacts," ranging from an intensification of global warming to a decrease in the ocean's capacity to absorb CO2, the study reported. Ultimately, the only way to slow down the interlocking changes is to stop adding more planet-warming gases into the atmosphere. "The greenhouse gas emission decisions that we make over the coming decade or two will lock in how much ice we will lose and how quickly it will be lost," Abram said.

Top US spy Gabbard announces staff cut

WASHINGTON (Reuters): US Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard announced the first major overhaul of her office since its creation, slashing personnel by more than 40% by October 1 and saving more than \$700 million per year.

Among other changes, the restructuring eliminates the Foreign Malign Influence Center, which monitors foreign efforts to influence the American public. A fact sheet said that function was already performed by other US intelligence units. The Trump administration has sought to shrink the federal bureaucracy and has made sweeping cuts to a number of agencies. Gabbard's announcement also comes as she accuses former intelligence officials and others of involvement in what she says was a manufactured and politicized assessment that Russia sought to influence the 2016 presidential

vote in US President Donald Trump's favor.

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) played a key role in drafting those findings, which were confirmed by bipartisan Senate intelligence committee reports and a recent review ordered by CIA Director John Ratcliffe. ODNI also oversaw assessments that Russia used online influence operations to try to sway the 2020 and 2024 presidential votes to Trump. Russia denies the allegations.

The office was created after the September 11, 2001, al Qaeda attacks on the US to coordinate the work of the 18-agency US intelligence community. "Over the last 20 years, ODNI has become bloated and inefficient, and the intelligence community is rife with abuse of power, unauthorized leaks of classified intelligence, and politicized weaponization of intelligence," Gabbard

said in a statement.

The overhaul is required so ODNI can focus "on its core mission: find the truth and provide objective, unbiased, timely intelligence to the president and policymakers," she said. ODNI had about 1,800 employees when Gabbard took the helm, and she has already reduced staff by about 25 percent, according to the Federal News Network, which focuses on news about the federal workforce. The additional 40% cut will save taxpayers more than \$700 million a year beginning when fiscal 2025 ends on October 1, Gabbard said. The ODNI fact sheet said Gabbard is also eliminating units that track weapons of mass destruction and cyber threats, saying that work, too, is performed by another intelligence unit. Eliminated as well is a group that produced long-range forecasts of global trends.

Fire burns for 12 hours on US Navy warship off Okinawa

OKINAWA: A fire burned aboard a US Navy warship anchored off Okinawa for 12 hours, injuring two sailors, a statement from the Navy's 7th Fleet in Japan said. The fire aboard the USS San Diego, an amphibious transport dock ship with a crew of more than 360 sailors and capable of carrying 800 troops, began about 4 p.m. local time and was extinguished, according to the statement.

But a statement from the Japan Coast Guard, which helped fight the fire, said firefighting efforts did not end until just after 9 a.m. local time and that an investigation was underway to determine whether it was fully extinguished.

Two sailors suffered minor injuries and were treated in on-board medical facilities, the Navy said.

When the fire broke out, the ship was at anchor off the White Beach Naval Facility, on the east coast of the Japanese island. The facility serves as a staging area for US Marines and their equipment to deploy

to amphibious ships like the New Orleans, which is 684 feet long with a displacement of 24,000 tons. New Orleans' crew was assisted in firefighting efforts by crews from the USS San Diego, which was also moored at White Beach, the Navy said. The Japan Coast Guard, Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force, and other US Navy commands on Okinawa "provided critical support to the firefighting efforts," the Navy statement said. Images from Japanese public broadcaster NHK showed tugs spraying water on the front of the New Orleans.

The cause of the fire is under investigation, the 7th Fleet statement said. Analyst Carl Schuster, a former US Navy captain, said fires are always a danger on warships, which carry a lot of flammable material. The US Navy's worst ship fire in recent years occurred aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Bonhomme Richard in July 2020, while it was in port in San Diego under-

going upgrades to carry F-35 fighter jets. That fire burned for more than four days and resulted in the Navy scrapping the billion-dollar ship. A Navy investigation found the fire was the result of a series of systemic failures, including a failure to maintain the ship, ensure adequate training, provide shore support, or carry out oversight. After the fire, the service introduced new inspection and training procedures to prevent future fires. Analysts said at the time that losing a ship like the Bonhomme Richard, even for a period of several months, can set back service readiness for years.

Fire damage could leave the New Orleans out of action for 60 to 120 days, Schuster said. He said the New Orleans fire shows the Navy needs to again "review and improve its fire prevention and firefighting procedures." "A fire of that extent used to be rare on US Navy warships," Schuster said. — Aljazeera

Tall ships sail into Amsterdam for giant maritime festival

AMSTERDAM (AFP): Tall ships from around the world paraded up the North Sea Canal into Amsterdam, with crews from Peru, Uruguay, Germany and France waving from their decks as crowds cheered along the banks. The spectacle launched Amsterdam's five-day maritime festival, a celebration of ships, sailors and the city's seafaring past that is expected to draw between 2.3 and 2.5 million visitors.

The Sail-in Parade is the most challenging moment of the festival, harbour master Milemb Mateyo told AFP. "There's a lot of press, there are an extreme amount of boats who want to see it, a lot of people in high places who want to be there, so that is the most (challenging)," she said. "Once that is safely over, I can finally sleep and enjoy the rest of the festival." The Sail Amsterdam festival --

now in its 10th edition -- is part of the city's 750th anniversary celebrations. This year, it will feature around 50 tall ships and 700 historic vessels. Sail Amsterdam chairman Arie Jan de Waard said this year's theme for the event was "United by Waves", chosen in response to global tensions. "It's important that we connect through the water and through the cultures on the ships and the crews who gather here in Amsterdam," he told AFP. The parade began in IJmuiden on the North Sea coast, where the first ships passed through the giant sea locks shortly after 10:00 am before making the 25-kilometre (15.5-mile) journey inland. The flotilla, stretching around 10 kilometres, included naval training vessels, steamships, sailing heritage craft and a swarm of recreational boats that joined the procession.

Thousands of spectators lined the canal from the locks to the IJ harbour behind Amsterdam's Central Station, where the tall ships were greeted with cannon salutes and music. Families perched on camper vans, schoolchildren leaned over barriers and pensioners waved flags as crews shouted greetings from the rigging. Siep de Haan, 60, said he had become "addicted" to Sail Amsterdam after seeing his first edition a decade ago.

"We love boat parades," he told AFP. "We invented the pride boat parade here in Amsterdam 30 years ago and 10 years ago I saw here my first sail and now I'm addicted to the whole thing." Another member of the crowd, Daniel Top, said he had been coming to Sail Amsterdam since childhood. "It's always a fun family event for us," the 28-year-old said. "Maybe we'll

go out on the water later in the week with a little boat to see the ships from the water." The event was first organised in 1975 to celebrate Amsterdam's 700th birthday. It has been held every five years since then, except for in 2020, when it was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic. That makes this year's event the first in a decade. Over the coming days visitors will be able to board the tall ships, watch a parade of hundreds of international crew members through the city centre and attend concerts and receptions along the waterfront. The vessels will sail out to sea in a second grand parade. Among the lighter traditions is the piramide, where locals float home-made rafts cobbled together from surfboards, chairs or anything else that drifts.

Few make it to the finish, but the point is spectacle rather than seamanship.

A wartime mass grave in Sri Lanka yields a baby bottle

CHEMMANI, Sri Lanka (AP): A baby bottle, a squeaky toy and a schoolbag are among items that have surfaced from a mass grave site in Sri Lanka's formerly war-torn northern region, along with 141 human skeletons including some that appear to be of children of different ages.

The findings were made at a cremation ground in the Chemmani area near Jaffna town, the cultural heartland of the country's ethnic Tamil minority. But hardly any burials take place here, as Hindus mostly cremate their dead according to religious customs. Excavations have been underway since June, after workers found human remains while digging to build an electric crematorium.

A pit test over nine days discovered 19 sets of human remains. Shallow burials of about 1.5 meters (4.9 feet) in a scattered and disorganized manner, and the

absence of clothing, indicated the site was a mass grave, according to a report provided to a court in June. Since the area was secured and declared a crime scene that month, a total of 141 skeletons have been discovered within a 165-square-meter (1,776-square-foot) area. About 135 of the bodies had no clothing, and only one set of adult clothing was identified. Tests confirmed that a skeleton found with a schoolbag was that of a girl between 4 and 6 years old. Toddlers' dresses, socks and footwear, tiny bead bangles and a baby powder tray were also recovered. The identities of the dead and the cause and timing of their deaths are all unclear. But many think the victims could be civilians who disappeared during Sri Lanka's civil war, which broke out in 1983 between government forces and ethnic Tamil rebels, who fought to create an independent homeland

for the minority group. The war ended in 2009.

Several Tamil armed groups and an Indian peace-keeping mission were active in the region over the decades. But attention has focused on the Sri Lankan military, which had a heavy presence for over a decade in Chemmani, as the gateway to Jaffna town. A confession made by an army soldier before he was sentenced to death for rape and murder 27 years ago has strengthened suspicions about the site.

In 1998, Somaratne Rajapakse along with four alleged accomplices from the military and police were sentenced to death for the gang rape and murder of a schoolgirl and the killing of her mother, brother and a neighbor. The five, who weren't hanged and remain in prison due to a moratorium on executions, have maintained that they were not involved in

the rape and murder, but only disposed of the bodies under orders. Rajapakse told the court that he knew where up to 400 bodies were buried in Chammani. "We cannot say exactly who the perpetrators are yet, but the finger points to the (state) army," said Brito Fernando, an activist working with the families of people who disappeared during various armed conflicts in Sri Lanka.

The area, including the cremation ground, were under Sri Lankan military control from 1996, when it captured Jaffna from the rebels, until after the war ended in 2009. The military operated checkpoints, and anyone who entered or left the area was searched. In 1999, Rajapakse led police to a spot where the schoolgirl, her family and the neighbor were buried and later showed police other places where more remains were found.

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Why is Russia still bombarding Ukrainians?

US President Donald Trump was “not happy” with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, this week. For three consecutive nights, from Friday to Sunday, Russia launched about 900 drones and scores of missiles at Ukraine. At least 18 people were killed, including three children. “We’re in the middle of talking and he’s shooting rockets into Kyiv and other cities,” Trump told reporters on Sunday, after Putin ordered the largest air assault on Ukraine’s civilians in its three-year war. Following up on his remarks, Trump posted on social media that Putin had “gone absolutely crazy!”

Putin is not crazy. He is a tactician with a long-term goal: to make Russia a great power again and secure his place in the history books as the re-builder of Russia’s imperial might. Trump announced after a phone call with Putin on May 19 that Russia and Ukraine would “immediately start negotiations” towards a ceasefire. With his latest air campaign on Ukraine, however, Putin is threatening to destroy the goodwill he’s built up in Washington, where Trump has been consistently soft on Russia and tough on his allies.

So, what is Putin’s strategy? Why is he launching these massive air bombardments on Ukrainian civilians now? One theory is that these attacks are somehow preparations for a major offensive. That makes little sense. Attacking military facilities, weapons depots or even frontline troops are useful preparations for an impending attack. Indiscriminate bombing of civilians, meanwhile, is a sign of either desperation or impatience. Britain and the US bombed German cities during the Second World War because they had no alternatives until they built up enough capacity to transport land forces across the sea to invade the continent. The US also sent bombers to Japan in the final stages of the war because the American public became tired of seeing their sons, husbands, brothers and fathers die on Pacific islands they had never heard of. The war had dragged on forever by this point, and there seemed no end in sight. Is Putin desperate or impatient? Likely the latter.

From the perspective of the Kremlin, Russia’s strategic situation is as good as it has been for years. The US is trying to destroy itself through trade wars and boorish diplomacy. Trump clearly dislikes Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and hopes the war will somehow end if he just demands it. Europe is continuing to back Ukraine. However, for the time being, it still needs US support because its entire security structure is built around NATO and US strength, both economic and military. What Putin sees when he surveys the international scene is weakness. In his thinking, such weakness needs to be exploited — now is the time to hurt Ukraine as much as possible, and hope it will crack. Analysts call this a “cognitive warfare effort.” Indiscriminate air war on civilians is the only means Putin currently has to pressure Ukraine. His army has been advancing, but painfully slowly. There is no breakthrough in sight, even once the spring muds dry and the summer fighting season starts in earnest.

Russia has gradually advanced in Ukraine throughout 2024, but with no perceivable change in the overall situation. Putin does not command precision weapons or super spies, which he could use to take out Ukraine’s leadership. All he can do is rain death on women, children and the elderly from relatively cheap, unsophisticated weapons such as drones. He now has these in large supply, thanks to ramping up military production at home. A strategic air war on civilians seldom works, however. Japan’s surrender in 1945 is an exception, but it is misleading in many ways. The Americans had flattened Japan’s cities for a while already, just not using their new atomic weapons. Japan had already lost the war and the real question was if there would be a bloody U.S/ invasion or surrender. And as the US dropped its two nuclear bombs in August of that year, the Red Army joined the fight, racing across Manchuria to help occupy Japanese territories.

In Germany, the British-American bombings from 1942 onwards certainly had an effect on war production, as they killed workers and destroyed factories. But they did not incapacitate the German army and certainly did not break morale. Instead, the bombings led to embitterment and a closing of ranks around the regime. German society fought to the last moment. It did so not just despite, but because of the air war. The German army was eventually defeated by the ground troops of the Red Army, who took Berlin in an incredibly bloody fight.

Other historical failures are even more spectacular. The US Air Force dropped 864,000 tons of bombs on North Vietnam during an air campaign of more than 300,000 sorties lasting from 1965 to late 1968. The North Vietnamese lost maybe 29,000 people (dead and wounded), more than half of them civilians. The Americans and their South Vietnamese allies still lost the war. Putin’s air war will likely follow the historical pattern: it has further embittered the Ukrainians, who know very well that what comes from the east is not liberation. Another summer of fighting lies ahead. Ukraine’s friends in the democratic world need to urgently redouble their efforts to support Ukraine. The misguided hopes that Putin would somehow “make a deal” lie under the rubble his drones leave behind in Ukraine’s cities.

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Trump and Putin speak same diplomatic language

Inna Bondarenko

AFTER reading dozens of commentaries on the Alaska summit, one theme stands out: there was never much to discuss about actual peace. The slogan “Pursuing Peace” remained just that — a punchy phrase plastered on banners, thrown together at the last minute. What really mattered were the symbols, the staging and how each geopolitical actor played their part in the performance.

United States President Donald Trump rolled out the red carpet for Vladimir Putin, staged military flyovers and even let the Russian president ride in his armored limousine in a gesture of pure flattery. To many, the ceremonial pomp turning an indicted war criminal into an honored guest looked grotesque. Commentators declared, “Trump got nothing, Putin got everything.” But the reading that it was theater without substance misses something essential. For both Trump and Putin, theater is substance. ??So Trump, too, got his share of the pie. Later, Trump hosted his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky and a room full of European leaders in Washington. Once again, choreography competed with diplomacy. Zelensky — chastised back in February for showing up in fatigues — appeared this time in a black suit and shirt. He smiled, thanked Trump at least eight times and even handed over a personal letter for the First Lady. The former actor had adapted his role for a single audience: Donald Trump.

The uncomfortable truth is that Zelensky had no choice but to learn quickly. He has realized the hard way that the European style of diplomacy does not work here. To remain relevant and actually heard in the room he has started to mirror Trump and Putin’s playbook, flexibly deviating from his usual military uniform to wear a suit that will appease Trump and the US media without deviating from his war-hardened image. But for him, this is not about cultivating the image of a global strongman admired on the world stage. It is about something far more immediate and pressing: saving lives and ensuring Ukraine’s survival.

For all their differences, what unites the three — the spy, the actor, and the real-estate magnate — is a shared lesson from their past lives: the art of adapting.

Putin, trained by the KGB, perfected the arts of concealment, mimicry, and adjusting swiftly to shifting political winds. He deploys vague formulas — “useful talks” in a “constructive atmosphere” — that keep doors open and buy time on the battlefield. Zelensky, the former actor, understands the audience and

vagueness means victory. But for Brussels, vagueness means failure. This chameleon-like adaptability — unbound by principles, heavy on symbols but light on substance — often frustrates Europe, which struggles to practice it, leaving its diplomacy ineffective in Ukraine peace negotiations.

European leaders present themselves as rule-bound, focused on outcomes such as ceasefires, timelines, and guarantees, especially when core values are at stake. European diplomacy

Neither man offered specifics, because specifics tie you down. The mere suggestion that Putin might one day meet Zelenskyy was hailed as already a great achievement. For Trump and Putin, vagueness means victory. But for Brussels, vagueness means failure.

costume. He shifts personas depending on the stage: in Kyiv, he embodies defiance, while in Washington, he expresses gratitude.

Trump, the businessman, treats politics like a deal where flexibility is required to “get it done.” Like in a real estate negotiation, he flatters the client, projects courtesy and postpones specifics to keep the agreement alive. What critics saw as humiliation in Alaska — dropping his demand for an immediate ceasefire — was, for him, simply a response to shifting circumstances. For Trump, shameless pivoting is not weakness; it is how you keep the deal moving.

In the shared logic of both Putin and Trump, the Alaska summit was no failure, but a necessary diplomatic ritual. The performance itself became the deliverable.

The choreography — including the unusually deferential press conference with no questions staged to suit Putin — was the point. There were no results to show, but Trump declared “great progress” had been made. Neither man offered specifics, because specifics tie you down. The mere suggestion that Putin might one day meet Zelenskyy was hailed as already a great achievement. For Trump and Putin,

is determined to cling strictly to its core ideals: democracy, human rights and freedom. But Putin, a cynical opportunist, scoffs at Europe’s rigidity and ridicules its insistence on upholding those abstract principles. For him, only national interests are legitimate. That is why he praises Trump as a strongman: someone who defends America’s national interests by leaving room for cooperation with Russia. In Putin’s eyes, that makes Trump an equal.

By contrast, Europe’s commitment to liberal values looks to him simply like weakness and posturing — or worse, sabotage. In his worldview, these values are not genuine but hollow slogans, or weapons, deployed to derail real negotiations. Sanctions, arms deliveries and calls for justice all are framed in Moscow not as diplomacy, but as confrontation and politicization, bad faith dressed as morality. Trump, too, seems to have little patience for Europe’s moralizing. When European leaders pressed in Washington for a ceasefire as the necessary — and moral — first step, Trump dismissed them with a line that sounded like it came from a real estate seminar: “Peace does not need a ceasefire.”

have fallen quiet about this obvious prerequisite to a fair peace, although they do not openly talk about the opposite — about the “need” to yield to the “inevitable” loss of a large part of Ukrainian territory.

While the meeting in Alaska was greeted with hundreds of ironic comments on social media, Ukrainians took the White House gathering much more seriously. They do not overestimate the outcomes, but they are quietly satisfied to see President Trump looking cheerful in such obviously pro-Ukrainian company. A bilateral meeting between President Zelenskyy and Putin is viewed as unlikely and Ukrainians are sure that Putin will do everything possible to avoid one. Putin has repeatedly questioned Zelenskyy’s legitimacy as president and meeting the Ukrainian leader would fly in the

For Putin, who thrives on endless war rather than victory, this was music to his ears. For Europe, it was another reminder that its lines fall flat. Europe insists that symbols are secondary, that what truly matters is the text of the agreement. But in this theater, substance flows from symbols, not the other way around. Where Europe offered morality and precision, Putin and Trump leaned on history and lavish protocol. Putin invoked the past constantly, reminding Americans of Alaska’s “shared heritage” and wartime alliance, carefully omitting Europe’s decisive role in World War II. Trump, for his part, happily indulged Putin’s obsession with history and ceremony.

Trump and Putin can negotiate — even if they achieve nothing — because they speak the same language of adaptability and theatrical symbolism. Zelensky, out of necessity, is learning to speak it too, and — sadly for world diplomacy — it works. Europe fails in peace talks not for lack of power, but for refusing to adapt to this style. European leaders seem to arrive with fixed positions and legalistic demands for precision. They almost never improvise, rarely flatter, and cannot bend. And so, while Europe remains the staunchest defender of liberal values and democracy, it appears as a rigid extra in the theater of Ukraine peace negotiations, not a protagonist.

That does not mean Trump and Putin will bring durable peace. Most likely, they will not. For all their adaptability and love of symbols, they seek different goals. The former KGB officer seeks the status quo. The businessman seeks a profitable deal at any cost. Meanwhile, the war grinds on, measured not in pageantry but in destroyed cities, lost lives, and the survival of a nation. European leaders, for all their principles, noble goals, and power, still seem unable to negotiate their way into real influence. Tragically, unless Europe learns to adapt, improvise, and perform — without abandoning its core values — it will remain what it was in Alaska and Washington: the most principled audience in the room, and the least relevant player on the stage.

The white working class is a timebomb ready to explode

Judith Woods

STOP press. Hold the front page. White working class kids are being let down by the British state admits Bridget Phillipson, the Education Secretary. Who knew? Apart from everybody. Previous incumbents of the post, and there’ve been quite a few, have said pretty much the same thing since 1996. What was that? You’re wondering exactly how many education secretaries that might be?

Eighteen. We have had 18 over the past 30 years with an average tenure of just a year and a half — although, in fairness, Michelle Donelan only managed 48 hours in July 2022 and Kit Malthouse was gone after a month the same year, so they probably never got round to the annual mea culpa on GCSE results day, which felicitously happens to be today.

In 2024, just 19 per cent of white working class pupils gained a strong pass in maths and English GCSE. When the numbers are crunched, this year doesn’t promise to be any different. Small wonder nothing substantive has been achieved by a Cinderella education department that has experienced more churn than a Kerrygold creamery. You don’t have to be any sort of expert to conclude Britain’s young people deserve better. Britain’s taxpayers deserve better. Britain’s tanking economy deserves better. Yet successive governments of every hue have signally failed to tackle the scandalous inequality at the heart of our education system.

At the risk of coming over all Dowager Duchess, I’m not entirely certain how “working class” is defined when plumbers earn more than academics and can sleep a lot easier too, knowing AI won’t take their job. But I think, on balance, we can safely accept self-identification in this regard. What is uncontested is that the current status quo militates against children who are already socially deprived and for whom the groves of academe are simply not an option. They might thrive in another, more hands-on learning environment. But, as the obsession with university degrees continues unabated, the non-academic are left to fall by the wayside.

Low educational attainment feeds into low motivation, fuelling low self-esteem. I’ve seen it for myself in the first part of the year when I travelled round the country visiting the places politicians fear to tread. In Grimshy, I found a once-proud fishing port now a bleak, derelict black spot, where generational worklessness has earned one ward, East March, the unenviable title of the area of Britain with the highest rate of youth unemployment.

In Blaenau Gwent and Rhymney, south Wales, the constituency with the highest proportion of people claiming benefits for anxiety in Britain, I witnessed first hand how an absence of optimism, ambition, call it what you will, erodes community cohesion, resulting in decline and petty crime. Without the spur of moving onwards and upwards, however that looks, stagnation and disaffection set in. Take it from me; there is something genuinely affecting and deeply dispiriting about hearing teenagers sound hopeless about the future when their adult lives have barely begun.

When government ministers talk about “working people”, “strivers not skivers” and “alarm-clock Britain” they are invariably envisioning a smiling family from the McCain ad, not real people feeling angry and undervalued by the metropolitan chattering classes and the bitter truth that, for all the talk of major reform, it’s still often more lucrative to claim benefits than get a job. What would you, in all honesty do? When it comes to the white working classes, the Government is more likely to flinch in horror than listen to their grievances. The demonstrations held outside the Bell Hotel in Epping, which houses asylum seekers, were initially dismissed, even though a resident was charged with sexual offences against a 14-year-old girl.

People putting up St George and Union flags in public areas as part of a “patriotism campaign” called Operation Raise the Colours have seen councils in cities including Birmingham and London cut them down. I’ll be honest, I’m no fan. Having grow up in Northern Ireland, I’m keenly aware of the message, the menace, a Red Hand of Ulster or Tricolour is intended to project. I’d ban all flags if I could.

But even I have to acknowledge that the optics of tearing down what are, like it or not, national symbols in broad daylight feels as incendiary and bloody-minded as putting them up in the first place. Are you reading this, Robert Jenrick? But flags are a diversion from the far more crucial issue of raising up those “working people” by giving their children the same opportunities as their middle-class peers.

And to do that we must dismantle the single greatest roadblock to social mobility: our exclusively academic education system. We urgently need to introduce a truly multi-faceted alternative that gives equal weight to “practical” skills and provides young people with a route into higher education, good apprenticeships and secure jobs. Not only that, but we need to complement it with an active economic strategy to boost growth across the regions. The investment in people as well as places will pay off many times over. So. We have a problem, we have a solution. Must we really wait another 18 education secretaries for this long-overdue change to happen?

The Telegraph

Europe’s show of unity at White House is a plus for Ukraine

Andrey Kurkov

IT was night in Ukraine when President Trump met President Putin in Alaska — a night during which Russia shelled only frontline Ukrainian cities. People in Kyiv, Lviv, Odesa, Dnipro and even Kharkiv could sleep, but they did not. They were waiting for news from Alaska. I was also awake and watching the news feed, aware that this meeting would lead to nothing, or worse, something bad for Ukraine.

But in difficult, seemingly hopeless situations, human nature is prone to desperate optimism. In the middle ages, people often hoped for a miracle, forgetting about the logic of events. So, the night of 15 August was a night of hope for a miracle, which, of course, did not happen.

Unlike on the eve of the Alaska meeting, in Ukraine, there was no particular tension in the

buildup to the meeting of European leaders at the White House on Monday, despite images of a hugely powerful team arriving in Washington. Ukrainians seemed to sense that this meeting had to be visually positive in order to push into the shade the Alaska meeting, which ended in nothing, if not actual failure.

The meeting demonstrated, in equal measure, the continuation of Europe’s support for Ukraine and Europe’s concern over the unpredictable position of President Trump, for whom the goal is simply a quick end to the war, rather than achieving a fair peace. A fair peace, that is the liberation of territories seized by Russia and the restoration of Ukraine within its constitutional geographical borders, is increasingly becoming a dream that only Ukrainians have the right to cherish. Our partners

face of that stance. But, if we try to imagine how a bilateral meeting might go, logically an easy issue should be dealt with first — a minor question on which agreement could be achieved, paving the way for more difficult topics.

But today, between Ukraine and Russia there are no easy issues. The exchange of prisoners of war and the return of Ukrainian children and civilians from Russia to Ukraine have long been addressed with a degree of success by a separate team of employees. All other points for discussion are extremely difficult; for example, a mutual ceasefire or a mutual cessation of shelling with missiles and drones, or the status of captured territories and territories that Russia is still planning to capture. The format of such a tete-a-tete meeting is therefore much more like-

ly to be two short monologues, but certainly not a dialogue. A three-person meeting with President Trump as a moderator could be more productive, but surely Trump will only agree to this if he is confident that at least something will be achieved. Otherwise, again, as after the Alaska meeting, his reputation will take a beating.

For most Ukrainians, the very fact of a joint visit to Washington by President Zelenskyy and the leaders of the European Union and Britain is more important than the post-meeting announcement about the agreement on the purchase of US weapons by Europe for Ukraine, which has long been understood as a done deal.

The most interesting aspect of the meeting — the content of the telephone conversation between Trump and Putin after the tete-a-tete with Zelenskyy

remains an unknown, but press reports pointing to Hungary as a potential meeting place are worrying. Putin’s visit to Alaska was presented by Russian media as a victory — Russia’s strongman breakthrough from global isolation. A meeting on EU soil will be presented as Russia’s final victory in its fight to make the civilised world recognise its right to violate any international law without bearing the least responsibility for violating the rights of other states to a peaceful life within their geographical borders.

When the White House talks ended, Russian drones and missiles attacked energy infrastructure facilities in the Poltava region. Dozens of explosions thundered across the cities of Kremenchuk and Lubny. Residents were unlikely to be interested in the results of the White House meeting the next morning.

The Guardian

Spain’s Huawei deal: A test of alliances in the tech cold war era

IN recent weeks, the Spanish Interior Ministry made a 12.3 million (\$14.4 million) contract with Chinese technology giant Huawei to manage servers for judicially authorized wiretaps. The decision has drawn unusually strong reactions from Western countries and placed Spain at the center of a delicate geopolitical debate. While the Spanish government insists that the arrangement complies with all national security requirements, the move is being interpreted abroad through a lens shaped by years of suspicion toward Huawei's relationship with the Chinese state.

In a broad perspective, the controversy appears to be part of the recent US-China technological rivalry. While American and European officials warn that Huawei could be a conduit for Chinese intelligence, Spanish authorities claim they weighed technological benefits against security risks [1]. Moreover, from inside Madrid, the picture is more nuanced, shaped by previous deals, domestic politics, and a belief in maintaining strategic room for maneuvering.

Within the wider geopolitical landscape, this is not just a technological competition between two superpowers, but also a geopolitical conflict where the internal balance of the Western alliance is being tested.

Huawei has long worked with Spain on its sensitive infrastructure. The company provided systems to store and manage data from law enforcement wiretaps for more than 10 years, with different governments approving these deals. These contracts are accessible in public procurement records and involve agencies ranging from the National Intelligence Center to regional police forces.

The Spanish administration

defends its decision based on this continuity. Government officials argue that the company has fulfilled its contractual obligations without any proven security breaches and that Huawei's offers are cost-competitive in a way that alternative suppliers could not match. Also, approval of the National Cryptologic Center, Spain's leading authority on computer security, is cited internally as evidence that security concerns have been addressed.

Nonetheless, escalating geopolitical tensions and the race for technological supremacy have significantly changed the landscape. Since 2017, China's National Intelligence Law has explicitly required companies like Huawei to cooperate with state intelligence services if requested, and to do so in secrecy.[2] While Spanish officials are aware of this legal reality, some believe that carefully compartmentalized contracts can mitigate the risk.

The US response has been unusually direct. Republican lawmakers such as Senator Tom Cotton and Representative Rick Crawford have urged a review of intelligence-sharing with Spain.[3] Congress is concerned that access to Spanish wiretap data could allow Chinese intelligence to track investigations involving Chinese operatives, or to gain insight into broader European and NATO security matters. Spain participates in multi-country intelligence frameworks within NATO, and a loss of confidence in Madrid's data security could prompt other allies to limit what they share.

American sensitivities on this issue are heightened by their own domestic consensus on Huawei, a consensus that has led to bipartisan agreement on bans, removal mandates, and persistent public warnings

Emirhan Kartal

[4]. Previously, the UK's policy shifted in a similar direction in 2020, ordering all Huawei 5G equipment removed by 2027 despite the financial cost [5]. The message in both cases is that security risk assessments now override commercial or operational convenience.

The engagement with Huawei is also subject to domestic political considerations. Figures such as former Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero and former Cabinet Minister Jose Blanco have been linked, in media reporting, to informal advocacy for the company. Reports have indicated that in 2021, Huawei contracted with a company linked to Zapatero's family, while its public affairs representation in Spain was managed by a consultancy co-founded by Blanco [6].

Inside the ruling Spanish Socialist Workers' Party circles, some see Huawei's presence as part of a broader strategy to attract technological investment and maintain diversified economic partnerships, particularly as China has become the EU's second-largest trading partner. Yet one overriding reality shapes Madrid's approach. Spain remains deeply embedded in the transatlantic security alliance. There is no policymaker in Madrid who envisions replacing the US as a security partner with China.

The debate also intersects with broader concerns about digital sovereignty and surveillance. Civil society groups such as Article 19 have warned that cooperation with Huawei could normalize intrusive surveillance capabilities, undermining rights within the EU. But as recent domestic scandals (such as the Pegasus spyware developed by the Israeli NSO Group) have shown, so-called democratic governments can

also overreach, using sophisticated tools to monitor political opponents or activists without sufficient oversight. This is a reminder that the risks of technological control are not confined to authoritarian states. It appears that whether the supplier is Chinese, American, or European, the potential for abuse exists if safeguards are weak.

Given the geopolitical backdrop, the space for middle-ground positions is narrowing. Washington often presents the choice as either aligning with US security assessments or risking classification as a potential security vulnerability. Beijing, for its part, promotes Huawei as a reliable partner unfairly targeted by political hostility. The EU is itself divided, with some member states enforcing strict bans and others maintaining a case-by-case approach. Spain's position, which is economically linked to China and its companies, and militarily aligned with the US, makes it a balance-seeking actor. However, in the context of the emerging "tech cold war," maintaining a balanced position can be interpreted by different parties as a sign of indecision.

For now, Madrid's stance is that the Huawei contract is secure, limited in scope, and consistent with national law. But in intelligence relations, perception often matters as much as reality. The question is whether Spain can persuade allies that this procurement decision does not compromise shared security.

The recent Huawei deal is more than just a narrow procurement arrangement. It is a test of how states navigate the tension between technological opportunity, economic pragmatism, and the obligations of security alliances. For Spain, the challenge is to manage these pressures without allowing external suspicion to erode the trust on which its security ultimately depends.

Ukraine needs guarantees Moscow will take seriously

Boris Bondarev

PUBLIC attention toward peace negotiations is concentrated on the question of territorial concessions. Must Russia's jurisdiction over Crimea be recognized? Will Ukraine accept the occupation — or even annexation — of the Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Donetsk and Luhansk regions? What other claims might Russia dream up?

This theme is constantly stoked by Russian representatives making territorial demands, reinforcing the impression that land is the main issue. In reality, the territorial issue comes to the fore because it is easy to conceptualize. Anyone following the events can look at a map, find Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, Crimea, draw a line along the front and conclude for themselves whether these regions are essential to Ukraine or could be given up.

But a true peace settlement — not a decorative or declarative one — does not come down merely to ending hostilities. It is about creating a durable, lasting peace — one that will be difficult to break. The key element of any settlement is not borders or territorial claims, but conditions that ensure a stable, unbreakable peace. This is the core dispute. To achieve such conditions, concessions and compromises may be made — territorial and otherwise.

Ukraine is naturally interested in ensuring that any peace deal with Vladimir Putin (leaving aside how realistic that is) secures a solid future peace. In other words, Ukraine must create conditions in which Putin would find any renewed aggression prohibitively costly, unprofitable, and personally dangerous — forcing him to abandon such plans. What might those conditions — those security guarantees — look like?

The first and most important guarantee of any state has always been its armed forces. If they are large enough, well-equipped, with high morale and competent leadership, an aggressor will think twice before starting a war. Putin's decision to invade in 2022 was largely driven by his mistaken belief that Ukraine's military was weak, incapable and unwilling to fight back. Ukraine's armed forces have since proved Moscow wrong, making it even more likely that the Kremlin will want to weaken Ukraine by pushing for its demilitarization.

Another issue is that a large army is expensive. It is doubtful Ukraine can sustain a million-strong force for many years without crippling its economy. The most successful and powerful defense bloc in history is based on Article 5 of the 1949 Washington Treaty, which declares that an attack on one member is considered an attack on all, obligating assistance, including military aid.

But until 2022, few noticed that Article 5 does not explicitly require armed assistance. Everyone assumed, rather carelessly,

that if war came, each NATO member would fight like a ferocious beast for another. The United States, as the bloc's main power, was naturally expected to lead that effort. Since 2022, after repeated Russian nuclear threats, it has become clear that even NATO members lack substantial guarantees.

NATO's hesitant policy toward Ukraine has exposed its fear of direct confrontation with Russia. The Biden administration's cautious, weak approach looked especially pitiful given America's military might. With Washington being more timid than the governments of much smaller states like Estonia, Moscow and other capitals concluded that nuclear blackmail works. Most NATO states, including the US, are catastrophically afraid of nuclear escalation, unprepared to face it and unable to resist someone who recklessly brandishes nuclear weapons. Russia's forces could have been defeated and expelled from Ukraine in 2022 if the West had immediately taken a hard line and delivered Kyiv the necessary weapons. Instead, the West flinched and ceded the initiative to Putin, never regaining it — a recipe for defeat.

Despite the fact that Putin's red lines have been crossed many times without triggering a nuclear strike, Western leaders remain in a state of panic that conveniently justifies inaction. This only strengthens Putin's belief that his tactics work and may even succeed if he attacks NATO members themselves.

It is easy to imagine that Putin could attack Ukraine again after a ceasefire, threaten its guarantors with nuclear weapons and cause those who promised to intervene to simply walk away. Precedent is not hard to find: the Budapest Memorandum, which guaranteed Ukraine's security in exchange for surrendering its nuclear arsenal. And the result? A war and empty guarantees. In short, guarantees that only activate after aggression are no guarantees at all. It would be naïve for Kyiv to expect Britain, France or Germany to declare war on Russia and fight on Ukraine's behalf. If they truly saw that as possible, why did they not send their troops in 2022 — or even now? Instead, the idea of stationing European peacekeepers in Ukraine has predictably fizzled out. Heaven forbid Putin take offense!

Ukraine needs real, irrevocable guarantees that operate before it next faces Russian aggression. Chief among them would be the stationing of a large foreign military contingent in Ukraine — 50,000 or 100,000 troops with armor, aircraft, and full support infrastructure — belonging to countries Putin would never want to fight. There are only two such states that could provide this: the US and China.

China, for many reasons, is unlikely to defend Ukraine against the Kremlin, its part-

ner. The US, however — if one looks at its real interests rather than Donald Trump's fantasies — should have considered this option. Only the prospect of war against Washington would force Putin to conclude that attacking Ukraine again would bring guaranteed devastation, outweighing any gains. This would require political will and legally binding obligations enshrined in US law by Congress, beyond the reach of a presidential decree. Such a law would have to cover funding, supply, troop status, the duration of their deployment and procedures for amendment.

Today, no such guarantee is on the table. On the contrary, the very idea frightens the West and even the US almost as much as the prospect of war itself.

Even a large international force in Ukraine would not fully guarantee peace. Putin's regime will continue to seek ways to harm Ukraine and Europe: hybrid warfare, interference in domestic affairs, terrorism, cyberattacks, provocations, trafficking components of weapons of mass destruction and more. Combating these threats — along with maintaining peacekeepers and rebuilding Ukraine — would further strain the already heavily burdened economies of Kyiv's allies.

The current approach of drip-feeding military support to Ukraine is like palliative care: relieving symptoms without curing the disease. Like giving painkillers and fever reducers to a patient with a severe infection, while the pathogen multiplies, poisoning the body and making recovery harder, costlier and more uncertain. It is far more effective and ultimately cheaper to apply antibiotics — treat the infection at its source.

The problem is not Russia's territorial claims against Ukraine. The problem is Putin's regime, which sees external aggression as the key to its political (and perhaps physical) survival. One can only make peace with him on his terms. That means that Ukraine must capitulate, even if the West insists otherwise. Then the victorious Kremlin might deign to show mercy — or might not. If the goal is to preserve a state's freedom and the right to choose its own path, the task is not to build walls or plead with the aggressor to stop, but to eliminate the disease itself. If you do not take a full course of antibiotics, the disease comes back stronger than before.

This war can only end by imposing peace on the aggressor — forcing him to stop fighting, ensuring his defeat in Ukraine and bringing down his regime in Russia. That is the only thing that can truly guarantee peace for Ukraine and the continent as a whole. But Western leaders are not seeing the best solution, but the easiest one. The conclusion of continuing down this path of least resistance is for them to hold up their hands and surrender.

Remember when having women in power was supposed to change everything?

NICOLA Sturgeon was always afraid of failure. But it was a very particular kind of failure she feared; one that follows a very particular kind of success. Living up to the fact of being Scotland's first female first minister became, she writes in her new memoir, "almost an obsession", which is arguably unhealthy but not unreasonable. To be the first woman (or indeed the first minority) in any field is to be uncomfortably aware of being on probation: the test case that sceptics will use to decide whether women in general can really hack it, but also the yardstick by which other women will judge whether representation actually makes a difference.

You aren't betray anything that looks like a sign of weakness, yet at the same time you're endlessly under pressure to spill your guts on all the intimate stuff - miscarriage and menopause in Sturgeon's case, pregnancy in high office for New Zealand's Jacinda Ardern, also the author of a recent memoir - lest other women feel you're either holding out on useful information, making it all look too infuriatingly easy, or failing to do your bit to break some taboo. (Even Sturgeon, in an interview this week with the midlife women's podcast The Shift, expressed surprise that, when she was figuring out how to manage menopausal symptoms in office, she couldn't find anything to read about how other senior politicians had coped.) Suddenly, you're not just a

woman but an everywoman, supposed to magically embody every female voter who ever existed, even on issues where women in real life are impossibly divided - as they were over trans rights, the issue that ultimately holed Sturgeon's premiership below the waterline. Representation can be a blessing and curse, even for a politician as gifted as Sturgeon undoubtedly has been. But is it also ultimately a distraction?

Her book completes a trio of recent memoirs, alongside those of Ardern and Germany's Angela Merkel, which feel like a final full stop on the end of an era in which putting a woman in power was expected somehow to change everything. All three at their peak were somewhat romantically held aloft as examples of a kinder, more emotionally literate politics: Merkel for opening her arms to Syrian refugees; Ardern for the unifying way she led her country through the immediate and potentially divisive aftermath of the Christchurch terrorist massacre; and Sturgeon for being the remain voter's feminist yin to Boris Johnson's laddish Brexiter yang.

All three functioned at times as queens across the water for English leftwingers, wondering wistfully why they couldn't have a leader like that. During the 2015 televised election debates in which Sturgeon took part, viewers furiously Googled whether it was possible to vote SNP south of the border. Merkel's principled pushback

Gaby Hinsliff

against Donald Trump in his first presidency - remember that iconic image of her looming commandingly over a seated Trump at a G7 summit? - was as much admired and envied in parts of the UK as Ardern's "zero Covid strategy" of sealing borders, at least until the latter was overwhelmed by new variants.

Yet all three became bitterly polarising figures in time, as Sturgeon herself acknowledged to The Shift's Sam Baker. The nature of the tribe in charge might have changed, but not the angry tribalism endemic in politics: so much for the patronising Barbieworld fantasy that if women ran the world, peace and love would rule the day.

With hindsight, though, what all three of those pioneer female leaders really represented was a longing for someone to break the mould, and that hasn't gone away. If anything, the impatience and frustration with mainstream politics building up in younger women suggests it is intensifying.

The Scottish journalist Alex Massie wrote this week of the English tendency to idolise Sturgeon from a distance, even as Scots who experienced her government's failings up close were losing patience with it. As an English journalist, I have to concede some truth in that. From a distance, it's too easy to get hung up on the performance of leadership, at which she genuinely did excel, and forget about what it

actually feels like to be governed by someone day in and day out. During the pandemic, I remember envying the way Scottish lockdown restrictions took into account children's need for play, but more broadly the thought and seriousness that seemed to be going into Sturgeon's policymaking when Johnson was still making jokes about squashing sombreros or turning a blind eye to drunken parties.

Yet death rates in Scotland weren't noticeably better than in England, for reasons the Covid inquiry is still exploring. Meanwhile, in New Zealand, Ardern was failing to hit her much-vaunted targets on child poverty, a reminder that personal values don't necessarily trump the realities of a post-lockdown economy.

The obvious moral to be drawn from all of this is that putting women on a pedestal simply because they're women makes no more sense than taking lumps out of them for the same reason: that in a mature democracy, they would be judged simply on results. Since the least interesting thing about Kemi Badenoch's increasingly erratic leadership of the Conservative party is her gender, perhaps it's not too much to hope that we're moving in that direction: that the joy of being the third or fourth or fifth woman through the door is that eventually people simply cease to care. But, if so, it will be the Sturgeons and the Arderns and the Merks, with all their flaws, who paved the way.

The Guardian

Slaughter dressed up as humanitarian aid: So-called Gaza Humanitarian Foundation

‘Gaza is on the verge of economic and humanitarian collapse. People live day to day, always at risk from hunger and disease,’ notes a UN report. Yet these words were written not in 2025, but by the Independent UN Commission of Inquiry on Gaza in 2019.

Israel has enforced a blockade on the Gaza Strip since 2007. No one and nothing enters or leaves without Israeli permission, including at the crossing to Egypt. Every import and every exit requires an application to Israeli authorities. Human Rights Watch has repeatedly called Gaza the world's largest open-air prison. Between 2017 and 2021, Israel blocked materials needed to maintain the water system. In 2017, the UN stated that 97% of Gaza's water was undrinkable. Oxfam concluded the same year that Gaza was the most water-scarce place on earth.

From 2023 onward, Gaza became the target of genocide. From the first days, the blockade on essentials was radically expanded. On Oct. 8, 2023, then-Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant announced there would be "no electricity, no food, no fuel," because Israel was fighting "human animals." The total blockade, combined with unprecedented bombardment, turned Gaza into the greatest humanitarian crisis of the 21st century.

During this genocide, international agencies, especially the UN, struggled to keep civilians alive. More than 400 distribution points tried to provide the bare minimum. Political pressure was needed again and again. There were 11 UN resolutions in all, 4 by the Security Council, 5 by the

General Assembly and 2 by the Human Rights Council, calling on Israel to enable sufficient humanitarian aid. Israel dismantled every channel through which aid could be delivered. More than 900 humanitarian workers have been killed in Gaza since the genocide began. Never before in any war has the toll on aid workers been so high.

By March 2025, the total blockade hardened into an open starvation strategy. "We have decided to stop all deliveries into Gaza, including food, water and aid," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared on March 2, 2025. Barely two months later, in May, Israel and the US rolled out the so-called Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF). This, Israeli officials said, would be the new and only route for humanitarian aid. Rumors of a new distribution mechanism had circulated since February, a design Israel was planning with US partners. Coverage of those plans was overshadowed by Donald Trump's "Gaza Plan." In a joint press conference with Prime Minister Netanyahu in Washington on Feb. 4, 2025, Trump publicly declared the intention of the US to "take over" the Gaza Strip. That the GHF sits inside this vision follows from statements by GHF officials. In June 2025, Executive Chairman Johnnie Moore Jr. said: "The United States will take full responsibility for the future of Gaza."

It is not a purely American venture. Logistical coordination at the GHF is led by Israeli Brigadier General Yaakov Baruch. Despite its name, the GHF is not a foundation; it is a political-military organization.

Tarek Bae

Alongside the Israeli military, mercenaries from the US are involved. According to The Times of Israel, Jared Kushner, son-in-law of Trump, is the chief architect of the idea. The US initially put 30 million (\$35 million) into the project, with further pledges. In July 2025, Trump complained that no one had expressed gratitude. But what exactly should anyone thank the GHF, Israel, or the US for? GHF spokesperson Shahar Segal offers an answer. "It is frustrating to see people constantly blaming Israel, when in reality it is Israeli logistics that ensure humanitarian food reaches those who desperately need it. The GHF model is saving lives." Is that true? No. Among the familiar set of claims used to relativize the genocide is the allegation that allowing international aid only helps Hamas. Again and again, the line is that aid never reaches civilians. Another claim is that Hamas steals humanitarian supplies. The conclusion is clear: this is propaganda.

Videos of armed guards on trucks or of lootings by armed gangs have been presented by Israel, in a misleading fashion, as Hamas seizures. The GHF more effective at distributing aid? Not at all. Instead of the 400 international distribution points that once existed, Israel's blockade and the imposition of the GHF have left only 4 highly militarized sites, with just 1 in the densely populated north. The UN calculates that Gaza's basic humanitarian need amounts to around 600 truckloads a day. By its own account, the GHF moves at most 26 truckloads daily, roughly 4% of what is required. In a territory facing

acute hunger, such an amount is not small—it is nothing.

According to the IPC Famine Review Committee, the whole of Gaza has been in IPC Phase 5 since July, the highest alert, a catastrophic food emergency. People in this phase are at immediate risk of starvation. More than 700,000 people have gone days without any food. The UN special rapporteur on the right to food, Michael Fakhri, was blunt: "Israel has made clear its intention to starve everyone in Gaza."

What Israel and the US call a distribution mechanism and a foundation is, in the words of Doctors Without Borders, "slaughter dressed up as humanitarian aid." Starving civilians are forced to walk up to 40 kilometers (25 miles) under the burning sun to reach GHF sites. Arrival does not guarantee help. More than 1,881 starving civilians have been killed at or near GHF distribution sites. The Israeli army regularly fires indiscriminately into the waiting crowd.

What does it distract from? Netanyahu has said the plan out loud. On May 11, according to the Israeli outlet Maariv, he tied aid to permanent expulsion. Those who receive aid at a given place should never see that place again and must evacuate. "The residents of Gaza whom we are expelling will not return. They will no longer be there. We will control the place. There is no other war aim. All other goals are mere eyewash." By the Israeli government's own account, the GHF is a means to drive Palestinians out of Gaza or to let them die, by deliberately starving them, denying supplies, and cutting off humanitarian aid.

Death of reading is a civilisational catastrophe

Kara Kennedy

If you’ve made it this far, congratulations: you’re doing something most of your countrymen can’t. You’re reading, not scrolling, not skimming, not letting TikTok spoon-feed you dopamine while your eyes glaze over. Actual reading. Consecutive sentences. Whole paragraphs.

It's a vanishing practice, according to new data. The numbers are apocalyptic. Researchers at the University of Florida and University College London have found that, in America, reading for leisure has collapsed by 40 per cent in just two decades. In Britain, according to the National Literacy Trust, the percentage of children who say they enjoy reading has plummeted by more than a third, while the number aged between eight and 18 who read daily has been cut in half. The verdict is in: books have lost to phones.

And when reading goes, so does everything else. Literacy isn't ornamental. It is the bedrock of thought, imagination, politics, democracy itself. Strip it away, and what remains? A public incapable of parsing a story, let alone a policy. Already, 43 million American adults have what the government delicately calls "low literacy skills". The cheerier headlines

insist that at least young women are still "reading", thanks to something called "BookTok". But what are they reading? According to reports, the hottest sellers are "the smuttiest, spiciest erotic novels" the publishing industry can churn out. This is not a literacy renaissance; it's a paperback version of junk food, or maybe more analogously, internet porn. If civilisation rests on werewolf fetishes, we may be in trouble.

Otherwise, no. Talk to teachers, and the picture turns bleak. Pupils twitch for their phones after three pages, as if suffering withdrawal. A professor told me his college students – legal adults – glaze over after a few paragraphs. He finally banned phones in his classroom. Miraculously, they began to read again. And the official response to this collapse of attention? More screens. More apps. More "gamified learning". The same poison repackaged as medicine.

Suggest banning phones and you'll be accused of authoritarianism. Just this week, one prominent tech reporter, Taylor Lorenz, lamented that phone bans in schools "harm the most marginalised kids" since "for many underprivileged kids their phones are their only word processor". God forbid children be forced to

look at words on a paper page. Meanwhile, the adults are just as guilty. Parents outsource parenting to iPads. Schools treat literacy as a boutique concern rather than the foundation of civilisation.

Politicians prattle on about "innovation" and "equity" while shrugging at the fact that an entire generation can no longer follow a story longer than a tweet. And Silicon Valley? They're delighted. An illiterate, screen-addicted population is their dream market: easy to manipulate, impossible to resist. At home, of course, the tech elite send their children to phone-free Waldorf schools. "I don't generally want my kids to be sitting in front of a TV or a computer for a long period of time," Mark Zuckerberg once said. Quite. Every year, fewer children read. Every year, more adults sink into functional illiteracy. The cultural muscles of focus, imagination, and memory wither further. We are not drifting into dystopia. We are sprinting toward idiocracy, eyes glued to a screen. We're seeing the start of it now. History becomes gossip. Politics becomes memes. Culture becomes noise. The end won't be televised. It will be reduced to bullet points for an audience that can no longer follow a sentence.



Minister urges govt academia collaboration to shape digital future

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on Saturday stressed the need of government, academia and private collaboration to shape Pakistan's digital future as well as harnessing the Blockchain and digital assets for growth.

Addressing the 'Leadership Summit on Blockchain and Digital Assets: Technology and Innovation', which was organized in collaboration with LUMS, the minister stressed that with millions of Pakistanis, especially youth, already engaged in blockchain and digital assets.

The country must embrace this shift as part of its new economy by fostering financial inclusion, transparency and efficiency, while ensuring a balanced regulatory framework through collaboration between government, academia and the private sector, he added.

The event brought together stakeholders from academia, industry and government to deliberate

on the future of blockchain, digital assets and emerging technologies in the country.

The minister underscored the importance of embracing technological innovation to align with the global transition towards the digital economy. He highlighted that while Pakistan is making strides in achieving macroeconomic stability, the next imperative is to actively participate in shaping the new economy driven by blockchain, artificial intelligence, and Web 3.0 technologies.

He noted that an estimated 20 to 25 million Pakistanis, primarily youth, are already engaged in blockchain and digital asset-related activities. "This scale of participation cannot be ignored," he remarked, stressing the need for acknowledgment, education and structured policy responses to harness this growing trend.

He emphasized three key drivers for blockchain adoption in Pakistan: financial inclusion, transparency and speed. By enabling

faster, cheaper and more efficient transactions, blockchain and allied technologies can provide critical solutions for banking, remittances, agriculture, IT, freelancing and energy.

He cited successful initiatives such as the development of e-KYC systems through blockchain, which reduce duplication of compliance processes in banking, as practical examples of progress.

He also outlined the regulatory dimension of this transformation. He cautioned that given the scale of activity, ignoring digital assets could expose Pakistan to risks related to KYC, AML, sanctions, and monitoring, potentially reversing hard-earned progress on the FATF front.

In this context, he highlighted the establishment of the Pakistan Virtual Asset Regulatory Authority (PVARA), whose inaugural meeting is scheduled for next week, as a milestone towards a balanced regulatory framework.

Senator Aurangzeb

stressed that Pakistan must leverage international experience, drawing on models from Dubai, Singapore and the EU, while ensuring that national interests remain paramount. He commended the support received from international experts and organizations in helping Pakistan fast-track its regulatory and policy frameworks.

Senator Aurangzeb reiterated the government's commitment to fostering an enabling environment while allowing the private sector to lead innovation, with academia providing knowledge and talent. He said this trilateral partnership of government, academia, and private sector is essential to scaling up our journey into the new economy.

The minister congratulated LUMS and the organizers of the summit for their leadership and reaffirmed the government's commitment to supporting all initiatives that accelerate Pakistan's journey into the digital and blockchain-driven future.



LAHORE Federal Minister for Planning Development & Special initiatives Ahsan Iqbal addressing a reception ceremony on receiving Nishan-e-Imtiaz organised by Institution of Engineers Pakistan.

Price control committee reviews food prices

BAHAWALPUR (APP): A joint meeting of the Price Control Committee and Price Fixation Committee was held under the chairmanship of Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue), Captain (Retired) Tayyab Sami Khan, with the objective of providing price relief to the public.

The meeting was attended by Member Provincial Assembly (MPA) Sadia Bilal, Assistant Commissioners, and representatives of Anjuman-e-Tajiran (Traders Association).

Speaking on the occasion, ADC (Revenue) Tayyab Sami Khan emphasized that the sale of essential food items at officially fixed rates must be strictly ensured across the district. He directed that updated price lists be prominently displayed at all retail outlets to ensure transparency and facilitate consumers.

He further instructed that strict legal action be taken against profiteers and hoarders, reiterating that no leniency would be shown to violators. Price Control Magistrates were directed to remain active in the field, conduct regular inspections, and take immediate action wherever discrepancies are found.

The meeting included a detailed review of the prevailing prices of essential commodities, and adjustments were considered where necessary to reflect market conditions while ensuring consumer protection.

The district administration reaffirmed its commitment to stabilizing market prices and protecting public interest through vigilant monitoring and collaboration with stakeholders.

ICCI urges reforms for better business environment

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Saturday urged the urgent need for comprehensive reforms to improve the ease of doing business in the country, terming it vital for attracting investment, boosting economic activity, and creating employment opportunities.

It said that despite efforts in recent years, businesses continue to face challenges in regulatory compliance, taxation, energy availability, and infrastructure which hinder competitiveness, said a press release.

President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, said that the business community is ready to

play its role in strengthening the economy, but requires a more business-friendly environment to thrive. He emphasized that reducing red tape, ensuring policy consistency, and providing one-window facilitation for investors are key steps that the government must take on priority.

He added that special focus should be given to SMEs, which form the backbone of Pakistan's economy, by simplifying licensing procedures, expanding access to finance, and offering digital solutions for regulatory processes.

Senior Vice President Abdul Rehman Siddiqui highlighted that regional competitors have made significant progress by adopting business-friendly

reforms, and Pakistan cannot afford to lag behind.

He stressed that improvement in ease of doing business indicators will not only strengthen domestic industries but also enhance the country's ability to attract foreign direct investment.

Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry reaffirmed ICCI's commitment to working closely with the government to identify bottlenecks, propose practical solutions, and mobilize the business community towards reforms.

He urged all stakeholders to collaborate in creating a predictable, transparent, and enabling business environment to put Pakistan on the path of sustainable economic growth.

FDA embraces digital transformation

FAISALABAD (APP): The Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA) is making a major stride toward modernization with the implementation of a new financial and property management system under the Punjab Urban Land System Enhancement (PULSE) project.

Chairing an awareness session, Director Finance and IT Yasir Ijaz Chattha stated that the initiative aims to accelerate service delivery, update official records, and enhance transparency across all office operations.

He noted that the new system is in line with the vision of the Director General to modernize Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA) services. As part of the PULSE project, an integrated financial management system will be introduced, replacing outdated fee collection methods.

Under the new system, applicants will no longer be required to visit banks to make payments. Instead, transactions will be verified instantly, enabling real-time processing of official

tasks. Chattha emphasized the need for a paperless workflow and encouraged staff to familiarize themselves with the system to ensure its smooth and successful implementation.

During the session, staff were briefed on e-challan-based fee collection procedures, data entry protocols, and the verification process across departments.

They were also instructed to strictly follow the new guidelines to enhance FDA performance and reinforce public trust.

FCEPL commissions 3.4MW solar power plant in Sahiwal

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The FrieslandCampina Engro Pakistan Limited (FCEPL) has commissioned a 3.4-megawatt solar power system at its Sahiwal manufacturing facility in collaboration with REON Energy Limited. The project was inaugurated by Kashan Hassan, Managing Director, FCEPL, who termed it a "major milestone in advancing sustainable operations and clean energy transition within Pakistan's dairy sector."

"This investment reflects our unwavering commitment to protecting the planet while nourishing Pakistan with high-quality dairy nutrition," said Mr. Kashan. "we believe in doing dairy right and by integrating renewable energy into our value chain, we are not only reducing our environmental footprint but also building resilience and saving the planet for the generations to come."

The solar installation is



designed to generate over 5,000 MWh annually, replacing conventional fossil fuel-based electricity and reducing approximately 2,500 tonnes of CO₂ emissions each year. This initiative directly supports Pakistan's progress on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption

and Production), and SDG 13 (Climate Action).

Pakistan has committed to deriving 60 per cent of its energy from renewable sources by 2030, in line with global climate agreements.

Industry analysts note that private sector initiatives such as this complement national renewable energy targets and underscore the growing role of businesses in advancing cli-

mate resilience.

FrieslandCampina Engro Pakistan's transition toward renewable energy is part of its larger Net Zero ambition, combining environmental responsibility with nutrition and well-being. With this project, the company continues to demonstrate that economic growth, sustainability, and community welfare can move forward together.

Annual Monsoon Tree Plantation Campaign: PC, Hashoo Group and CDA join PM's drive

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In alignment with Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif's nationwide annual monsoon Tree Plantation Campaign, themed for the first week as "One Daughter - One Tree," PC Hospitality Division, Hashoo Group, one of Asia's leading hospitality conglomerates, in collaboration with the Capital Development Authority (CDA), organized a large-scale tree plantation drive in the green belt of Main Constitution Avenue, Islamabad. Senior management of both organizations, along with employees, actively participated in planting a wide variety of trees, reinforcing their commitment to a greener, healthier future.

The initiative drew inspiration from the Prime Minister's vision, particularly the themes of "One Daughter - One Tree," "Green Canopy," "One Tree in the Name of Every Martyr," and "Islam and Tree Plantation." Employees planted saplings alongside their daughters, symbolizing the nurturing bond between future generations and the environment.

A green canopy promises shade, clean air, and ecological balance, while trees planted in memory of the nation's martyrs serve as living symbols of sacrifice. The campaign also highlighted tree plantation as an integral part of Islamic values, where caring for nature is both an act of faith and a moral duty.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Bastien Blanc, CEO PC Hospitality - Hashoo Group, said: "Tree plantation is more than placing saplings in the soil - it is a symbol of nurturing life, growth, and future potential. At Hashoo Group, we are deeply committed to sustainability and regenerative practices that preserve the natural beauty of Pakistan while supporting long-term tourism development. This year's theme, One Daughter - One Tree, deeply resonates with our values. It reminds us of the importance of nurturing both our environment and the incredible female talent across the country. Hashoo Group has long championed the empowerment of women, actively creating opportunities for them to grow, lead, and thrive within the hospitality industry.

By standing with CDA and embracing the Prime Minister's vision, we proudly demonstrate our responsibility towards climate action and national pride. Together, we are building a greener tomorrow."

Awais Manzoor Tarar, DG Environment CDA, added: "This drive reflects the spirit of the Prime Minister's campaign, which combines environmental responsibility with social and religious values. Every tree planted today is a step towards combating climate change and strengthening national resilience. CDA is proud to collaborate with Hashoo Group in making Islamabad greener and healthier for its citizens."

This partnership between PC Hospitality Division, Hashoo Group, and CDA underscores the importance of unity in addressing climate change, expanding forest cover, and promoting sustainable practices. By envisioning Pakistan's green flag mirrored in its landscapes, the plantation drive sends a powerful message that building a resilient and eco-friendly future is a shared responsibility.

WS rallies, dollar drops

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): Wall Street shares rallied Friday as US Federal Reserve chief Jerome Powell left the door open to cutting interest rates, which also sent the dollar dropping against the euro and other major currencies.

Investors had been eagerly waiting for Powell's speech all week, hoping to hear hints that the Fed would cut rates at its next meeting in September to spur economic growth.

New York's three main indexes surged following his remarks, rebounding after a tech sell-off this week. European stock markets also got a bump in afternoon deals, though the gains were limited by the impact of President Donald Trump's tariffs on the German economy, which shrank in the second quarter.

In his speech at the annual symposium of global central bankers in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, Powell warned that risks of higher inflation and a weakening jobs market meant a "challenging situation."

"Downside risks to employment are rising," Powell said, adding that the effects of Trump's tariffs on consumer prices "are now clearly visible."

"With policy in restrictive territory, the baseline outlook and the shifting balance of risks may warrant adjusting our policy stance," he said.

Powell has come under intense public pressure this year from Trump to lower rates.

But the independent central bank has kept benchmark interest rates steady at a range of between 4.25 percent and 4.50 percent since its last reduction in December.

Rupee weakens against major currencies, USD climbs to Rs284.10

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The According to data released by the Exchange Companies Association of Pakistan, the Pakistani Rupee depreciated against major international currencies. The US Dollar rose from Rs283.55 to Rs284.10

in the open market.

The Euro also saw an upward trend, trading at Rs332.77, while the British Pound reached Rs384.14. The Japanese Yen recorded a slight increase, now valued at Rs1.94 against the Rupee.

Minor gains were also observed in the exchange rates of the UAE Dirham and the Saudi Riyal, although specific figures were not provided.

Interbank exchange rates were not reported in this update.

CEJ marks a decade of excellence in evolving media landscape of Pakistan

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Center for Excellence in Journalism (CEJ) at IBA celebrated its 10-year journey of shaping the future of Journalism in Pakistan with a grand event titled, "A Decade of Excellence" held at the JS Auditorium, City Campus. The event brought together distinguished journalists, media professionals, academics, diplomats, and students to commemorate IBA-CEJ's contributions in strengthening ethical, innovative, and impactful journalism in Pakistan.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. S Akbar Zaidi, Executive Director, IBA Karachi, emphasized IBA-CEJ's importance in academia and media practice. He appreciated the continued support of the US Consulate in Karachi. Reflecting on the past decade, he noted the rise of Artificial Intelligence and emphasized the need to re-examine the state of journalism in Pakistan. He hoped this milestone would encourage meaningful dialogue between jamhooriyat (democracy) and sahafat (journalism), for the greater good of the public and the country.

Scott Urbom, US Consul General in Karachi, acknowledged the Center's long-standing partnership with the US government in promoting press freedom and empowering journalists, praising CEJ as a leader in advancing professional journalism, nurturing



the next generation of dedicated and courageous Pakistani journalists, and fostering transparency, skills development, and citizen empowerment. He reaffirmed the US commitment to supporting institutions like IBA-CEJ that uphold freedom of expression and help build stronger ties between nations.

Renowned journalist, Hamid Mir, reflected on the challenges faced by Pakistani media and the way forward. He emphasized that Journalism in Pakistan has become increasingly challenging in recent times, with both overt and subtle forms of censorship restricting open dialogue. In some cases, interviews and programs are unable to air due to various pressures and threats. Such constraints not only limit press freedom but also raise

concerns about the broader implications for democratic values and governance.

During the session, renowned journalist, Mr. Azhar Abbas, shared his views, stating that journalists are being harassed and silenced. Reflecting on the current newsroom environment, he said newsrooms are under pressure to toe the line, and in some cases, the very right to ask questions is under threat. Mr. Shahzaib Jillani, Director IBA-CEJ, thanked the guests, journalists, and partners for celebrating 10 successful years of the Center. He reflected on how journalists and reporters have benefited from IBA-CEJ's trainings and workshops and acknowledged all those who played a role in shaping IBA-CEJ into a leading center for Journalism.

The event also featured engaging panel sessions, including a thought-provoking discussion on artificial intelligence in journalism by young innovators, and a fact-checking presentation on countering disinformation led by iVerify. Notable figures such as Dr. Ishrat Husain, Former Dean & Director, IBA Karachi, and Dr. Lawrence Pintak, Founding Dean, Murrow College of Communication, Washington State University, a Renowned Journalist, Academic Leader, and Media Development Expert, also shared their reflections on IBA-CEJ's journey through video messages. Since its inception in 2015, IBA-CEJ has trained thousands of journalists, collaborated with international partners, and pioneered fact-checking initiatives in Pakistan.



South Africa recall trio for England T20 series

CAPE TOWN (Agencies): South Africa have recalled David Miller, Keshav Maharaj and Donovan Ferreira to their T20 squad for the white-ball tour of England next month.

Middle-order batter Miller, 36, and 35-year-old spin bowler Maharaj missed the recent T20 tour of Australia, which the hosts won 2-1. Big-hitting Ferreira last played for his country in the shortest format in December but has been in good form in franchise cricket, including in this summer's Hundred competition.

The Proteas will play three one-day internationals and three T20s on their tour of the UK, which begins on 2 September.

All-rounder Marco Jansen, 25, and fast bowler Lizaad Williams, 31, are also included after recent injuries. Teenage fast bowler Kwená Maphaka has been retained in the ODI squad as cover for Kagiso Rabada, who is continuing his recovery from an ankle injury.

Paceman Rabada, who has almost 250 white-ball wickets, will travel with the ODI squad and is expected to be available for all three T20s. "We'll reassess Kagiso in England," said head coach Shukri Conrad. "We are hopeful that he will be available for part of the ODI series, but we're prioritising T20 cricket and will take a conservative approach. We won't rush him back." Both teams are building towards the 2026 T20 WC, which is being held in India and Sri Lanka in February and March.

The opening game of the tour is the first ODI at Headingley on 2 September (13:00 BST).

England have included uncapped fast bowler Sonny Baker in their squad for the ODIs.

England vs South Africa fixtures & squads

September

2 1st ODI, Headingley (d/n) (13:00 BST)

4 2nd ODI, Lord's (d/n) (13:00 BST)

7 3rd ODI, Utilita Bowl, Southampton (11:00 BST)

10 1st Twenty20 international, Cardiff (d/n) (18:30 BST)

12 2nd Twenty20 international, Emirates Old Trafford (d/n) (18:30 BST)

14 3rd Twenty20 international, Trent Bridge (14:30 BST)

England ODI squad for South Africa: Harry Brook (captain), Rehan Ahmed, Jofra Archer, Sonny Baker, Tom Banton, Jacob Bethell, Jos Buttler (wk), Brydon Carse, Ben Duckett, Will Jacks, Saqib Mahmood, Jamie Overton, Adil Rashid, Joe Root, Jamie Smith (wk).

England T20 squad for South Africa: Harry Brook (captain), Rehan Ahmed, Jofra Archer, Tom Banton, Jacob Bethell, Jos Buttler (wk), Brydon Carse, Liam Dawson, Ben Duckett, Will Jacks, Saqib Mahmood, Jamie Overton, Adil Rashid, Phil Salt, Jamie Smith (wk), Luke Wood.

South Africa ODI squad to face England: Temba Bavuma (captain), Corbin Bosch, Matthew Breetzke, Dewald Brevis, Nandre Burger, Tony de Zorzi, Keshav Maharaj, Kwená Maphaka, Aiden Markram, Wiaan Mulder, Senuran Muthusamy, Lungi Ngidi, Lhuan-dre Pretorius, Kagiso Rabada, Ryan Rickelton, Tristan Stubbs.

South Africa T20 squad to face England: Aiden Markram (captain), Corbin Bosch, Dewald Brevis, Donovan Ferreira, Marco Jansen, Keshav Maharaj, Kwená Maphaka, David Miller, Senuran Muthusamy, Lungi Ngidi, Lhuan-dre Pretorius, Kagiso Rabada, Ryan Rickelton, Tristan Stubbs, Lizaad Williams.

No place for Mehidy in Bangladesh Asia Cup squad

DHAKA (Agencies): Mehidy Hasan Miraz could not find a place in Bangladesh's 16-member squad for the Asia Cup but fellow all-rounder Saif Hassan and wicketkeeper-batter Nurul Hasan have been picked for the Twenty20 competition in the United Arab Emirates next month. Mehidy, who was named Bangladesh's 50-overs captain in June,

Mohsin Naqvi says sports ties with India will only be on equal terms

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi has said that all future discussions with the Indian cricket board will be held on a level playing field, declaring that the era of "begging" is over.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony of the GRT club at the Ghani Institute of Cricket in Lahore on Saturday, PCB chairman stressed that team selection is the sole responsibility of the selection committee.

Setting aside the speculations, Naqvi categorically clarified that he played no role in including or excluding players from the squad.

"Selectors are professionals and have been instructed to make decisions strictly on merit."

He praised the role of local clubs in promoting the sport, describing their efforts as commendable, and noted that women's teams are also actively participating at such venues.

Commenting on PCB's policy regarding the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), Naqvi maintained that any dialogue would only be pursued based on equality. "The time has passed when we would go begging to them."

The PCB chief also expressed optimism about the national side's future, assuring that the team's



performance would soon be visible. He further stated that all those requiring visas for Dubai to attend the upcoming Asia Cup would be granted them without difficulty.

Naqvi chairs 80th meeting of PCB Board of Governors: Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Mohsin Naqvi chaired 80th meeting of the PCB Board of Governors to review the measures to improve the quality of cricket.

The meeting was attended by Board of Governors members Anwar Ghani, Zaheer Abbas, Sajjad Ali Khokhar, Zafarullah, Tanveer Ahmed, Ismail Qureshi, Tariq Sarwar and others.

PCB Chief Operating Officer Sameer Ahmed, Chief Executive Officer PSL Salman Naseer, Chief Financial Officer International Cricket, Media and Communication, Domestic Cricket, Human Resources, Head of Women's Cricket

and officials of the Legal Department also attended the meeting.

During the meeting detailed discussion were made on improving team performance in international cricket. The detailed briefing was given on grassroots level initiatives to promote women's cricket, domestic cricket and bringing forward young talent.

Board of Governors also reviewed on the upgradation of High Performance Centers. The meeting also approved the updated financial rules of the PCB besides the reappointment of auditors for the current financial year.

During Board of Governors meeting, approval was given for procedural changes for adoption of Global Anti-Corruption Code and changes in procedures for scrutiny of clubs. The meeting ratified the decisions of the 78th and 79th meetings of the BOG.

Djokovic narrows focus in pursuit of 25th Grand Slam

NEW YORK (AFP): Former tennis world number one Novak Djokovic says the expansion of most ATP Masters 1000 events to 12 days makes them "just way too long for me" as he focuses on his pursuit of a record 25th Grand Slam title.

"To be quite frank with you, I don't enjoy the two-week Masters events anymore," Djokovic said Friday as he spoke to reporters before the Sunday start of the US Open -- the last Grand Slam of 2025.

"It's just way too long for me. My focus is mostly on the Slams, and I have said that before. "But I also like other tournaments. I'd like to play more of the other tournaments, but I just, we have currently informally, unofficially, 12 Grand Slams a year when you think about it.

"Grand Slam is two weeks and the other Masters events are almost two weeks, as well."

At 38, the former world number one says his priorities have changed in the latter stages of his career.

"I'm not chasing the rankings or building up my points or defending, et

cetera," Djokovic said. "I just don't think about it anymore.

"For me, it's really about where do I find motivation and joy? Where will I be inspired to play the best tennis? And where do I care to be, really, and play?" With family now at the forefront of his life, Djokovic said, he is less willing to miss out on major personal milestones.

He noted that his daughter's birthday falls on September 2, when he could find himself playing in the US Open quarter-finals. "But those are types of things that I really don't want to be missing anymore," he said.

Throwing the first pitch

Djokovic, long an advocate for player input in matters such as scheduling and player compensation, said he does not see how the Masters 1000s -- which shifted this year from one-week to 12-days -- could go back to the previous format.

Canada and Cincinnati in the run-up to the US Open became 12-day events this year. "In the end of the day, when the players needed to be active and when there was a time of negotiations and decision-making, play-

ers weren't participating enough," he said.

Djokovic himself has not played since a comprehensive semi-final loss to currently world number one Jannik Sinner at Wimbledon in July. He acknowledged that he is coming in "cold" in terms of match play, but said he had been training hard as he eyes a return to the later stages of the US Open.

A four-time winner in Flushing Meadows, Djokovic suffered his earliest Grand Slam exit since 2017 when he lost to Australia's Alexei Popyrin in the third round of last year's tournament. But this week Djokovic has taken some time to explore New York as well, notably throwing out the ceremonial first pitch at a New York Yankees baseball game.

"It was a great experience," said Djokovic, adding that he met Yankees slugger Aaron Judge. He also thought he acquitted himself well with his pitch. "I didn't throw that accurate, but it still wasn't as embarrassing I think as some of the other guys I saw in the past."

Miller bags hat-trick in record 11-try win

SALFORD (Agencies): Australia scored 73 points against a helpless Samoa to record their largest-ever Women's Rugby World Cup victory in a perfect start to their tournament campaign.

The Wallaroos' 11 tries was also the most they have scored in a World Cup game, with their previous largest winning margin coming in a 62-0 win over South Africa in the 2010 tournament. Wing Desirée Miller bagged a first-half hat-trick as Joanne Yapp's side moved above England to lead Pool A on points difference.

Full-back Caitlyn Halse, the youngest player to represent Australia at a Women's World Cup at just 18, scored the pick of the first-half scores after hitting a brilliant line to race clear.

Former England captain Yapp will be confident her side can qualify for the knockout stages, but it is hard to know just how they will match up against the Red Roses, who are World Cup favourites, given the weak opposition they faced in Salford. "We



can take a lot of learnings, especially from that third quarter when we were defending for a lot of time," said Yapp, who will leave her role and return to the UK at the end of the tournament.

"It was good to see our girls step up physically before next week. "A lot of focus was on our kicking game during pre-season as we know at this World Cup we need to play smarter.

"I also thought the players executed that really well." Samoa, who are fully amateur and ranked 15th in the world, are competing at their first Women's World Cup since 2014. A large portion of the Salford crowd got behind

the second-lowest ranked side in the tournament, but strong defence prevented them from crossing in an improved second-half performance. "We knew we could be some people's second team," Samoa head coach Ramsey Tomokino told BBC Sport.

"It was great to hear the support, but I don't think we will hear it next week [against England]." The Wallaroos next face the United States in York on Saturday, which will probably decide who will qualify alongside England for the quarter-finals.

England comfortably defeated the United States 69-7 in their opening game, with head coach

Trump says 2026 WC draw set for December in Washington

WASHINGTON (AFP/APP): US President Donald Trump announced Friday that the draw for the 2026 World Cup will be held in Washington on December 5 -- and then jokingly asked if he could keep the golden trophy for himself.

The draw for the 48-team football championship will be held at the Kennedy Center in the US capital, where Trump recently installed himself as chairman in what he called a war on "woke" culture.

"It's the biggest, probably the biggest event in sports," Trump, flanked by FIFA chief Gianni Infantino, said as he made the announcement in the Oval Office of the White House. The 2026 World Cup is being hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico next year, and Trump has made a big deal about it happening during his presidency.

Infantino, who has fostered close ties with the billionaire US president, brought the World Cup with him for the announcement and even let Trump get his hands on it.

"Only the FIFA president, presidents of countries, and then those who win can touch it, because it's for winners only. And since you are a winner, of course you can as well touch it," Infantino said.

"Can I keep it?" replied Trump, who won a second term in the White House last year, as he lifted the tro-

phy with both hands. "That's a beautiful piece of gold."

Trump appeared to be joking -- although the separate FIFA Club World Cup trophy remains in the Oval Office more than a month after English side Chelsea won it in New Jersey last month.

- Putin 'may be coming and he may not' -

There was a brief moment of nerves as Trump appeared to fumble the World Cup before placing it on his desk -- as Infantino reached out a hand to steady it. Infantino later presented the US leader with a giant ticket -- Row 1 Seat 1 -- for the World Cup final on July 19 at the MetLife stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey, just outside New York.

Trump also suggested that Russian President Vladimir Putin may attend the World Cup. Holding up a photo that he said Putin had sent him after their summit in Alaska last week, Trump said the Kremlin chief "wants to be there very badly," but that he "may be coming and he may not" depending on the outcome of Ukraine peace efforts.

The United States was named as a joint host of the 2026 World Cup during Trump's first term as president in 2018. He lost the 2020 election to Joe Biden but won a second term last year. Since his return to power, Trump has launched a major crack-

down on immigration, but he said it would be "very easy" for most World Cup fans to get a visa.

For visitors from some countries, it would be "obviously a little bit more difficult," said Trump, who has banned all travelers from 12 nations including Afghanistan, Haiti and Iran.

- 'Trump-Kennedy Center' -

The World Cup draw was reportedly due to be held in Las Vegas but the new venue has more political overtones. Trump led a takeover of the Kennedy Center earlier this year, saying that the venerable performing arts venue named after late Democratic president John F. Kennedy had become too "woke."

He added on Friday as he made the announcement that "some people refer to it as the Trump-Kennedy Center, but we're not prepared to do that quite yet, maybe in a week or so." Trump visited the Kennedy Center just before the Oval Office announcement on Friday. He has said he is going to make major improvements to "beautify" it, including adding marble cladding.

The US president also hailed a major federal crime crackdown in Washington that has seen US National Guard troops deployed on the streets of the capital. Trump said the move would make Washington safe for football fans visiting the city during next year's tournament.



Brennan Johnson (right) opens the scoring against Manchester City at the Etihad Stadium.

Pak team departs for ATF final

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan 12 & Under Tennis Team has departed for Singapore to participate in the finals of the ATF 12 & Under Team Competition, scheduled to be held from August 25 to 30.

Pakistan secured their place in the final after clinching the ATF 12 & Under Regional Qualifying Event of South Asia in Sri Lanka in May this year, said a press release.

The participating nations in the tournament include Iran, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, China, Korea, and Chinese Taipei.

The Pakistan team comprises Shayan Afridi, Rashid Bachani, Muhammad Ibraheem Hussain Gill, Muhammad Nameer Shamsi (captain).

Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi, President PTF, extended his best wishes to the squad and expressed confidence in the team's abilities. Our side is strong, and I am hopeful they will deliver excellent results in the tournament, he said. Col. (R) Zia-ud-din Tufail, Secretary General PTF, also said we look forward to the players best performance in this important competition.

John Mitchell revealing post-game that he will rotate his squad heavily for the game against Samoa next Saturday.

Given the Red Roses played two different teams across this year's Women's Six Nations and still won a fourth consecutive Grand Slam, the so-called 'second string' will likely put up a big score in Northampton.

But for Samoa it will be all part of the "learning curve for future World Cups". "Our players can be ambassadors for future Samoans to be here," Tomokino added.

"Everyone has got a story in terms of how they have got to here and they can share their story. "It feels right Samoa being back at the World Cup, we possibly could have been at a couple of others."

Spurs stun Man City at Etihad with Johnson & Palhinha goals

LONDON (Agencies): How to rally Tottenham after the Eberechi Eze farago: turn up at Manchester City and mastermind a dominant 2-0 triumph that takes your side to the top of the Premier League, for a few hours at least.

By doing so Thomas Frank issued a fine calling card regarding his professionalism, and suggested his Spurs project will be as strategic as Ange Postecoglou's was gung-ho. Witnessing how the visitors caused Pep Guardiola's men headaches all afternoon caused one way to question if Eze might change his mind (again) about which club to join.

Spurs missed a number of chances but were far more cutthroat than their hosts, as Brennan Johnson and João Palhinha's opening period goals took them back to north London with the points. City were just not allowed to enjoy any rhythm. Instead they were a discordant bunch who kept finding a Spurs player rushing up to undermine their composure.

Towards the end, Jérémy Doku wriggled through and found his fellow substitute Phil Foden but Micky van de Ven chopped the ball away. Moments after, Bernardo Silva, at a tight angle, headed on to the roof of the net.

"Good vibes" was Guardiola's description of the mood as City hoped to banish the spectre of last November's 4-0 humiliation here by Spurs, though an ill augury came early in a Rico Lewis-James Trafford mix-up. Hesitation between the right-back and the new goalkeeper, preferred to Ederson, allowed Richarlison to pounce. While City escaped, Trafford's performance was one to watch. Before this Pedro Porro committed a howler for the visitors: the right-back's header back for Guglielmo Vicario was weak, Oscar Marmoush took over and shot, but the

Spurs No 1 saved.

Marmoush was fashioned another opening when Erling Haaland lit up the contest with a bulldozing run that played those in black. After a lucky ricochet when challenged, the centre-forward slipped in the Egyptian: he took a glance and unloaded but Vicario repelled.

Guardiola always enthuses about Frank's managerial smarts and 35 minutes in the Dane showed how he already has Spurs drilled. Along the right Mohammed Kudus outfoxed Rúben Dias and put Richarlison through. The Brazilian ran forward, squared for Johnson, and the No 22 beat Trafford: the shot was close to the keeper but was hit hard so may claim mitigation if Guardiola scolds him about it.

The flag went up but the semi-automatic offside technology showed Richarlison had been outside. The goal stood, and Spurs' celebrations were soon to double.

Now, Trafford's shakiness came home to roost. The keeper dawdled when playing out from his goal, finally plumping for Nico González. The No 14 did not want it delivered close to his penalty spot anyway but Trafford passed only to Pape Matar Sarr, the ball went to Richarlison. He tried to shoot but failed, though the excellent Joao Palhinha did, driving the ball home on his full debut.

City were a mess and Guardiola's decision to choose Trafford over Ederson cast as quaint, however the Brazilian views his future (he may leave for Galatasaray) -- he is still an employee, after all.

The disarray of those in blue was summed up by two moments at the other end. Attack is supposed to be their forte. But first Rayan Cherki aped a pub player by hitting the first defender from a corner: then Haaland headed the same player's delivery to the heavens with Vicario's goal gaping.

City's backline had been

disrupted by the 23rd-minute injury to Rayan Aït-Nouri but he was replaced by Nathan Aké, a treble-winner, so this offered no mitigation for the first-half horror show.

The next time Trafford took the ball with Spurs at close quarters he coolly (and advisedly) launched a 50-yard pass for Marmoush, but the wide-man slipped and Guardiola spun away in disgust. The reaction showed how bitty his side's patterns were. At play in Spurs' ascendancy was City's greater ball share (60-40) not transmitting into the relentless pass-and-move of their finest years.

Instead of fluency, Guardiola's men hoped to prosper on scraps and moments. One came when Vicario did an unwitting impression of Trafford: the keeper passed sideways and near goal to Van de Ven, who must have cursed the Italian as he had Bobb for company. The Norwegian pilfered possession and tapped to Haaland, who passed to Cherki; at close-range the Frenchman went to pull the trigger but Palhinha, Spurs' star act, snuffed out the danger.

Guardiola began the day with no Foden, Rodri, Silva, Doku and Ederson (all substitutes), plus Manuel Akanji (left out completely for tactical reasons), yet could still field Haaland, Cherki, Marmoush, Tijjani Reijnders, and Bobb.

By the 54th-minute Cherki and Marmoush were hooked -- for Silva and Doku -- and still City were amateurish. Example: at a corner the ball popped up sweetly for Rico Lewis to let fly from outside the area -- he did, into the gods.

In the 74th-minute Foden and Rodri wandered on -- the Spaniard for his first action since being injured in City's 4-3 Al-Hilal Club World Cup knockout in early July.

Instantly, Rodri leaped to meet a corner and headed only into Vicario's gloves.



In brief

ANF launches crackdown against drug traffickers

RAWALPINDI (INP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) launched a crackdown against drug traffickers, conducting four operations in different parts of the country, adjacent to the educational institutions. During the operations, two drug suppliers were arrested and a total of 131.4 kilograms of drugs, valued at over Rs 109.3 million were seized. According to ANF spokesman, ANF recovered 33 kg of drugs from a vehicle near Yaru, Pishin and arrested a drug peddler. In another operation, ANF confiscated 1.4 kg of drugs from motorcyclist at Industrial Road, Korangi, Karachi. Meanwhile, in Quetta's Hazarganji area, 72 kg of drugs were recovered hidden in land, while 25 kg of drugs were found concealed in bushes near Old Pasni Road, Kech. The ANF said all cases have been registered under the Control of Narcotic Substances (CNS) Act, and further investigations are underway.

Police arrest 2 involved in jewelry theft

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Islamabad police have arrested two individuals suspected of involvement in multiple robberies, effectively dismantling a jewelry theft group. Police recovered gold jewelry worth over ten crore rupees from the suspects' possession. These arrests took place at the Khanna Police Station. The recovered jewelry represents a significant victory for law enforcement agencies in combating property-related crimes in the capital. The Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Islamabad reiterated the commitment to seeking justice, assuring the public that legal requirements against the alleged thieves will be fulfilled and appropriate punishments will be ensured. Further investigation is underway to determine the full extent of this criminal network and identify any potential accomplices. This operation demonstrates the police's dedication to maintaining public safety and holding criminals accountable.

FIA arrests 4 human smugglers

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has arrested four individuals involved in human smuggling in Gujrat and Gujranwala. The accused, identified as Sabir Hussain, Shamshad Ali, Talha, and Munir Ahmed Nishad, allegedly extorted millions of rupees from unsuspecting individuals by offering them fake job opportunities abroad. The FIA's Anti-Human Smuggling Circle carried out the operation that led to these arrests. The accused are suspected of targeting individuals seeking employment abroad and fraudulently obtaining large sums of money from them. Investigations are underway to ascertain the full extent of their illegal activities and identify potential victims. The FIA is committed to combating human smuggling and protecting vulnerable citizens from exploitation. The agency urges the public to remain vigilant and verify the credentials of any individual or organization offering overseas employment opportunities. Citizens are encouraged to report any suspicious activity to the FIA to aid in the efforts to dismantle these criminal networks.



Mohsin orders complete removal of encroachments in ICT

ISLAMABAD: (APP): Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has directed authorities concerned to ensure the complete elimination of encroachments in the Federal Capital and stressed that no leniency should be shown in this regard. Chairing a meeting at Capital Development Authority in Islamabad on Saturday, he instructed that an operation against illegal occupants should be conducted to clear the affected sectors by end of next month.

The Minister assigned specific tasks to SSP Operations, ADCG, and the Director of DMA in this regard.

The meeting focused on reviewing both ongoing and new development projects to facilitate the public in the capital. It was decided that the foundation stones for a flyover at T-Chowk and an underpass at Shaheen

Chowk would be laid in the beginning of September.

Mohsin Naqvi emphasized that housing societies must strictly comply with regulations or face legal action. He instructed the commencement of Phase One of the Diplomatic Enclave Upgradation Project, which will include work on the main entrance from Constitution Avenue, the adjoining road, boundary wall, cycling track, and a park.

The meeting also reviewed various models to make the Gandhara Heritage and Citizen Centre operational and discussed the remodeling of Daman-e-Koh to enhance public facilities. Progress on the under-construction sectors C-14, C-15, and C-16 was also reviewed, and the Interior Minister directed the early completion of work in the long-

delayed sectors E-12 and I-12 to hand over possession to allottees.

Additionally, he instructed the presentation of a comprehensive development plan for new sectors C-13, D-13, E-13, and F-13.

The Interior Minister further directed that the preliminary work for the construction of two five-star hotels in Islamabad be completed by the end of this year. During the briefing, it was informed that work on the first phase of the model jail in Islamabad is in progress and nearing completion, while land has also been allocated for the establishment of the Capital House.

The meeting was attended by CDA Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa, CDA members, ADCG, SSP Operations, and other senior officials.

CDA launches Mobile App to guide citizens on metro bus routes

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has launched its official "CDA Mobile App", designed to provide citizens with detailed information about metro and electric feeder bus routes and stops integrated with Google Maps.

The initiative aims to improve urban mobility and make public transport in Islamabad more accessible, convenient, and environmentally friendly, CDA spokesman said on Saturday.

Talking to APP, he said the announcement came during a high-level meeting, chaired by CDA Chairman and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Randhawa.

According to CDA spokesman, the app—available on both the Google Play Store and Apple App Store—features trip planning with estimated travel times, detailed route maps, bus stop information, and even tourism guidance to help visitors explore Islamabad's attractions.

The platform also serves as a channel for public announcements, such as route changes or updates. He said Chairman Randhawa emphasized the project's importance in modernizing Islamabad's public transport network. "The primary objective is to give citizens complete information about electric buses from their homes so they can plan their journeys optimally without facing inconveniences," he said.

The spokesman further said CDA officials were directed to launch a strong public awareness campaign about the service.

Future updates of the app will include real-time bus tracking on Google Maps and a digital fare payment system that supports QR codes, debit and credit cards, as well as mobile wallets like Easypaisa and JazzCash.

"We are keen to elevate the quality of bus service to international standards," he quoted Randhawa as saying, adding that new routes will be introduced based on passenger demand and

feedback.

Meanwhile, another CDA official also told APP that the new Zero Point Depot, currently under construction, will soon be activated to expand electric bus operations across Islamabad.

The integration of routes with Google Maps ensures that passengers can view buses with distinct colors and user-friendly stop details for easier navigation, he added.

The authority underscored that beyond convenience, the electric bus initiative is part of a broader plan to cut environmental pollution by reducing reliance on petrol and diesel vehicles.

"This initiative will not only provide comfortable and safe travel facilities but also play a key role in protecting the environment," he maintained.

Commuters can also access route maps and schedules on the CDA's official website: www.cda.gov.pk/public/cdaTransitMap.

Committee reviews arrangements for Eid Milad un Nabi

RAWALPINDI (APP): Additional Deputy Commissioner General Hassan Tariq chaired a meeting of the District Seerat-un-Nabi Committee at the Deputy Commissioner's Office here Saturday.

Representatives of Milad Committees from Rawalpindi City and Cantonment, along with DSP Security Sohail Ahmed and DSP Traffic Zafar Mahmood, attended the meeting.

The meeting reviewed in detail the arrangements for processions and celebrations to be held on

September 5 in connection with the 1500th anniversary of Eid Milad-un-Nabi.

Addressing the participants, Additional Deputy Commissioner General Hassan Tariq said that the government would utilize all available resources to facilitate the participants of the processions and celebrations on the occasion of Eid Milad-un-Nabi.

He emphasized that cleanliness, proper lighting, traffic management and foolproof security along the procession routes would be ensured. He further stated that it

was essential to remain vigilant against internal and external threats on such occasions.

Therefore, all Milad Committees and procession organizers must extend full cooperation with government departments to avoid any untoward incident.

During the meeting, the DSP Security briefed the participants about the security plan, while Traffic Police officials informed them about the measures taken to ensure smooth traffic flow and public convenience during the processions.

Strict crackdown launched against underage drivers in Murree

RAWALPINDI (APP): Murree Traffic Police have launched a strict crackdown on underage and unlicensed drivers Saturday, following the directives of DIG Traffic Muhammad Waqas Nazir. The campaign aims to ensure safe travel for the public across Punjab.

In a statement, Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Murree Waseem Akhtar said underage and unlicensed drivers not only endanger their own lives but also pose a serious risk to others on the road. He stressed that no underage or unlicensed individual would be allowed to drive cars or motorcycles under any circumstances. Special squads have been deployed across Murree district to take swift and strict action against violators of traffic rules. Challan tickets, heavy fines, and other legal measures are being enforced as part of the operation.

The CTO added that ensuring safe travel and protecting the lives and property of citizens remains the top priority of traffic police. He appealed to parents to prevent their underage children from driving and urged individuals above 18 to obtain valid driving licences without delay. Traffic Police Murree also issued a public message: "Follow traffic rules, stay safe, and keep others safe too."

Research, China, Dr. Fahad, UAJK, and Dr. Saleem UAJK. The organizers were of the view that workshop symbolizes the growing collaboration between Pakistan and China in advancing mineral exploration through modern science and technology.

Biased reconciliation panels obstruct justice in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The presence of politically affiliated members in Islamabad police station reconciliation committees is hindering justice, raising concerns about impartiality and fairness. Sources indicate that nearly every police station in the capital has committee members nominated by political parties, compromising the intended neutrality of these bodies.

These committees,

designed for mediating disputes, are reportedly being used by politically connected members to advance their own interests, rather than ensuring equitable resolutions.

Analysts suggest that appointing impartial individuals, vetted by law enforcement, would facilitate more effective resolution of domestic disputes, minor financial disagreements, and other local conflicts, thereby rein-

forcing the rule of law. Residents have called upon the Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Islamabad to conduct background checks on existing committee members and compile new lists of non-partisan individuals. This action, they contend, would restore the committees' original purpose and minimize political influence within police stations.

CM Punjab's vision praised for effective monsoon response

ISLAMABAD (APP): Punjab Minister for Housing and Urban Development, Bilal Yasin Saturday acknowledged the CM's leadership in making timely arrangements to face any challenges during the monsoon season and emphasized his oversight of the 'Apni Chhat Apna Ghar' program, setting examples by ensuring homes are allocated to those who truly deserve them.

In an exclusive interview with State News channel, Bilal Yasin highlighted that CM Maryam Nawaz prioritizes low-income communities, ensuring their welfare during the monsoon season. He praised her for actively reviewing safety measures and setting an example for other provinces, with continuous efforts from June 21 onwards to ensure roads are cleared within 2 to 3 hours after rain. Yasin also emphasized that Maryam Nawaz has leveraged technology to improve monsoon management, swiftly addressing challenges and guaranteeing public safety.

Her hands-on approach has made a significant difference in Punjab's response to the monsoon, setting a high standard for

efficiency, he added.

While replying to a query regarding the recent monsoon efforts, he said I must begin by acknowledging Maryam's exceptional leadership. She faced this season's challenges head-on, ensuring that all departments were on high alert, working around the clock day and night. Her strategic planning and tireless coordination at the district level have turned every campus into a hub of efficiency, with no water left standing after the rains, he added.

While many faced the storm with uncertainty, Maryam's unwavering commitment set a new precedent in Punjab, he mentioned. "Her work has not only protected our communities but has become a shining example for other provinces to emulate, he said, adding, her actions have turned a season of potential crisis into one of triumph, showcasing what true dedication can achieve in the face of adversity".

While discussing the 'Apni Chhat Apna Ghar' programme, he highlighted that it aims to provide homes based on merit. With around 750,000 applicants, we are distributing 2,000 plots across 19 districts, focusing on

major government land holdings.

This initiative is a significant step toward ensuring that those who truly deserve a home will receive one, creating lasting stability for families throughout the province, he added.

"We are also extending the 'Apni Chhat Apna Ghar' programme to include low-income government employees, recognizing their invaluable contributions, he said, adding, by offering them access to affordable housing, we aim to provide stability for those who serve the public tirelessly.

This addition underscores our commitment to supporting all segments of society, ensuring that even those with limited resources have the opportunity to own a home, he said, adding, it is a step toward greater equity and empowerment for our hardworking government employees.

Punjab Minister Bilal concluded with a strong assurance that the Maryam Nawaz Initiative is unmatched in its approach, emphasizing that merit will be fully ensured throughout the entire process, guaranteeing fairness and transparency for all involved.



RAWALPINDI: Welders busy welding a new gate for installation at Allama Iqbal Park Murree road. —APP Photo

Israeli attacks kill 51 in Gaza as more Palestinians die from starvation

GAZA: At least 51 Palestinians, including 16 seeking aid, have been killed in Israeli attacks across Gaza, medical sources told Al Jazeera, as health authorities in the besieged territory recorded eight more deaths from malnutrition amid a deepening hunger crisis.

Israeli artillery shelled tents sheltering displaced families in the Asdaa area northwest of Khan Younis in southern Gaza, killing 16 people, including six children, on Saturday, according to medical sources. In central Gaza, two people were killed in an Israeli drone strike on a house in the Maghazi refugee camp.

A Palestinian was shot dead by Israeli forces while waiting for aid near a distribution point close to the so-called "Morag axis", southeast of Khan Younis. Another civilian seeking aid was shot dead near the Israeli-controlled Netzarim Corridor. Palestinian health authorities said on Saturday that eight more Palestinians, including two children, died from malnutrition over the past 24 hours, raising the total death toll to 281 since the onset of the humanitarian crisis.

Munir al-Bursh, the director-gen-

eral of Gaza's Health Ministry, said on social media that 114 children were among the victims. "The famine is silently ravaging the bodies of civilians, depriving children of their right to life, and turning tents and hospitals into daily scenes of tragedy," he added.

The United Nations on Friday officially declared a famine in Gaza, the first time it has done so in the Middle East, with experts warning 500,000 people face "catastrophic" hunger. The UN has accused Israel of "systematic obstruction" of aid deliveries to the war-ravaged Palestinian territory, and Secretary-General Antonio Guterres described the famine as a "man-made disaster". The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) system, a global hunger monitor, said 514,000 people – close to a quarter of Palestinians in Gaza – are experiencing famine, with the number due to rise to 641,000 by the end of September.

Reporting from Deir el-Balah, Al Jazeera's Hind Khoudary said many other Palestinians in Gaza were at risk from malnutrition. "The UN famine report has been very late,

according to Palestinians. They have been witnessing weeks and months of this ongoing starvation," she said. The Palestinian Health Ministry in Gaza said on Saturday that it "appreciates" the declaration of famine in the enclave, although it believes the announcement was late.

"We emphasise that the engineering of starvation is one aspect of the chapters of genocide, which also include the systematic destruction of the health sector and other sectors, mass killing, and the policy of exterminating generations," the ministry wrote in a statement on Telegram. Since May 27, Israel has enforced a unilateral aid delivery mechanism through the so-called "Gaza Humanitarian Foundation," backed by Israel and the US but rejected by the UN and major relief groups. According to Gaza's Health Ministry, more than 2,076 Palestinians have been killed and more than 15,300 people wounded while seeking aid since the GHF scheme was launched. Israel has killed more than 62,600 Palestinians in Gaza since the Hamas-led October 2023 attack on southern Israel. — Aljazeera



LARKANA: PPP Chairman, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari distributing land papers to flood affectees.

Darfur records 158 cholera deaths

KHARTOUM (AFP): At least 158 cholera deaths have been recorded in Sudan's South Darfur since the end of May, the health ministry of its paramilitary-controlled state government said Saturday. More than two years of fighting between the regular army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces has left much of Darfur in the hands of the RSF and without access to live-saving aid.

The last pocket of territory in her hands, around the North Darfur state capital El-Fasher, has been under siege by the RSF since May last year and UN agencies have spoken of appalling conditions for the remaining civilians trapped inside. Since South Darfur recorded its first cholera case at the end of May, cases have been reported in all five of the region's states but South Darfur still accounts for more than half of them, the World Health Organization said on Friday.

The state health ministry said it had recorded a total of 2,880 cases so far, 158 of them fatal, with 42 cases, two of them fatal, on Friday alone. Medical charity Doctors Without Borders (MSF) has said the Darfur outbreak is Sudan's worst in years and threatens to spread to neighboring South Sudan and Chad. Cholera is an acute intestinal infection that spreads through food and water contaminated with bacteria, often from faeces.

It can kill within hours when not attended to, though it can be treated with simple oral rehydration, and antibiotics for more severe cases. MSF said mass displacements of civilians sparked by the war had aggravated the Darfur outbreak by denying people access to clean water for essential hygiene measures, such as washing dishes and preparing food. The delivery of humanitarian aid has also become almost impossible.

Japan's Ishiba hosts S Korea's Lee

TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba has hosted South Korean President Lee Jae Myung in Tokyo for a visit aimed at reaffirming security cooperation and showcasing friendly ties between the two East Asian neighbours facing common challenges from their mutual ally, the United States.

On his first official visit to Japan since taking office in June, Lee met Ishiba on Saturday at the premier's residence to discuss bilateral ties, including closer security cooperation with the US under a trilateral pact signed by their predecessors. "As the strategic environment surrounding both our countries grows increasingly severe, the importance of our relations, as well as trilateral cooperation with the United States, continues to grow," Ishiba said in a joint announcement with Lee after their meeting.

The leaders agreed to resume shuttle diplomacy, expand exchanges such as working holiday programmes, and step up cooperation in defence, economic security, artificial intelligence and other areas. They also pledged closer coordination against North Korea's nuclear and missile threats. The snap election victory of the liberal Lee – following the impeachment of conservative President Yoon Suk Yeol for declaring martial law – raised concerns in Tokyo that relations with Seoul could sour. — Aljazeera

Aleema denounces govt pressure tactics

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) in Lahore has approved physical remands for Shahrez Khan and Shershah Khan, nephews of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan, in connection with the May 9, 2023, riots. Shahrez, arrested on August 21, was sent on an eight-day physical remand, while his younger brother Shershah, detained the following day, was remanded for five days. The arrests, linked to the violent protests that erupted after Imran Khan's arrest, have sparked controversy, with PTI alleging political victimization.

Aleema Khan, Imran Khan's sister and a close PTI associate, condemned the arrests as an attempt to intimidate her family and the party. Speaking to the media, she stated, "If they think that they will pressure us by kidnapping children, then it is their mistake. The only crime of Shahrez and Shershah is that they are Imran Khan's nephews. We will not be pressured." She further claimed that her elder son, Shahrez, was taken from their Lahore residence by armed men in plainclothes, who assaulted staff and harassed her daughter-in-law in front of her grandchildren. Shershah was detained while returning from a court hearing related to his brother's case.

Aleema Khan also addressed rumors of her own impending arrest, noting that warrants had already been issued against her. "If they arrest me, they will pressure themselves. Cracks are forming between them," she asserted, suggesting internal discord among the authorities. She vowed to continue delivering Imran Khan's message, stating, "In every FIR, it is written that I bring Imran Khan's message. We will absolutely be his voice."

The arrests follow the Supreme Court's decision on August 21 to grant bail to Imran Khan in eight cases related to the May 9 riots, during which PTI supporters vandalized military installations, including the Jinnah House (Lahore Corps Commander's residence). Lahore police claim Shahrez and Shershah were involved in the Jinnah House attack, with Shahrez named in supplementary statements filed in September 2023. The police sought a 30-day remand for Shahrez to recover evidence, but ATC Judge Manzoor Ali Gul approved only eight days. Shershah's five-day remand was granted on similar grounds.

PTI Secretary General Salman Akram Raja, who represented Shahrez in court, argued that Shahrez was in Chitral, not Lahore, during the May 9 riots and had no political involvement with PTI. "This is a message to the nation that there is no law in this country," Raja told reporters, calling the arrests a "well-thought-out conspiracy" in response to Imran Khan's recent bail victories.

In contrast, Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry defended the arrests, stating, "You can say the police arrested them late, but you cannot say their cases were fake. Both were present at Jinnah House on May 9." He added that the delay was due to the time required to gather evidence and maintained that the accused would receive relief if no evidence was found.

The arrests have intensified tensions between PTI and the government, with the party accusing authorities of orchestrating a crackdown to weaken its political base ahead of by-elections. PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan condemned the detentions, stating, "By arresting Imran Khan's family members, the government is deliberately creating political tension."

UK delays ruling on Chinese embassy

LONDON: The British government has extended the deadline to October to decide on whether to approve China's plans to build the largest embassy in Europe in London, after Beijing refused to explain why the plans contained blacked-out areas.

China's plans to build a new embassy on the site of a two-century-old building near the Tower of London have stalled for the past three years because of opposition from numerous groups in Britain. Pro-democracy campaigners from Hong Kong fear Beijing could use the embassy to harass political opponents and even detain them, while nearby residents fear it could pose a security risk to them and attract large protests.

Politicians in Britain and the United States have warned the government against allowing China to

build the embassy on the site over concerns that it could be used as a base for spying. DP9, the planning consultancy working for the Chinese government, said on Friday its client felt it would be inappropriate to provide full internal layout plans, saying additional drawings provided an acceptable level of detail, after the government asked why several areas were blacked out in drawings.

"The Applicant considers the level of detail shown on the unredacted plans is sufficient to identify the main uses," DP9 said in a letter to the government. "In these circumstances, we consider it is neither necessary nor appropriate to provide additional more detailed internal layout plans or details." Several rooms on the plans submitted to the local council, including the basement area, were

marked "redacted for security reasons".

The proposed complex would include offices, a large basement area, housing for 200 staff, and a new tunnel to connect the Embassy House to a separate building on the embassy grounds. The United Kingdom government's decision to extend the deadline came after the embassy earlier this month said that claims the building, located near London's financial district, could have "secret facilities" used to harm Britain's national security were "despicable slandering". The British government's department of housing said in reply on Friday that it would now rule on whether the project can go ahead by October 21 rather than by the previous deadline of September 9 because it needed more time to consider the responses. — Aljazeera

US general whose report on Iran nuclear sites angered Trump fired

WASHINGTON (AP): United States Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has fired a general whose agency's preliminary intelligence assessment angered President Donald Trump for reporting that the US attack on Iranian nuclear sites in June had inflicted limited damage, according to reports.

The Pentagon firings, which, according to US officials who spoke to the Reuters and Associated Press (AP) news agencies, also include two other senior military commanders, are the latest moves by the Trump administration to purge officials at the Department of Defense. It was not immediately known on what grounds Lieutenant General Jeffrey Kruse, who led the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) since early 2024, was fired.

But President Trump had previously decried the

agency's initial findings on US strikes against Iran. The initial DIA assessment – which was widely reported on by US media – contradicted claims by Trump that the strikes totally destroyed the nuclear sites, drawing the ire of both the president and officials within his administration. Kruse "will no longer serve as DIA director", a senior defence official said on condition of anonymity on Friday, without providing an explanation for the general's departure.

Prior to becoming director of the DIA, Kruse served as the adviser for military affairs for the director of national intelligence, and also held positions including director of intelligence for the coalition against the ISIS (ISIS) group. Hegseth also fired Vice Admiral Nancy Lacore, who is chief of the Navy Reserve, as well as Rear Admiral Milton Sands, a Navy SEAL officer who

oversees Naval Special Warfare Command, according to officials who spoke to both AP and Reuters. All three military officials said they did not know why they were fired by the Trump administration, which has demanded loyalty across the government. "The firing of yet another senior national security official underscores the Trump administration's dangerous habit of treating intelligence as a loyalty test rather than a safeguard for our country," said US Senator Mark Warner, who is the vice chair of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.

Since beginning his second term in January, Trump has overseen a purge of top military officers, including the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Charles "CQ" Brown, whom he fired without explanation in February.

NK accuses SK troops of firing

SEOUL: North Korea has accused South Korean forces of firing warning shots at its soldiers who were part of a border reinforcement project, cautioning Seoul that its actions risked raising tensions to "uncontrollable" levels.

In a report published on Saturday, Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) quoted the North's Korean People's Army Vice Chief of the General Staff Ko Jong Chol as saying that the South should stop its "premeditated and deliberate" provocation, which he described as "inciting military conflict". Calling the incident from earlier this week a "serious provocation", Ko said the South Korean military fired more than 10 warning shots towards North Korean troops.

"This is a very serious prelude that would inevitably drive the situation in the southern border area, where a huge number of forces are stationing, in confrontation with each other, to the uncontrollable phase," Ko said. The incident took place on Tuesday as North Korean soldiers were working to permanently seal the heavily fortified border that divides the peninsula, state media outlet KCNA said, citing a statement from Ko.

In a statement on Saturday, the South Korean military acknowledged that its soldiers had fired warning shots after it claimed North Korean troops briefly crossed the border. "Some North Korean soldiers operating near the Military Demarcation Line (MDL) within the central frontline DMZ [Demilitarised Zone] crossed the MDL, prompting our military to fire warning shots," Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement, referring to the de facto border. "The North Korean soldiers then moved north of the MDL," the statement added.

The reported firing of warning shots is only the latest confrontation between North and South Korean forces, which have been at odds for decades over the heavily guarded border that divides both nations. The last border clash between the arch-rivals was in early April when South Korea's military fired warning shots after a group of 10 North Korean soldiers briefly crossed the border. Those troops were spotted in the Demilitarised Zone between the two countries, parts of which are heavily mined and overgrown.

In more recent months, South Korea has been taking steps to ease border tensions following the election of President Lee Jae-myung in June. North Korea's army announced last October that it was moving to totally shut off the southern border, saying it had sent a telephone message to United States forces based in South Korea to "prevent any misjudgement and accidental conflict". Shortly after its announcement, it blew up sections of the unused but deeply symbolic cross-border roads and railway tracks that had once connected the North and South. — Aljazeera

SL ex-president rushed to intensive care after jailing

COLOMBO (AFP): Sri Lanka's jailed former president was rushed to intensive care at a state hospital on Saturday, a day after being charged with misusing government funds for foreign travel.

Ranil Wickremesinghe, who was remanded in custody on Friday night, was severely dehydrated and required close monitoring, the deputy director-general of Colombo National Hospital told AFP. "He has to be closely observed and treated for acute dehydration to prevent serious complications," Rukshan Bellana said. "He was a severe diabetic with high blood pressure when he was brought in."

Bellana said, however, that Wickremesinghe's condition was "stable". The former president was taken to Sri Lanka's main state-run hospital as his condition deteriorated and the prison medical facility was not equipped to treat him, a prison spokesperson said. Opposition legislators who visited 76-year-old Wickremesinghe in prison earlier in the day reported that he had been in good spirits.

Opposition parties have

accused the government of jailing him over fears he could return to power. Wickremesinghe lost the last presidential election in September 2024 to Anura Kumara Disanayake, but has remained politically active despite holding no elected position. He was arrested on Friday as part of Disanayake's campaign against endemic corruption in the island nation, which is emerging from its worst economic meltdown in 2022.

Nalin Bandara, a member of parliament for the main opposition Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) party, who visited Wickremesinghe at Colombo's New Magazine Prison, said the former leader had called for unity to challenge Disanayake's leftist government. "What the former president says is that we should get onto a common stage to fight the oppression of the new government," Bandara told reporters outside the prison. Wickremesinghe's own United National Party (UNP), which has two seats in the 225-member parliament, said the government felt threatened by

the former president.

"They fear he might return to power, and that is why this action," UNP General Secretary Thalatha Athukorala told reporters in Colombo. Wickremesinghe stands accused of using state funds to finance a private visit to Britain in September 2023, while returning from attending the G77 summit in Havana and the UN General Assembly in New York. The offences carry a maximum punishment of 20 years in jail and a fine not exceeding three times the value of the misappropriated funds, estimated at 16.6 million Sri Lankan rupees (\$55,000).

His two-day UK visit was to participate in the conferring of an honorary professorship on his wife, Maithree, by the University of Wolverhampton. Wickremesinghe has maintained that his wife's travel expenses were met by her and that no state funds were used. Wickremesinghe became president in July 2022 after then-leader Gotabaya Rajapaksa stepped down following months of street protests fuelled by the economic crisis.



HYDERABAD: A man shifting his child to safer place after heavy rainfall in the area.

Russia says captured two villages in Ukraine

MOSCOW (AFP): Russia on Saturday said its forces in east Ukraine had taken two villages in the Donetsk region, upping military pressure on the ground as world leaders struggle to broker an end to the conflict.

Russian forces are slowly advancing in the embattled eastern region, grinding closer to Kyiv's key defensive line in costly meter-for-meter battles. Moscow's defense ministry said on Telegram that Russian forces captured the villages of Sredneye and Kleban-Byk. The taking of Kleban-Byk would mark a further advance toward Kostiantynivka — a key fortified town on the road to Kramatorsk, where a major Ukrainian logistics base is located.

On Friday, Russia said its troops had captured three villages in the Donetsk region it claimed to have annexed in September 2022. The latest Russian advances come as hopes dim for a summit between Russian and Ukrainian presidents — a

solution campaigned for by US President Donald Trump as part of his efforts to end the conflict.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Friday "no meeting" was planned as Trump's mediation efforts appeared to stall, while Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Russia was trying to prolong the offensive. Also Friday, Trump told reporters he would make an "important" decision in two weeks on Ukraine peace efforts, specifying that Moscow could face massive sanctions — or he might "do nothing".

Aljazeera adds: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has called on countries in the Global South to support diplomatic efforts to push Russia to agree to end its war with Ukraine. In a social media post following talks with his South African counterpart Cyril Ramaphosa on Saturday, Zelenskyy stressed that the conflict "must be brought to an end" and that "the killings and

destruction must be stopped".

"I reaffirmed my readiness for any format of meeting with the head of Russia," the Ukrainian leader said, referring to Russian President Vladimir Putin. "However, we see that Moscow is once again trying to drag everything out even further. It is important that the Global South sends relevant signals and pushes Russia toward peace." The comments come as a renewed diplomatic effort, spearheaded by United States President Donald Trump with support from European countries, to push Moscow to end its war in Ukraine has appeared to stall.

Trump expressed frustration with Moscow over the lack of progress in efforts to negotiate a peaceful settlement to end the war, despite his recent meeting with Putin in Alaska. The US president renewed a threat that he would consider imposing sanctions on Russia if there was no momentum within the next two weeks.