

Eid Milad on Sept. 6

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee on Sunday announced that the crescent for Rabi-ul-Awwal 1447 AH was not sighted anywhere across the country. Accordingly, the first Rabi-ul-Awwal will commence from Tuesday, August 26, while the 12th Rabi-ul-Awwal – the birth anniversary of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) – will be observed on Saturday, September 6.



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DHAKA: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar called on Chief Adviser of Bangladesh Professor Muhammad Yunus in Dhaka.

## Wang Yi, Asim reaffirm rock-solid strategic ties



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Chinese Foreign Ministry has released a statement highlighting the outcome of an important meeting between Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, underscoring the unwavering strength of the Pakistan-China strategic partnership.

Speaking at the meeting, Wang Yi emphasised that the Pakistani army remains a pillar of national stability and a strong guardian of

Pakistan-China friendship and cooperation. He noted that the military has always played a pivotal role in supporting the implementation of the important consensus reached between the leaderships of the two countries.

"In uncertain global times, promoting strong Pakistan-China relations is highly beneficial to regional peace and stability," Wang said, reaffirming that Pakistan has always held a top priority in China's neighbourly diplomacy. Despite the tests of time, he stressed, Pakistan-China

relations have only grown stronger, built upon a foundation of traditional friendship.

Wang Yi further assured that China will continue to fully cooperate with Pakistan in safeguarding its territorial integrity and national security, while also welcoming Pakistan's constructive role in international affairs.

According to the statement, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir reaffirmed the depth of bilateral ties, calling China Pakistan's "iron friend." He noted that the two nations have always

shared each other's joys and sorrows, with a partnership "as strong as a rock."

"Maintaining friendly relations with China is the unanimous position of the entire Pakistani nation," the Army Chief said, expressing gratitude to the Chinese leadership for its valuable cooperation in Pakistan's economic and social development.

Field Marshal Munir further pledged that the Pakistan Army is committed to actively advancing counter-terrorism and security cooperation. He assured continued efforts to ensure the safety of Chinese personnel, projects, and institutions in Pakistan.

He added that steps to further strengthen the historic Pak-China friendship and to continue the shared journey of progress would remain a top priority for Pakistan.

The meeting reaffirmed the long-standing, strategic, and all-weather partnership between Pakistan and China, with both sides vowing to deepen cooperation across security, economic, and regional stability domains.

## Israel pounds Gaza City suburbs

CAIRO/JERUSALEM (Reuters): Israeli planes and tanks pounded the eastern and northern outskirts of Gaza City overnight Saturday to Sunday, destroying buildings and homes, residents said, as Israeli leaders vowed to press on with a planned offensive on the city.

Witnesses reported the sound of explosions non-stop overnight in the areas of Zeitoun and Shejaia, while tanks shelled houses and roads in the nearby Sabra neighborhood and several buildings were blown up in the northern town of Jabalia.

The Israeli military said on Sunday that its forces have returned to combat in the Jabalia area in recent days, to dismantle militant tunnels and strengthen control of the area.

It added that the operation there "enables the expansion of combat into additional areas and prevents Hamas terrorists from returning to operate in these areas."

Israel approved a plan this month to seize control of Gaza City, describing it as Hamas' last bastion. It is not expected to begin for a few weeks, leaving room for mediators Egypt and Qatar to try and resume ceasefire talks between the sides.

Israel's Defense Minister Israel Katz on Sunday vowed to press on with the offensive, which has raised alarm abroad and objections at home.

On Friday Katz said that Gaza City will be razed unless Hamas agrees to end



the war on Israel's terms and release all the hostages it still holds.

Fire lit the skies from the direction of the explosions, causing panic, prompting some families to stream out of the city. Others said they would prefer to die and not leave.

Around half of the enclave's two million people currently live in Gaza City. A few thousand have already left, carrying their belongings on vehicles, and rickshaws.

"I stopped counting the times I had to take my wife and three daughters and leave my home in Gaza City," said Mohammad, 40. "No place is safe, but I can't take the risk. If they suddenly begin the invasion, they will use heavy fire," he told Reuters via a chat app.

Others say they will not leave, no matter what.

"We are not leaving, let them bomb us at home," said Aya, 31, who has a family of eight, adding that they couldn't afford to buy a tent or pay for the transportation, even if they did try to leave. "We are hungry, afraid and don't have

money," she said.

A global hunger monitor said on Friday that Gaza City and surrounding areas are officially suffering from famine that will likely spread. Israel has rejected the assessment and says it ignores steps it has taken since late July to increase aid supply into and across Gaza.

On Saturday, the Gaza health ministry said eight more people died of malnutrition and starvation in the enclave, raising deaths from such causes to 281 people, including 114 children, since the war started. Israel disputes fatality figures by the health ministry in the Hamas-run strip.

The war began on October 7, 2023, when Hamas-led gunmen burst into southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people, mainly civilians, and taking 251 hostages.

Israel's military offensive against Hamas has since killed at least 62,000 Palestinians, mostly civilians, according to the Gaza health ministry, left much of the territory in ruins and internally displaced nearly its entire population.

## Khamenei calls US issue 'unsolvable'

DUBAI (Reuters): Iran's supreme leader said the current situation with the United States was "unsolvable," and that Tehran would never bow to pressure to obey Washington, amid a standoff with Western powers over its nuclear program, state media reported on Sunday.

The Islamic Republic suspended nuclear negotiations with the United States after the US and Israel bombed its nuclear sites during a 12-day war in June.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's comments come after Iran and European powers agreed on Friday to resume talks to try to restart full negotiations on curbing Tehran's nuclear enrichment work.

"They want Iran to be obedient to America. The Iranian nation will stand with all of its power against those who have such erroneous expectations," Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was reported as saying.

"People who ask us not to issue slogans against the US ... to have direct negotiations with the US only see appearances ... This issue is unsolvable," he added.

France, Britain and Germany have said they could reactivate United Nations sanctions on Iran under a "snapback" mechanism if Tehran does not return to the table.

The European states, along with the US, say Iran is working toward developing nuclear weapons. Iran says it is only interested in developing nuclear power.

# The Frontier Post

PM invites 'heroes'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has invited 'three heroes' from Gilgit Baltistan who had saved about 300 human lives by providing timely information about the impacts of glacial burst or glacial lake outburst flood (glof) in Ghizer district. "Wasiyat Khan, Ansar and Muhammad Khan have been invited to Islamabad upon the prime minister's directive", PM Office Media Wing said.

## Dar, Yunus discuss trade, regional cooperation

F.P. Report

DHAKA: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar met Bangladesh Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus on Sunday during his visit to Dhaka.

The Foreign Office described Dar's two-day visit—the first by a Pakistani foreign minister to Bangladesh in 13 years—as a "significant milestone" in bilateral relations.

According to a statement posted on X by the Foreign Office, Dar briefed Yunus on developments during his trip, and the two leaders discussed "recent developments in the region and the prospects of regional cooperation."

"The discussions focused on reviving long-standing connections, promoting youth engagement, improving connectivity, and enhancing trade and economic cooperation," the Foreign Office added.

Pakistan, Bangladesh sign six key agreements

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar met Bangladesh's Foreign Affairs Adviser during his visit to Dhaka, reaffirming the commitment to further strengthen bilateral ties, while six agreements were signed between the two countries.

According to the Foreign Office, both sides reviewed all aspects of bilateral relations, including high-level contacts, trade and economic cooperation, people-

to-people links, cultural exchanges, education, capacity building, and humanitarian issues.

They also discussed regional and international matters such as the revival of SAARC, the Palestine issue, and the Rohingya crisis.

The Pakistani delegation was led by Deputy PM and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, while the Bangladesh side was headed by Adviser for Foreign Affairs, Mohammad Touhid Hossain.

Senior officials from both countries participated in the talks, which covered bilateral relations, economic and trade cooperation, regional challenges, and strengthening collaboration under SAARC.

Later, under the supervision of Dar and Hossain, important agreements and MoUs were signed. In total, six accords were concluded, including:

Abolishing visa requirements for diplomats and government officials,

MoU between the foreign service academies of both countries,

Agreement between APP (Associated Press of Pakistan) and BSS (Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha),

MoU between the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad and the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies,

MoU during the Joint Working Group on Trade, Cultural exchange programme (2025–2028).

Earlier, Dar held detailed discussions on trade, investment, and economic cooperation during his Dhaka visit. He also attended a key business meeting with Bangladesh's Commerce Adviser Sheikh Bashiruddin, joined by Pakistan's Commerce Minister.

Senior Bangladeshi officials present included the Governor of Bangladesh Bank, Chairman of the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority, Chairman of the Trading Corporation, Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority, Acting Vice Chairman of the Export Promotion Bureau, Commerce and Aviation Secretaries, and Chairman of the National Board of Revenue.

Dar arrived in Bangladesh on Saturday, marking the most high-profile visit by a Pakistani official to Dhaka in recent years.

His trip signals a significant thaw in relations between the two nations, coming amid renewed efforts to strengthen bilateral ties following the ouster of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina last year.

His visit follows months of intensified engagement between the two South Asian neighbours. Earlier this week, Pakistan's Commerce Minister Jam Kamal was in Dhaka to discuss trade and agricultural cooperation. In April, Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Amna Baloch led the first bilateral consulta-

tions with Bangladesh in 15 years.

Representing Bangladesh were top economic and regulatory figures, including the governor of the central bank, the executive chairman of the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority, and the heads of the Bangladesh Trading Corporation and the Civil Aviation Authority. Pakistan noted that senior officials from Bangladesh's commerce and aviation ministries, as well as the chairman of the National Board of Revenue, also took part.

Meanwhile, the adviser will also host a lunch in honour of Pakistan delegation.

Shortly after his arrival on Saturday, Dar met with leaders of the National Citizen Party (NCP), a student-led political movement that played a central role in the protests that led to Hasina's removal from power.

During his two-day visit, Dar is also scheduled to meet Bangladesh's Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus and other senior officials, including Foreign Affairs Adviser Touhid Hossain. Discussions are expected to center on strengthening bilateral cooperation as well as regional and global issues.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar has expressed Pakistan's strong desire to forge a cooperative and forward-looking relationship with Bangladesh.

## Distribution of compensation cheques underway: Saif

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information and Public Relations, Barrister Dr. Muhammad Saif has said that the process of distributing compensation cheques among the flood-affected districts is underway at a fast pace.

So far, a total of Rs. 614 million has been disbursed to the families of 307 deceased individuals,

while Rs. 15.9 million has been distributed among 34 injured persons. Cheques for the remaining 89 martyrs and 144 injured persons will be issued soon.

The Advisor highlighted that, on the special instructions of the Chief Minister, the martyrs' compensation package has been increased from Rs. 1 million to Rs. 2 million. Likewise, compensation amounts for damaged homes have also been doubled.

Now, owners of completely destroyed houses will receive Rs. 1 million, while those with partially damaged homes will receive Rs. 500,000, up from the previous amounts of Rs. 500,000 and Rs. 250,000 respectively.

Furthermore, Dr. Saif shared that a digital application has been introduced to ensure transparency and timely payments. Through this platform, flood victims are now receiving Rs. 15,000 as immediate relief

assistance.

He remarked that this is the first time in the province's history that compensation payments have been processed and disbursed with such unprecedented speed and efficiency.

Additionally, a comprehensive survey of fully and partially damaged houses is currently ongoing. Upon its completion, compensation cheques will be distributed accordingly to the affected homeowners.

## Sutlej: Indian water aggression inundates dozens of villages

LAHORE (APP): Dozens of villages came under water and hundreds of acres of crops were destroyed after India has released water into the River Sutlej.

A high-level flood was reported at Ganda Singh Wala on Sunday, where water reached above 21.30 feet and water flow has been recorded at more than 130,000 cusecs.

According to Rescue 1122 sources, the areas affected by the flood water include more than 30 villages, including Nagra Aimanpura, Mabooki, Basti Ibrahim, Mahiwala, Fatiwala.

The district administration is closely monitoring the situation, and emergency measures are being taken for evacuation of people from the affected areas.

The DC said that continuous announcements and alerts were being made through mosques so that people can immediately move to safe places. The deputy commissioner made it clear that the protection of lives and property of people was being given top priority, while a complete ban had been imposed on crossing the river to avoid any loss of life.

The flood has cut off 30 villages. The district administration stepped up relief efforts and estab-

lished relief camps at schools. In Arifwala, a child drowned in floodwater.

High level of flooding is likely to continue at Ganda Singh Wala for the next 48 hours, during which there is a risk of flooding in the Ravi and Chenab rivers. According to the PDMA, the 8th spell of monsoon rains starting today in Punjab will continue till August 27. Due to heavy rains in the upper parts of Punjab from August 24 to 27, there is a risk of flooding in the rivers Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Sutlej and their adjacent rivers.

According to the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), torrential rains are expected in Punjab,

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir. Therefore, the risk of flooding in low-lying areas and landslides in mountainous areas has increased. Flash flooding is also expected in Lahore, Rawalpindi, Multan and Faisalabad.

Rescue sources informed APP that in view of the situation in Kasur, Rescue 1122 personnel and boats have been called from other districts. Citizens have been shifted to safer places from riverside settlements in Kasur, Okara and Pakpattan.

Due to Indian water aggression, crops have been submerged due to the breach of landowner dams at several places. The land route of more than 30 vil-

lages including Nagar Aimanpura, Mabooki, Basti Ibrahim, Mahiwala, Fatiwala has been cut off, while thousands of acres of agricultural land have been submerged, small protective dams have been breached at Mouza Santika, Akoka and Bhurika.

Likewise, several settlements have been submerged. Dozens of villages have also been affected in Bahawalnagar, Arifwala and Manchanabad.

In addition, according to the NDMA, 785 people have died across Pakistan since the start of the monsoon.

Three systems causing rain will enter Pakistan simultaneously, which is expected to bring heavy rains.







## Mohsin Naqvi assures full support for int'l Tablighi Ijtimaa in Raiwind

LAHORE (APP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Sunday visited the Tablighi Markaz, Raiwind and held a meeting with the elders of the Tablighi Jamaat, including Maulana Muhammad Ahmad Butler, Maulana Ubaidullah Khurshid, Dr. Saleem, and others. Anwar Ghani, Mian Ahsan, Dr. Nadeem Ashraf, Maulana Amir Ihsan, Maulana Amjad Farooq, Shabbir Ahmad Usmani, Mufti Irfan, and Brigadier (R) Musaddiq were also present on the occasion.

The elders of the Tablighi

Jamaat briefed the interior minister about the arrangements for the International Tablighi Ijtimaa to be held in November.

Mohsin Naqvi appreciated the services of the elders of Tablighi Jamaat for Islam and assured them of full cooperation in facilitating the foreign delegations attending the Ijtimaa. He said, "Wherever there is a visa-related issue, we will resolve it on priority basis. The delegations coming from abroad for the Ijtimaa are our respected guests. Every facility will be ensured for

them at all levels."

The interior minister added that he regularly attends the Tablighi Ijtimaa every year and InshaAllah he will also participate this year. He prayed that Allah Almighty may reward the organizers of the Ijtimaa for continuing this noble work.

Maulana Muhammad Ahmad Butler said, "Everyone must return to Allah Almighty."

We should make the service of Islam and humanity our mission. True success lies only in following the path shown by Allah Almighty."

## PA Speaker, minister visit Bulleh Shah shrine

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Assembly Speaker Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan, Provincial Minister for Minorities Affairs Ramesh Singh Arora, Members of the Provincial Assembly Muhammad Naqam Safdar Ansari and Chaudhry Ahsan Raza visited the shrine of Hazrat Baba Bulleh Shah in Kasur on the occasion of his 268th annual Urs.

They laid a floral wreath at the shrine and offered prayers for the prosperity and security of the country.

Speaking on the occasion, Speaker Punjab

Assembly Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan said Baba Bulleh Shah was a great Sufi poet whose teachings continued to inspire reform even in the present times. He said the Sufi poet challenged oppressive systems of his era and regarded humanity as the greatest religion.

Minorities Minister Ramesh Singh Arora said the poetry of Baba Bulleh Shah carried a universal message of peace and love. He said Kasur had a distinct place in the world due to the presence of the shrine, which remained a source of guidance for

humanity.

MPA Haji Naqam Safdar Ansari said the presence of the shrine was a blessing for the people of Kasur and stressed the need to adopt the teachings of Baba Bulleh Shah as a guiding principle.

PA Deputy Speaker Malik Zaheer Iqbal Chana, MPAs Haji Muhammad Naqam Safdar Ansari, Chaudhry Ahsan Raza, ADCG Salomon Ayub, Deputy Director Information Tabinda Saleem, Auqaf Manager Tariq Mahmood Najmi and other district officials were also present.

## Show-cause notices issued to 124 school heads

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab School Education Department (SED) has issued show-cause notices to heads of schools in the province over the poor performance of schools in recent matriculation examination results.

More than 124 principals, vice principals and teachers have been issued show cause notices by the provincial education department and asked to submit their explanations, SED official sources told APP.

The Punjab School Education Department has issued show-cause notices to heads of schools with poor matriculation exam

results, with over 60 schools in Lahore and other districts facing potential disciplinary action for performance below the board average.

This move is part of a broader strategy to increase accountability in the education sector and improve the quality of education provided. Schools with student success rates below the board average have been served notices.

At least 124 schools in Lahore and other districts have been affected, and now school heads are being held accountable for performance and to ensure a better quality of education for students. Muhammad

Karim, a noted educationist, told APP that this is not the first time the department has taken such measures; a similar action against school heads was taken in September 2022.

The department is also using data to monitor schools, conducting surprise checks, and implementing a new Key Performance Indicator (KPI) system to raise educational standards.

The recent actions come amidst private schools dominating the matriculation results, highlighting ongoing challenges and efforts to improve the public education system in Punjab.

## Allotment of 720 flats: Applications from workers invited

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has launched a series of landmark housing and welfare projects aimed at improving the living standards of industrial workers across the province. These include the construction of new labor colonies in various districts, the establishment of a major cardiac city in Lahore, and the inauguration of social security hospitals and wellness centers — all reflecting the Chief Minister's strong commitment to worker welfare.

As part of this broader vision, a major initiative has been launched to allot flats to industrial workers in the districts of Lahore and Kasur. Under the directives of CM Maryam Nawaz, applications are now being invited from eligible workers for housing units in the Workers Welfare Complex, Sundar Industrial Estate, Kasur (Phase One).

According to official sources from the Punjab Labour Department, the Punjab Workers Welfare Fund has begun the allotment process for 720 flats. A special quota of 3% has been reserved for the widows of deceased industrial workers and 2% for disabled workers.

To ensure transparency and accessibility, workers from Lahore and Kasur can obtain application forms directly from the official website, or physically from the offices of the Director Labor Welfare (North and South) and the Deputy Director Labor Welfare Kasur.

The allocation of flats will be divided with a two-thirds quota for workers in Kasur and one-third for those in Lahore. The last date for submitting applications is September 8. These projects are part of the Punjab government's continued efforts to provide industrial workers and their families with safe housing, health care, and a dignified living environment.

## IGP okays Rs. 2.1m medical aid for cops, families

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr Usman Anwar has released an additional Rs. 2.1 million for medical treatment of police employees and their families.

According to a Punjab Police spokesperson, Rs. 500,000 were given to the widow of late retired Inspector Bashir Ahmad for cancer treatment. Retired Constable Muhammad Din and ASI Ghulam Shabbir were provided Rs. 250,000 each for the treatment of their wives. Retired Assistant Daniel Yousaf received Rs. 200,000 for treatment of lung disease.

Private Secretary Muhammad Javed, Head Constable Rukhsar Arif, Traffic Wardens Muhammad Kamran and Zeeshan Azhar, and Constables Shafiq Ahmad and Muhammad Safdar were each granted Rs. 100,000 for medical expenses. In addition, a total of Rs. 300,000 was allocated for the treatment of the wife of Shaheed Sub-Inspector Muhammad Aslam, ASI Muhammad Asif, Constable Fayaz Raza, and the wife of Junior Patrolling Officer Ghufan Khan.



KARACHI: Members of Jammu Kashmir Freedom Alliance Karachi are holding protest demonstration for release of Yasin Malik, Kashmiri Huriat Leader at Karachi press club. —PPI Photo

## Qaiser urges 'dialogue' only way forward

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Investment Board Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh Sunday advised PTI to seek compromise and engage in dialogue, while praising PPP and PML-N for addressing political challenges through mutual understanding and cooperation.

In an exclusive interview with PTV News Channel, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh urged PTI to move beyond confrontation and engage in meaningful discussions to ensure stability and progress for the country.

Sheikh pointed out that the vision shared by allied parties, especially PPP and PML-N has been effective in navigating complex political issues.

He stressed that this collective approach was crucial for addressing national concerns and overcoming the ongoing political deadlock.

Sheikh called on PTI to align with this unified vision, recognizing the importance of cooperation over division. He urged all parties to prioritize dialogue and collaboration for the greater good of the nation.

When asked, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh stated that PPP first proposed collaboration to PTI but now regrets the offer due to PTI's ego-driven response, which he said contradicts democratic principles.

He added that PPP and PML-N are working in unison with mutual understanding. Talking about the

by-elections, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh stated that both PPP and PML-N, as allied parties, will make a collective decision on how to proceed.

He emphasized that any strategy would be based on mutual understanding and the shared goals of both parties. When asked about provincial matters, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh expressed his strong support for measures to assist the 50 percent of people living below the poverty line.

He clarified that although the topic had not been raised in the cabinet or within his party, he would personally back any initiative that addresses this issue. He further stated that addressing the needs of the provinces was need of the hour.

## Govt to enhance journalists' benefits

E.P. Report

KARACHI: Spokesperson for the Government of Pakistan, Sindh, Raja Khaliq Zaman Ansari, emphasized that journalism is the fourth pillar of the state and the protection of journalists is a top priority.

He highlighted that the federal government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, has taken significant steps to ensure the welfare of journalists, including life insurance and health insurance.

Raja Ansari stated that the government aims to

further enhance the health facilities currently provided to journalists. He added that the government is committed to creating a robust mechanism to address the issues faced by journalists nationwide.

The spokesperson mentioned that the federal government is keen on increasing the existing benefits and budget allocations for journalists, especially in emergency situations.

The government plans to work closely with media owners, the Prime Minister, and the Information Minister to develop a com-

prehensive strategy for journalists' job security.

This includes linking institutional advertisements to the permanent employment of journalists and streamlining the disbursement of funds to journalists.

Raja Ansari emphasized the need for better working relationships between state institutions and journalists. He also acknowledged that the current medical allowances and compensation for journalists in case of death are insufficient and pledged to address these issues.

## FTO dispose of 44,370 complaints in 4 years

LAHORE (APP): Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO) Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah, Sitar-i-Imtiaz, has set a new national record by resolving 44,370 complaints out of a total of 50,903 filed in just four years. This achievement surpasses the performance of last two decades, during which 37,118 complaints were filed in total.

Addressing an awareness session with the business community on Sunday, FTO Coordinator Saifur Rehman said it was another landmark that 98 percent of FTO's decisions were implemented by the FBR, following the rejection of appeals by the President of Pakistan. He noted that under Dr. Jah's leadership, the complaint redressal system became more efficient and accessible to the public through simplified procedures and prompt responses.

He added that all chambers, trade bodies, and associations, including women's chambers, were engaged, while hundreds of awareness sessions and university-level seminars were held to ensure prompt resolution of genuine tax-related grievances within an average of 34 days. The Coordinator said that FTO's dynamic approach encouraged taxpayers to seek justice with confidence against maladministration and harassment in tax matters. By setting this national record, Dr. Jah has reinforced accountability, improved taxpayer facilitation, and strengthened public trust in tax reforms.

## Atta ul Haq Qasmi honoured

LAHORE (APP): A reception was held in honour of Atta ul Haq Qasmi at a local hotel on receiving prestigious Nishan-e-Imtiaz, the highest civilian award.

The reception was hosted by noted humorist and writer Shahid Zaheer Syed. Senior journalists, poets, writers, and admirers of Qasmi's towering literary legacy attended the event.

Among them were senior journalists Habib Akram, Naveed Chaudhry, Iqtadar Javed, and Nasir Bashir.

The literary circle was represented by eminent poets and writers, including Rehman Faris, Aghar Nadeem Sahar, Abrar Nadeem, and Uzair Ahmed. At the same time, DSP

Nasir Malik's presence reflected the participation of the civil service. Together, they formed a gathering of intellectuals and cultural admirers united in honoring Atta ul Haq Qasmi's remarkable achievement.

Atta ul Haq Qasmi, one of Pakistan's most celebrated literary figures, has served the nation as a columnist, humorist, playwright, and cultural ambassador for more than five decades. His writings, marked by wit, satire, and a profound understanding of society, have earned him recognition across borders.

Having served as Chairman of PTV and contributing to Pakistani

media and culture with unmatched vigor, Qasmi stands as a symbol of resilience, creativity, and national pride.

Speakers at the reception paid glowing tributes to Qasmi, calling the Nishan-e-Imtiaz a well-deserved recognition of his lifelong services to literature, journalism, and the promotion of cultural values.

The evening, marked by heartfelt tributes and literary camaraderie, reflected the profound respect and affection Pakistan's intellectual and cultural community holds for Atta ul Haq Qasmi, a name that continues to inspire generations of readers and thinkers.

## Karachi floods: Restoration of natural waterways urged

KARACHI (PPI): Pasban Democratic Party (PDP) Chairman Altaf Shakoor warned on Sunday that the financial burden of Karachi's recurring monsoon floods surpasses the expense of restoring the city's encroached natural drainage systems. He expressed deep worry over the substantial losses Karachi endures each monsoon season. The megacity's natural drainage, he explained, has been systematically obstructed. Roads, real estate developments, and unplanned settlements have completely or partially encroached upon rivers, streams, and coastal inlets.

Shakoor proposed an ecological redesign of Karachi, focusing on reviving natural water flow wherever feasible and supplementing it with engineered solutions for unavoidable blockages. He advocated for clearing encroachments on waterways, offering relocation and compensation to those affected rather than forced evictions.

He urged the restoration of floodplains and buffer zones, prohibiting new permanent constructions in these areas and instead converting them into linear parks or sports fields capable of withstanding temporary flooding. He cited Rotterdam's floodable parks as a successful model.

To conserve rainwater, Shakoor suggested constructing underground storm water reservoirs beneath intersections or open spaces to temporarily store excess water.

He emphasized the need for data collection, mapping, and early warning systems, specifically recommending hydrological mapping of Karachi using satellite imagery to identify former waterways, current bottlenecks, and encroachment areas. He criticized the Sindh provincial government and Karachi's local government for corruption and urged improvements in governance.

Shakoor called for a single drainage authority to eliminate

overlapping responsibilities among KMC, DMCs, cantonments, and provincial entities.

He proposed establishing a Karachi Storm water Authority with legal enforcement powers. Karachi's flooding, he asserted, is not unavoidable but a design flaw that can be rectified by respecting natural waterways and implementing intelligent infrastructure.

He highlighted that flood damage expenses significantly outweigh drainage restoration costs, citing successful implementations of similar plans in other nations, including Seoul's Cheonggyecheon stream restoration, Rotterdam's water parks, and China's "sponge cities."

Shakoor concluded that prevention is more economical than repair, emphasizing that the government would save considerably more than the cost of reclaiming encroached waterways by preventing extensive losses to life and property during each rainy season.



LAHORE: People are enjoying boat ride during the pleasant weather of monsoon season, at Jilani Park in Lahore on Sunday — PPI Photo



# Pakistani Mountaineers successfully summit Tirich Mir

Mountaineers from Gilgit-Baltistan, Sirbaz Khan and Abid Baig, became the first Pakistanis to summit the peak, other climbers were restricted to 7,300 meters due to severe weather conditions

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Under the auspices of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority, a team of Pakistani mountaineers, successfully scaled Tirich Mir, the highest peak of the Hindu Kush range.

Led by Director Administration and Finance of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority, Umar Arshad Khan, the team included two climbers from Gilgit-Baltistan, Sirbaz Khan and Abid Baig, who successfully summited the 7,708-meter peak. Due to severe weather and snowstorms, the remaining five climbers could only reach up to 7,300 meters. However, the team of seven mountaineers accomplished the remarkable feat of climbing beyond 7,000 meters.

The mountaineering



team comprised Sirbaz Khan, Abid Baig, Umar Arshad Khan, Dr. Naveed Iqbal, Major Muhammad Atif, Shamsul Qamar, and Akmal Naveed. They were supported by experienced high-altitude porters Hassan, Shehzad, Younas, and Arif, each with extensive experience at altitudes above 8,000 meters.

Speaking on the achievement, Director Administration and Finance, Umar Arshad Khan, said:

“Today, history has been made. With the successful summit of Tirich Mir, the world will now

turn its attention towards Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Chitral Valley. Tirich Mir is the highest peak of the Hindu Kush. Around the world, a single summit generates millions of dollars in revenue. Now, as the youth of Chitral emerge as high-altitude porters, this achievement

will not only enhance local income but also play a key role in strengthening the regional economy.”

Renowned climber Sirbaz Khan, who summited Tirich Mir, stated: “The three tallest peaks of the Hindu Kush, Karakoram, and



Himalaya ranges will now be globally recognized as the ‘Three Summits.’ I am proud to have achieved the honor of scaling all three. Compared to other peaks, Tirich Mir is particularly challenging. By organizing this summit, the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Culture and Tourism Authority have placed

Tirich Mir as a new global target for mountaineers.

Moreover, the Tirich Valley and its local porters will now emerge on the global stage of adventure tourism.”

In addition to the summit, a group of over 60 male and female trekkers, along with more than 100 local porters and guides, also participated in the expedition and trekking activities.

Thanks to the efforts of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government, the year 2025–26 will be celebrated as the “Year of Tirich Mir.” For the first time at the official level, Pakistani climbers have successfully scaled this peak.

# FOP empowers bankers to serve clients with disabilities

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Friends of Paraplegics (FOP), the welfare body of person with disabilities (PwDs), inspired a wave of change in inclusive banking with a dynamic one-day workshop titled “Serving Banking Clients with Physical, Visual, Hearing and Speech Impairments”.

Held at the CPMR Hall of the Paraplegic Center Peshawar (PCP), the event brought together 11 dedicated officials from leading banks, including National Bank of Pakistan (NBP), Bank of Khyber

(BoK) and Al Baraka Bank, to master the art of serving clients with disabilities with respect and efficiency, advancing financial inclusion.

Dr. Samina Bibi, FOP's Project Manager, opened the workshop with a warm welcome, while Engr. Irfan Ullah, GS FoP, passionately underscored its mission to align with the State Bank of Pakistan's disability inclusion policies.

The training captivated participants with hands-on sessions led by experts: M Javed, a Sign Language Expert, shared techniques

for assisting clients with hearing and speech impairments; Engr. Irfan Ullah offered insights on serving those with physical challenges; and Dr. Adnan Malik, an industry expert and Assistant Professor, outlined strategies to enhance financial inclusion for the disability community. Through lively discussions, role-plays and interactive activities, bankers gained a deeper understanding of the barriers faced by clients with disabilities and honed skills to serve them with dignity.

The workshop concluded with a simple but impressive certificate distribution ceremony, wherein Dr. Syed Muhammad Ilyas, CEO of Paraplegic Center Peshawar, joined as chief guest and flanked by Engr. SanaUllah Khan and Dr. Adnan Malik to honor the participants.

A group photo captured the shared commitment to building a more inclusive banking landscape in Pakistan, with participants raising their hands skyward to affirm the PCP's inspiring slogan, “Sky is just the beginning”.



PESHAWAR: Volunteers of Al-Khidmat Foundation are collecting donation and relief goods for flood affected victims of KPK, at Saddar road in Peshawar on Sunday.

# KP Govt prioritize equipping youth with modern skills: SACM

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Science & Information Technology, Dr. Shafqat Ayaz, has said that the youth are the real asset of the province and equipping them with employment opportunities, skills, and access to modern technology is the foremost priority of the government.

Dr. Shafqat Ayaz stated that currently more than 26 projects are underway under the Department of

Science & Technology and IT, aimed at preparing the youth according to the demands of the modern era and creating new avenues of employment. Through these initiatives, the youth of the province will not only find opportunities within the country but also abroad in jobs and entrepreneurship.

He said that some of the key projects launched by the provincial government include “Dastak App,” “Khyber Pass Digital Identity System,” “Paymir Project,” “Mahasil,” “E-Basta,” “Science & IT

Parks,” and “Citizens Facilitation Centers (CFCs).” All these projects are designed to provide public convenience, ensure easy access to government services, and integrate youth into the digital economy.

Dr. Shafqat Ayaz added that modern digital training centers are being established where youth will be trained in IT, freelancing, e-commerce, and innovation. These projects will enable thousands of young people to enter the practical field, utilize their skills, and contribute to strengthening the

country's economy.

He further said that PTI Founder Imran Khan's vision is of a self-reliant Pakistan where youth progress on the basis of their abilities independently. Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is also striving to provide every possible facility to the youth in line with this vision.

Dr. Shafqat Ayaz expressed confidence that these initiatives in the field of Science & Technology will transform Khyber Pakhtunkhwa into a hub of the digital economy in the coming years.

# The character assassination of teachers - The root of our decline

### Alamgir Khan

THE strike of a pen is sharper than the strike of a sword. Sadly, today these strikes are being directed at the most honorable segment of our society - the teachers.

In the wake of the recent examination results, once again a campaign has begun to heap every failure upon the shoulders of teachers. Media headlines, drawing room conversations, and the storm of social media all chant the same refrain: "Teachers are to blame." But how long will we deceive ourselves with this narrative?

Is a teacher a magician who can guarantee every child a perfect score? Is a teacher singlehandedly responsible for fighting societal decay, parental negligence, and the overwhelming flood of social media?

The bitter truth is that today's students no longer follow their teachers.

They follow TikTokTokers, YouTubers, and self-proclaimed influencers. They adopt their fashions, slang, and gestures instantly. They imitate their trends and lifestyles without hesitation.

Yet when a teacher



advises them, opens a book, or stresses the value of hard work, they find it boring. Some even go so far as to say: "Sir, why should we listen to you when that TikTokToker says otherwise?"

Parents and society, on the other hand, practice double standards. If a teacher is strict, the complaint arises: "Do not raise your hand against the child."

If a teacher is lenient, the accusation follows: "These teachers don't teach anything."

Thus, no matter what he does, the teacher is painted guilty.

Parents hand over mobile phones to children for peace of mind, society regards teachers with suspicion, and every academic failure is placed squarely upon their shoulders. This is not only unfair - it is destructive.

What we fail to realize is simple: a teacher can

guide, but he cannot study for the student. A teacher can inspire, but he cannot control parental neglect. A teacher can shape minds, but he cannot reverse societal decay alone. A teacher can teach values, but when the media glorifies shallowness, his voice is drowned. In other words, a teacher is an architect - but the bricks, cement, and foundation must come from students, parents, and society.

A teacher is neither a miracle-worker nor a conjurer of instant success.

He is the lamp that lights the path in darkness, the compass that shows direction. But the journey to the destination must be made with the student's own effort, supported by the upbringing and involvement of parents.

Nations are built on the honor and dignity of teachers - never on their humiliation.

If we do not end this practice of making teachers scapegoats for every failure, the generations to come will be deprived not only of knowledge but also of moral strength.

It is also high time that we recognize another bitter reality: teachers today face constant criticism, demotivation, and blame, while rewards, encourage-

ment, and appreciation are almost non-existent.

Across the world, teachers are cherished as nation-builders and respected as pillars of society.

But in our case, the reverse has become true: we burden them with blame but deny them recognition. A demoralized teacher cannot inspire greatness. If we want education to thrive, we must reward and motivate teachers, not exhaust them with negativity.

The time has come for parents and society to open their eyes. Restore the dignity of teachers. Motivate and encourage them.

Introduce children to genuine role models. Regulate the destructive use of social media. And above all, understand that education is a shared responsibility between school, home, and community.

Let us remember: the downfall of nations begins the day they stop respecting their teachers.

"If you plan for a year, plant rice.

If you plan for a decade, plant trees.

If you plan for a life-time, educate a child - and honor the teacher who makes it possible."

# Good Governance Forum calls for protection of public spaces

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Dr. Syed Akhtar Ali Shah, Chairman of the Good Governance Forum, has called upon the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Chief Secretary to personally intervene for the protection of public spaces in Peshawar under the jurisdiction of the Peshawar Development Authority (PDA).

In a statement issued here on Sunday, he stated that the Government of

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has recently launched its Road Map to Good Governance, which pledges transparency, accountability, and adherence to the rule of law.

Syed Akhtar Ali Shah is a retired senior civil servant, who had served Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on the important posts of the Inspector General of Police (IGP), Secretary Home & Tribal Affairs and other assignments.

He said that the preservation of public spaces as per the master plan is now

an acid test of this commitment.

Dr. Shah highlighted that the open tract of land at the end of Street 13, Sector E-4, Phase 7, Hayatabad township has been earmarked in the master plan for a public park.

Across the double road, several open grounds are currently being used by youth for football and cricket. However, there are indications that these areas may be encroached upon or converted into plots for

vested interests.

"The violation of the master plan and encroachment of recreational spaces will be a betrayal of sustainable development principles.

The government must ensure that these lands are preserved for the public," Dr. Shah emphasized.

The Good Governance Forum reiterated that protecting these spaces will be the real measure of the government's seriousness in implementing its Road Map to Good Governance.

PESHAWAR (APP): As the world accelerates its transition toward renewable energy, Pakistan finds itself trailing behind, with just 12.2% of its electricity currently sourced from renewables which is a stark contrast to the advances made by its regional peers.

Despite being endowed with vast solar, wind, coal, and hydel potential, the country remains mired in an substantial energy shortage marked by frequent blackouts, high power tariffs, outdated infrastructure, and growing public discontent.

"Pakistan's power woes are deeply rooted in decades of underinvestment in sustainable energy solutions. The country's reliance on imported fossil fuels, which are not only costly but also volatile in price, has led to a ballooning circular debt and a fragile electricity grid" said Professor Dr Zilakat Malik, former Chairman Economics Department at University of Peshawar while talking to APP.

He referred to the Economic Survey of Pakistan (2024-25) that revealed that the nation's total installed power generation capacity stands at 46,605 MW, with a disproportionate dependence on thermal sources (55.7%), followed by hydropower (24.4%), nuclear (7.8%), and renewables (12.2%).

Half of this electricity comes from Independent Power Producers (IPPs), a model widely criticized for its high generation costs and take-or-pay contracts that compel the govern-

ment to pay for electricity whether it's consumed or not.

"Pakistan's economic progress is closely tied to massive investments in renewable energy and the construction of new dams," stressed Professor Dr. Zilakat Malik.

He said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa possesses significant coal potential, with major deposits located in areas like Hangu-Orakzai, Cherat, Gulakhel, and Dara Adamkhel.

He said an estimated total reserves reach around 120 million tons, primarily in the Hangu formation. However, development is hindered by dog-hole mining methods and a lack of comprehensive 3D geological data, though it could significantly reduce Pakistan's reliance on imported energy if properly exploited.

"Our energy mix needs urgent diversification. We're blessed with solar, wind and hydel potential, and even our coal resources, if responsibly developed, could help bridge our energy deficit."

He added that projects like the 1320 MW Sahiwal Coal-Fired Power Plant have played a vital role in ensuring reliable, large-scale power generation. However, he emphasized that Pakistan must now prioritize a transition to cleaner, sustainable sources to secure its energy future.

Efforts to promote solar energy have also been hindered. A notable example is the reduction in the buy-back rate for surplus solar power from Rs27 to Rs10

per unit, discouraging residential and commercial solar adoption.

Coupled with technical challenges and policy inconsistencies, these factors risk derailing the country's renewable momentum at a time when global climate pressures and economic needs demand urgency.

In contrast, the 1320 MW Sahiwal Coal Power Plant, a flagship project, has emerged as a model for operational excellence. A spokesperson from the plant underscored their Total Quality Management (TQM) approach, emphasizing a holistic and proactive system for quality control and assurance.

"Our quality assurance isn't just about compliance but it's about building long-term trust and operational efficiency," the spokesperson said. "We follow a dual strategy combining Quality Control (QC) and Quality Assurance (QA) to maintain high safety, reliability, and performance."

One of the plant's most distinctive assets is its state-of-the-art metal testing laboratory, which plays a central role in ensuring component integrity and process reliability.

Equipped with advanced tools such as HS610e Ultrasonic Flaw Detector for internal defect detection, XL 2800C Handheld Alloy Analyzer using XRF technology for material composition analysis, DM2700M Metallographic Microscope for structural analysis, Magnetic Flaw

Detectors for weld inspections, HT2000A Leeb Hardness Tester for material strength assessment,

Olympus 27MG Ultrasonic Thickness Gauge for corrosion monitoring, the laboratory provides comprehensive support for preventive maintenance, failure analysis, and long-term operational safety. "These instruments allow us to detect early signs of wear and structural weaknesses, enabling timely interventions that reduce downtime and extend equipment life," the spokesperson added.

Experts argued that the Sahiwal model of rigorous quality control and proactive maintenance should be replicated not only in thermal projects but also in upcoming renewable energy ventures.

While coal may still have a significant role to play in the short-term energy mix, the long-term viability of Pakistan's power sector hinges on decarbonization, investment in solar and wind infrastructure, and grid modernization.

"Economic growth is impossible without energy security," Dr. Malik reiterated. "And in today's world, energy security is synonymous with renewable energy."

As Pakistan continues to grapple with the dual challenge of energy shortages and climate change, transitioning to clean energy is not merely an environmental necessity rather it is an economic imperative for sustainable growth and social equity.





## In brief

Free medical camp held  
F.P. Report

**BUNER:** The Association of Private Health Institutions Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has launched relief activities in the flood-affected district of Buner. A free medical camp was set up in Beshkoni, the most severely hit area, where hundreds of victims were provided with medical treatment, medicines, and essential relief. On this occasion, the Association's General Secretary and Director of Al-Madina Institute of Medical Sciences Peshawar, Dr. Habibullah, said that the flood victims are in dire need of cash assistance rather than just food supplies, so they can rebuild their homes and restore their daily lives. He urged the youth to step forward with their manpower, stressing that young people are the real strength of the nation, and the rehabilitation of the affected population is only possible through collective efforts. Dr. Habibullah also expressed gratitude to the Association's provincial president Dr. Haroon, Bannu region representative Dr. Shereen Daraz, allopathic doctor Dr. Najeebullah, and other office-bearers who turned this humanitarian mission into a reality through their active participation. At the end of the visit, the delegation also met with families who had lost their loved ones in the flood. They offered condolences and prayed for the departed souls and the elevation of their ranks.

Bugti congrats  
Sarwat Fatima

**QUETTA (APP):** Chief Minister (CM) Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Bugti, congratulated badminton player Sarwat Fatima from Balochistan for winning a silver medal for Pakistan in the South Asian Regional Badminton Championship. The CM said that Sarwat Fatima has not only brought glory to Balochistan but also to the whole of Pakistan. He termed this success as proof of the hard work, passion and talent of the youth of Balochistan. Mir Sarfaraz Bugti said that the achievements of the players of the province in the field of sports are a beacon for the younger generation. The CM Balochistan said that the provincial government is taking practical steps to promote sports and encourage players and all possible support would be provided to talented players like Sarwat Fatima. It should be noted that Sarwat Fatima has previously met CM Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti, during which the Chief Minister encouraged her and expressed his expectation of excellent performance in the future.

Police official  
suspended

**ABBOTTABAD (APP):** Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Hazara, Nasir Mehmood Satti, has taken strict action against police officials involved in unnecessarily questioning a foreign female tourist. According to details, Lance Head Constable Khair-ur-Rehman has been suspended, while Constables Shahid and Waseem have been served show-cause notices. District Police Officer (DPO) Battagram, Muhammad Ayaz Khan, has been appointed as the inquiry officer and directed to submit a detailed report to the DIG at the earliest. The DIG Hazara stated that discipline, professionalism, a tourist-friendly environment and ensuring the safety of visitors were the top priorities of Hazara Police.

# Prosper Pakistan Conference concludes: Focus on winning economic battle



## F.P. Report

**ABBOTTABAD:** The historic two-day Prosper Pakistan Conference successfully concluded in Nathiagali, with key stakeholders from across the country emphasizing the urgent need to now win the battle for economic stability after triumphing in the battle for truth.

In the joint declaration of the conference, it was affirmed: "We have won the battle for truth; now is the time to win the battle

for economic prosperity."

Speaking at the event, Advisor to the Chief Minister on Finance, Muzzammil Aslam, said that the provincial government is actively taking steps to boost investment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Advisor on Information, Barrister Saif, highlighted that law and order is directly linked to economic progress.

Chairman of the Businessmen Panel, Mian Anjum Nisar, former Governor Haji Ghulam Ali,

and Vice President FPCCI Aon Ali Syed affirmed their unwavering support for the business community and pledged to ensure sustainable economic growth across the country, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The conference, organized by the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI), Prosper Pakistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment & Trade (KPBOIT), was attended by a large number

of participants, including Ambassador of Tajikistan Sherali Jononov, provincial advisors, FPCCI officials, women chamber representatives, secretaries of relevant provincial departments, Board of Investment officials, chamber presidents, traders' associations, and other stakeholders.

During the conference, extensive discussions were held on the challenges faced by the business community, with panel discussions allowing experts

from various sectors to voice their concerns from taxation issues to policy gaps. Practical and actionable recommendations were put forward.

Chairman Businessmen Panel Mian Anjum Nisar, Haji Ghulam Ali, and VP FPCCI Aon Ali Syed addressed the technical and structural challenges faced by small and large businesses and industries, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Their proposals were well received by government representatives, who assured full cooperation to resolve these issues collaboratively. Topics like investment opportunities, tourism development, sustainable utilization of mineral resources, and inclusive participation of women in business were also extensively discussed.

The hall burst into applause when Tajik Ambassador Sherali Jononov delivered his

entire speech in Urdu. He acknowledged Pakistan's strategic importance and called for joint efforts and projects, especially in the field of trade, between the two countries.

Addressing the gathering, Finance Advisor Muzzammil Aslam said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa holds greater potential compared to other provinces, with a government focus on tourism, industry, and minerals. He emphasized that the government is actively working to strengthen investment policies and expand the tax net.

Terming the conference a vital bridge between the business community and the government, he said the dialogue with FPCCI will continue.

Information Advisor Barrister Saif acknowledged certain local challenges but assured that the provincial government, in collaboration with security

agencies, is committed to ensuring the safety of all citizens, especially the business community. He lauded the Businessmen Panel and FPCCI for organizing Pakistan's first-ever Prosper Pakistan Conference, proving their commitment to the country's economic uplift.

He reiterated that all business sectors from tourism and minerals to small enterprises are the backbone of the national economy.

At the closing ceremony, shields were presented to top-performing chambers and associations for their contributions to industry and trade, along with special mementos to chief guests Muzzammil Aslam and Barrister Saif. Chamber presidents paid tribute to the Businessmen Panel for hosting a remarkable event, declaring them as the true representatives of Pakistan's business community.

## Muqam visits flood-hit areas of Shangla

## F.P. Report

**SHANGLA:** Federal Minister and President of Pakistan Muslim League (N) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Engineer Amir Muqam, visited various flood-affected areas of Shangla to assess the situation on the ground and to offer condolences to those affected by the recent devastating floods.

He also visited the Ayesha Foundation Relief Camp established at his guest house.

Federal Minister Engineer Amir Muqam distributed relief items among the victims at the UNHCR Camp in Puran.

He said that the federal government is closely monitoring the situation and taking all necessary measures to provide complete support to the affected population.

The Federal Minister appreciated the timely actions and services of local volunteers, federal institutions, and provincial departments.

He inspected the damaged roads and reviewed the ongoing restoration works.

Engineer Amir Muqam assured the public that the federal government stands with them in this difficult time and is fully committed to ensuring relief and rehabilitation efforts at the fastest possible pace.

While talking to the media, Engineer Amir Muqam stated that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is personally monitoring the relief and rehabilitation operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Azad Jammu & Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan.

He said that the federal government is closely monitoring the situation and taking all necessary measures to provide complete support to the affected population.

The Federal Minister appreciated the timely actions and services of local volunteers, federal institutions, and provincial departments.

He said: "Their dedication and quick response helped mitigate the impact of this natural disaster and ensured immediate relief to the victims."

It is worth noting that since the onset of the floods, Federal Minister Engineer Amir Muqam has continuously remained in the field visiting affected areas, assessing the damages, meeting directly with victims, and understanding their needs and challenges.

His presence has been a source of encouragement for many, as he is speeding up relief efforts through close coordination between federal and provincial institutions.

Engineer Amir Muqam once again assured that the federal government will take every possible step to restore normalcy in the affected areas and will continue to extend all possible support until complete rehabilitation is achieved.



**SHANGLA:** Federal Minister for Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan Affairs and SAFRON and President PMLN Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Engineer Amir Muqam among the flood-affected people of District Shangla in Swat, sharing their grief in this time of hardship and assuring them of immediate relief.

## JI raises over Rs142m for flood victims in Lower Dir

## Haleem Asad

**LOWER DIR:** Jamaat-i-Islami (JI), Lower Dir, has collected more than Rs142 million in donations for the flood-affected people of the district, party leaders announced at a press briefing on Sunday.

Speaking at the JI district secretariat in Balambat, the party's Lower Dir emir and former MNA Maulana Asadullah Khan said the amount included Rs23 million worth of food, medicines, bottled water, shoes and livestock. He said Al-Khidmat Foundation had deployed 1,200 volunteers who were actively engaged in relief operations.

He was accompanied by district general secretary Shoaib Ahmad, Al-Khidmat Lower Dir president Advocate Hafizullah Khaksar, general secretary Sultan Zeb, vice-president Haji Majidullah, district spokesman Mohammad Ali Ghorl Shalmani and other office-bearers.

Mr Asadullah said that soon after the floods, 33 relief camps were set up across the district under the directives of the party's central and provincial leadership. He added that the "Jhooli Phelawo" (fundraising) campaign had received overwhelming response from the public.

So far, he said, Rs142 million had been raised in cash donations, while Rs23 million worth of essential items and 55 livestock had been distributed among affected families. He said Al-Khidmat volunteers had provided assistance to 6,999 victims in Lower Dir, Buner and other flood-hit areas.

The volunteers, he added, were also using machinery to clear landslide-blocked roads, while 10 medical teams and three ambulances equipped with doctors were providing healthcare in the affected localities. Medicines worth Rs200,000 had already been distributed, while 50 families had been treated under the supervision of female doctors.

## Minister distributes agri inputs in Gumbat

## F.P. Report

**KOHAT:** The Agriculture Department (Extension Wing) Kohat has organized a grand Agricultural Mega Gathering at the TMA Office, Gumbat, where Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs, Aftab Alam Advocate was the Chief Guest.

On this occasion, farmers were provided with free Agricultural Inputs including fertilizers, quality seeds, spray pumps, fruit plants and fencing material for orchards. The ceremony beside others, was also attended by the Tehsil Mayor Gumbat Sajid Iqbal, Additional Deputy Commissioner Kohat Hamid Iqbal, District

Director Agriculture Kohat, Officers of the Agriculture Department and a large number of the progressive farmers.

During the event, the participants were briefed in detail on the department's performance, ongoing agricultural activities and programs, and developmental projects.

Tehsil Mayor Sajid Iqbal, on this occasion, said that 83 tube wells have so far been solarized, while demonstration orchards, fertilizer distribution and free spray pumps are directly benefiting local farmers.

Addressing the gathering, the Law Minister announced that the Zamir Gul Dam is in the final stage of its completion and

will soon be inaugurated, while several schemes for the Gandiali Dam have also been approved. He assured the farmers that the government is fully committed to agricultural growth and the welfare of farmers, adding that today's mega gathering reflects the government's strong resolve for the development of the agriculture sector.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Hamid Iqbal reaffirmed that the district administration would continue to extend all out support to the Agriculture Department. The event concluded with the distribution of free Agricultural Inputs and saplings among the farmers by the Law Minister.

## Journalism plays vital role in democracy: Saira

## F.P. Report

**HAFIZABAD:** Adviser to the Chief Minister of Punjab and Member National Assembly Hafiza Saira Afzal Tarar has said that journalism plays a vital role in politics and democracy. She emphasized that journalists must remain impartial in their work, as they are the eyes, ears, nose, and voice of society. "Journalists highlight the issues that often go unnoticed and bring them before the public," she stated.

She expressed these views during a meeting with a delegation of the District Press Club in Rasulpur Tarar. The delegation was led by President District Press Club/Union of Journalists Ch. Javed Asad, while Senior Vice President Hafiz Abdul Qadeer Chaudhry, General Secretary Kashif Ihsan Tarar, Additional Finance Secretary Chaudhry Mazhar Warraich, and former General Secretary Mehar Habibullah were also part of the delegation.

On the occasion, District President of Pakistan

Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Chaudhry Muhammad Bakhs Tarar, District Spokesperson PML-N Chaudhry Muhammad Zaman Bhoon, and District President PML-N Youth Wing Chaudhry Murad Bakhs Tarar were also present. The delegation congratulated Hafiza Saira Afzal Tarar on being elected as MNA and presented her with a bouquet and sweets.

Hafiza Saira Afzal Tarar said that due to the love and patronage of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, Hafizabad has been included in every development initiative of the province, resulting in a vast network of development projects across the district. "Whenever PML-N came into power, it always prioritized public welfare and record-breaking development projects," she remarked. She further announced that very soon, electric buses will be seen operating on the roads of Hafizabad, providing affordable and eco-friendly travel facilities to the people, which she described as

a revolutionary step. She added that the construction of Hafizabad University and the District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital is in the final stages, while the inauguration of an overhead bridge at the Thatha Khokhran railway crossing will take place soon.

Highlighting the progress, she said that all inter-district link roads have been completed, ensuring improved connectivity and convenience for the people. Concluding her remarks, she said, "We have never made a promise that we could not fulfill."

**HAFIZABAD:** The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) Food Safety Teams conducted an extensive crackdown in Hafizabad and surrounding areas, inspecting 114 food outlets and production units. The operation led to fines totaling Rs. 213,000 imposed on 11 units for serious violations of food safety standards. Authorities also seized and destroyed a large quantity of expired food items and harmful chemicals on the spot.

## PYO launches relief activities in Buner

## Wali Ullah Shah

**BUNER:** The Pakistan Youth Organization has stepped forward to support families devastated by the recent floods in Peshonai, Buner district.

Under the leadership of Provincial Coordinator Javed Khan from Nowshera, a 20-member committee along with religious scholars reached the affected area and distributed cash worth millions of rupees and household items among 55 families.

Alongside the relief team, the District Health Officer (DHO) Mardan also set up a free medical camp, where needy and sick individuals were provided with free treat-

ment and medicines.

Local residents praised the initiative, calling it a blessing in such difficult times.

Those who actively participated in the relief efforts included Nazim Javed Khan, Maulana Shahid Ali Haqqani, Maulana Abdul Hadi, Azizullah Amir, youth member Kamran Ali Shah, Malik Javed, social activist Nawab Kaka, Malik Sher Afzal Khan, Farooq, Shah Hussain, Dawood, Zia Javed, and former farmer councilor Mian Syed Faqir, among others, who spent the entire day with the affected families.

The Pakistan Army also lauded the efforts of

the Pakistan Youth Organization, stating that the institution stands firmly with the people in this time of crisis, and its spirit of sacrifice and service is an example for others.

According to the local population, the destruction caused by the floods was so severe that around 98% of houses were completely destroyed, forcing victims to live under the open sky.

Pakistan Youth Organization's National Coordinator, Mujahid Ali Mujahid, announced that additional cash assistance will be distributed among Buner's affected families today to help meet their immediate needs.





# Widespread protests held in Australia to support Palestinians



SYDNEY (Reuters): Thousands of Australians joined pro-Palestinian rallies on Sunday, organizers said, amid strained relations between Israel and Australia following the center-left government's decision to recognize a Palestinian state.

More than 40 protests took place across Australia on Sunday, Palestine Action Group said, including large turnouts in state capitals Sydney, Brisbane

and Melbourne. The group said around 350,000 attended the rallies nationwide, including around 50,000 in Brisbane, though police estimated the numbers there at closer to 10,000. Police did not have estimates for crowd sizes in Sydney and Melbourne.

In Sydney, organizer Josh Lees said Australians were out in force to "demand an end to this genocide in Gaza and to demand that our govern-

ment sanction Israel" as rallygoers, many with Palestinian flags, chanted "free, free Palestine."

Alex Ryvchin, co-CEO of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, the umbrella group for Australia's Jews, told Sky New television that the rallies created "an unsafe environment and shouldn't be happening."

The protests follow Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu this

week stepping up his personal attacks on his Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese over his government's decision this month to recognize a Palestinian state.

Diplomatic ties between Australia and Israel soured after Albanese's Labor government said it would conditionally recognize Palestinian statehood, following similar moves by France, Britain and Canada.

The August 11 announcement came days after tens of thousands of people marched across Sydney's iconic Harbor Bridge, calling for peace and aid deliveries to Gaza, where Israel began an offensive nearly two years ago after the Hamas militant group launched a deadly cross-border attack.

Palestinian authorities say the conflict has claimed the lives of more than 60,000 people in Gaza, while humanitarian organizations say a shortage of food is leading to widespread starvation.



TOKYO: South Korean President Lee Jae Myung and his wife, Kim Hye Kyung, are pictured at Tokyo's Haneda airport on Sunday, before flying to Washington.

# Canadian PM Carney, in Ukraine, says can't rule out sending peacekeepers

KYIV (Reuters): Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney told Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Sunday he backed Ukraine's calls for robust security guarantees as part of any peace deal, saying Canada would not rule out sending troops under such a framework.

Three and a half years since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, U.S. President Donald Trump is leading peace efforts and Ukraine is working with its European allies to draft potential frameworks for post-war security guarantees for Kyiv, which Trump has also expressed openness towards.

Carney, making his first visit to Ukraine since taking office in March, joined Zelenskyy for a ceremony in central Kyiv to mark Ukrainian Independence Day,

which was also attended by Trump's special envoy for Ukraine, Keith Kellogg.

"We are all working to ensure that the end of this war would mean the guarantee of peace for Ukraine, so that neither war nor the threat of war are left for our children to inherit," Zelenskyy told a crowd of dignitaries in Kyiv's Sophia Square, against the backdrop of an 11th century cathedral.

Zelenskyy has said he wants future security guarantees as part of a potential peace deal to be as close as possible to NATO's Article 5, which considers an attack on one member state as an attack against all.

Carney backed Ukraine's calls for potential international participation.

"In Canada's judgment, it is not realistic

that the only security guarantee could be the strength of the Ukrainian Armed Forces ... that needs to be buttressed and reinforced," Carney told a joint press conference.

The two leaders also signed an agreement on drone co-production, and Carney said Ukraine would receive more than C\$1 billion (\$723 million) in military aid from a previously announced package next month.

Zelenskyy presented Kellogg with a state honour during Sunday's ceremony, telling him "we need peace" as he gave him a medal in a leather case.

Later in the day, Kellogg met Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko, who said they had discussed the Ukraine-U.S. minerals agreement as well as the security guarantees issue.

During the press conference with Carney, Zelenskyy was asked about a story in the Wall Street Journal which said the Pentagon had for months been quietly blocking Ukraine's use of the U.S.-supplied ATACMS missile to hit targets in Russia.

In response, he said that Kyiv has of late been using its own domestically produced long-range weapons to hit targets inside Russia, which are not cleared with Washington.

"Lately we have not been discussing this issue with the United States," he said.

Ukraine has said it conducted overnight strikes on an oil refinery in Russia's Samara region, as well as a gas fractionation facility at Ust-Luga, a Russian port which is a key energy export node.

# Germany should look for new trade partners: Chancellor



BERLIN (Reuters): Germany should look beyond a trade deal between the United States and the European Union that slaps 15% tariffs on EU goods by finding new trade partners in coming years, Chancellor Friedrich

Merz said on Sunday. "How do we handle world trade if for example the Americans are no longer prepared to play by the rules of the World Trade Organisation?" Merz said at a government Open Day, an event where people can

visit Berlin institutions and participate in discussions. "We should search for partners in the world that share our thinking," added Merz, leader of the conservative CDU party whose approval rating stands at 25% - level with

Alternative fur Deutschland (AfD) - according to an INSA poll published by newspaper Bild this weekend.

The July 28 framework trade deal was brokered between U.S. President Donald Trump and EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

"We need good economic relations with the U.S., and we may have got off lightly," said Merz, noting that trade possibilities might open up in South America, Asia and Africa, and should be of mutual benefit.

"We must consistently go down that road," he said.

Merz also said basic questions regarding social security systems needed to be addressed by the end of the year, arguing that the government must rein in welfare spending on employment, pension and health benefits.

"We have to make our social security systems fit for the future," he said.

# What to know about China's new regulations on rare earths

BANGKOK (AP): China released new interim measures tightening controls on mining and processing of rare earths that are used in many high-tech products including electric vehicles, smartphones and fighter jets.

The rules released by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology apply both to rare earths originating in China and those that are sent to China for refining.

They require companies to comply with quotas for various minerals. Companies must have government approval to deal with rare earths and must accurately report the amount of rare earths products being handled. Violators will face legal penalties and also have their quotas for rare earths reduced.

Here's what to know.

The 17 rare earth elements, including such minerals as germanium, gallium and titanium, aren't actually rare. But they're hard to find in a high enough concentration to make mining them worth the investment.

China has been gradually tightening restrictions on exports of such materials, partly in response to U.S. controls on its access to American advanced technology.

In April, just after U.S. President Donald Trump announced a raft of tariffs on dozens of U.S. trading partners, Beijing announced permitting requirements for seven more rare earths: samarium, gadolinium, terbium, dysprosium, lutetium, scandium and yttrium, citing the need to "better safeguard national security and interests and to fulfill global duties of non-proliferation."

Those limits raised worries that manufacturers in the U.S. and elsewhere would run short of vital materials needed for production, an issue in China-U.S. trade talks. In response to U.S. concessions on

access to computer chip design software and jet engines, Beijing announced in June that it was speeding up approvals of rare earths exports.

In July, China's Ministry of State Security said it was cracking down on alleged smuggling of rare earths materials that it said threatened national security, indicating Beijing was moving to exert more control.

Over the past several decades, China has come to dominate rare earths processing. It now supplies nearly 90% of the world's rare earths, even though it mines only about 70% of such materials.

China holds nearly half of the world's known reserves of rare earths, but it also imports significant amounts of rare earths from neighboring Myanmar for processing and export.

Since it controls technologies used for refining rare earth elements and has banned exporting that know-how, China holds a near-monopoly on smelting and separating them.

In 2024, the United States obtained 70% of the rare earths it used from China; 13% from Malaysia; 6% from Japan and 5%

from Estonia. Some of the elements obtained from non-Chinese intermediate sources came from mineral concentrates processed in China and Australia, according to the U.S. Geologic Survey.

China has agreed to issue some permits for rare earth exports but not for military uses, and much uncertainty remains about their supply.

The rules released Friday spell out tighter controls on licensing of companies dealing in rare earths and centralize controls on mining, exports and processing.

They also impose more stringent environmental standards for the industry.

Trump has made it a priority to try to reduce American reliance on China for rare earths, while pushing for Beijing to ease its controls.

China has opted to dial up or down the approval process as needed, while tightening overall controls on the industry. The new regulations don't spell out the quotas for production and export or specific rare earths elements, but strongly suggest Beijing is serious about exerting stronger control over the industry.



# Doctors in Gaza say patients protruding ribs and bony limbs offer evidence of malnutrition

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP): Not long after Texas surgeon Mohammed Adeel Khaleel arrived at a Gaza City hospital in early August, a 17-year-old was brought in with gunshot wounds to both legs and one hand, sustained when he went to collect food at an aid site.

In the emergency room, Khaleel said he noted the ribs protruding from the teen's emaciated torso, an indication of severe malnutrition.

When doctors at Al-Ahli Hospital stabilized the patient, he raised his heavily bandaged hand and pointed to his empty mouth, Khaleel said.

"The level of hunger is really what's heart-breaking. You know, we saw malnutrition before, back in November, already starting to happen. But now the level is just, it's beyond imagination," Khaleel, a spinal surgeon on his third volunteer stint in Gaza, said in an interview.

On Friday, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, or IPC, the leading authority on global hunger crises, said for the first time that parts of Gaza are in famine and warned that it is spreading. For months, U.N. agencies, aid groups and experts had warned that Israel's blockade and ongoing offensive were pushing the territory to the brink.

In the 24 hours following the famine announcement, eight people in Gaza died of malnutrition-related causes, bringing the overall toll of such deaths during the war to 281, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which is part of the Hamas-run government and staffed by medical professionals.

A U.S. medical nonprofit working in Gaza says one in six children

under 5 is affected by acute malnutrition.

Israel rejected the famine announcement, calling it an "outright lie" and pointing to its recent efforts to allow in more food after it eased a complete 2½ month blockade in May. It has accused Hamas of siphoning off aid — allegations disputed by the United Nations, which says Israeli restrictions and a breakdown of law and order make it extremely difficult to deliver food to the most vulnerable.

Khaleel, who spoke to The Associated Press ahead of the announcement, said the evidence of deprivation was already clear.

"Just the degree of weight loss, post-operative complications and starvation that we're seeing."

That wouldn't surprise me at all if it was called famine," said Khaleel, who traveled to Gaza as an independent volunteer via the World Health Organization.

At Gaza City's Shifa Hospital earlier in the week, nutrition director Dr. Mohammad Kuheil led an AP journalist to the bedside of a thin-limbed girl.

Aya Sbeteh, 15, was wounded in an airstrike. But her recovery has been set back by weakness from lack of food that her family says has reduced her weight by more than a third.

"All we have are grains like lentils, sometimes," said her father, Yousef Sbeteh, 44. "Even flour is unaffordable."

Another patient, Karam Akoumeh, lay with sunken cheeks, his thin skin stretched like plastic wrap across his rib cage.

His intestines were seriously damaged when he was shot while going

out to collect flour, his family said, compromising his digestive system.

Now he is one of 20 people at Shifa brought in for abdominal wounds and increasingly malnourished because of a shortage of intravenous nutritional supplements, the doctor said.

Akoumeh's father, Atef, said the lack of supplements compounded the hunger that reduced Karam's weight from 62 kilograms (136 pounds) to just 35 kilos (77 pounds).

"I checked throughout all Gaza's hospitals for it (the supplements), but I have not found any," he said.

Israeli officials have pointed out that some of those said to have died from malnutrition had preexisting conditions. But doctors and other experts say that is to be expected, as famine first preys on the most vulnerable, including babies and small children.

Outside the hospital, the shortage of nutrients is equally dire, doctors and civilians say.

"There are no protein sources, only plant-based protein from legumes. Meat and chicken are not available. Dairy products are not available, and fruits are also unavailable," said Kuheil, the doctor in charge of nutrition at Shifa.

In Gaza City on Friday, Palestinians displaced from elsewhere recounted a desperate search for food.

"We're starving. We eat once a day. Will we be more hungry than we are now?"

There's nothing left," said Dalia Shamali, whose family has been repeatedly displaced from their home in nearby Shijaiyah.

She said they spent most of their money over the last two years mov-

ing from one part of Gaza to another as the Israeli military issued evacuation orders.

With Israel allowing more food in recently, the price of flour and other food items has been dropping, but the family still can't afford them, Shamali said.

In its announcement Friday, the IPC said famine in Gaza City is likely to spread across the territory without a ceasefire and a flood of humanitarian aid.

Some of the IPC's conclusions were echoed in a report by a group that organizes medical missions to Gaza, which described a "catastrophic rise in severe malnutrition" among children and pregnant women.

One of every 6 children in Gaza under 5 is now affected by acute malnutrition, said the report by U.S. nonprofit MedGlobal, based on observations by its staff in four of Gaza's five governorates.

The group warned that all young children in Gaza are at risk of starving without intervention.

Khaleel, the Texas doctor, said he would leave it to others with more expertise to measure exactly what constitutes famine.

But he knows what he saw in three weeks of treating patients in Gaza, most of the time at the hospital in Gaza City. Again and again, medical workers cut open patients' clothing to treat injuries, revealing a loss of muscle and fat caused by hunger that left skin stretched tight over protruding bones.

"These patients, a number of them that we're seeing are just exposed ribs, severely skinny extremities," he said.

"And you know that they're just not getting calories in."



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## RFK Jr. versus the paediatricians on COVID vax

In simple terms, paediatricians save children, while Bobby Kennedy kills children. And so the dangerous quack Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is now attacking the American Academy of Pediatrics, which dared to issue guidance recommending that children under age 2 be given the COVID-19 vaccine, in contrast to the fatally compromised CDC under Kennedy, which had rescinded that earlier recommendation.

The secretary accused the AAP of kowtowing to corporate benefactors while ignoring the clear evidence that such vaccines are safe for children and can prevent serious illness. Once again, RFK Jr.'s rabid antivaxxer outlook is dictating the direction of HHS that is determinantal to public health, according to the Tribune News Service.

Part of the problem with RFK and his Make America Healthy Again movement is that he is talking about some things that can be legitimate concerns for the American public, such as diet. It is true that the pharmaceutical industry is a profit-driven one that can engage in abuses for business reasons - look no further than the infamous case of Purdue Pharma pushing opioids on the public despite knowing the risks, to disastrous effect. Having a government bureaucracy that can think critically about the incentive structures of our health system could be a good thing.

The issue is that the solution to a system incentivized to occasionally misuse science for its own ends is not to simply reject science altogether. What RFK is ultimately insisting is not just that we examine potential conflicts of interest, but throw out the research and scientific method practices that undergird our entire understanding of public health, which is the exact opposite of his job.

The anti-vaccine scion embarrassment to his famous political family is also conflating pharmaceutical corporations with professional organizations of medical practitioners and researchers that exist separate and apart from the industry.

Yes, Big Pharma certainly has over the years bankrolled a lot of its own research and propped up independent-seeming front groups to ward off scrutiny, but it is an example of the deeply conspiratorial thinking of the nation's top health official that he cannot envision anyone but his conspiracy friends acting in good faith to help us make better decisions about our health.

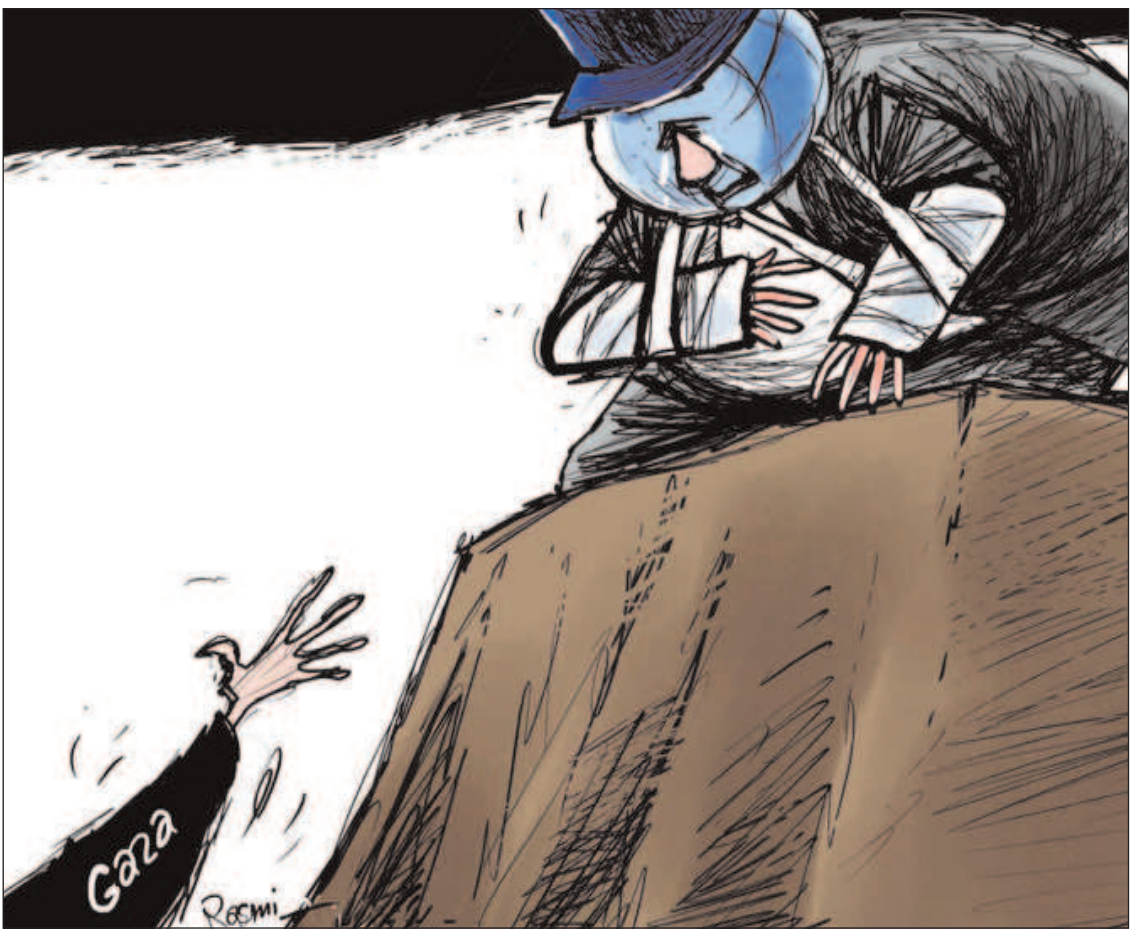
People have had public debates about the proper approach to safeguarding health since before modern medicine, but RFK is not a fringe academic or internet poster who can argue to his heart's content without actually hurting anyone. His position atop the nation's public health infrastructure means that he is actually tasked with overseeing as close as we can get to the right answers.

Even people who are not all in on his wacko alternative health movement will listen to his advice by simple virtue of the position that he's in, one that is meant to convey authority on these matters.

It also confers literal authority; the exclusion of a recommendation for child vaccinations means that they are much likely to not be covered by insurers, which means that even people that want to immunize their children will not be able to do so. In that way, Kennedy is moving away from his supposed concern with parental choice; he is making his choice on behalf of the parents, not just now but in the long term as he axes funding for crucial vaccine research. The results of all this are both predictable and depressing, as we said at the outset: children and many adults will get sick, and many of them will ultimately die, in ways that were entirely preventable.

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## This is what happens when money dies

Hani Qarmoot

You try to buy a kilo of flour in Gaza. You open your wallet; what's inside? A faded 10-shekel note, barely held together by a strip of tape. No one wants it; it is all rubbish now.

The 10-shekel note, normally worth about \$3, was once the most commonly used bill in daily life. Now, it is no longer in circulation. Not officially—only practically. It has been worn out beyond recognition. Sellers will not accept it. Buyers cannot use it.

There is no fresh cash. No replenishment.

Other banknotes are following the fate of the 10 shekels, especially the smaller ones.

If you pay with a 100-shekel note for an 80-shekel purchase, the seller will likely be unable to return the remaining 20 due to the poor physical state of the banknotes.

Many notes are torn or taped together, and entire stalls now exist just to repair damaged currency so it can be used again. Anything is better than nothing.

But the disintegration of banknotes is not the only problem we have in Gaza.

Civil servants have gone months without pay. NGOs are unable to transfer salaries to their employees. Families cannot send remittances. What once supported Gaza's financial structure has vanished. There is no mention of when it will return. Just silence.

Money is stuck. Trapped

behind closed systems and political barriers.

If you manage to obtain money from outside sources — perhaps from a cousin in Ramallah or a sibling in Egypt — it comes at a cost. A brutal one. If you get sent 1,000 shekels (\$300), the agent will hand you 500. That's right, the commission rate on cash withdrawals in Gaza is now 50 percent.

There are no banks to offer such withdrawals or oversee transfers.

The signs are still there. Bank of Palestine. Cairo Amman Bank. Al Quds Bank. But the doors are shut, the windows are dusty, and the inside is empty. No ATMs work.

There are only brokers, some with connections to the black market and smugglers, who are somehow able to obtain cash. They take huge cuts to disperse it, in exchange for a bank transfer to their accounts.

Every withdrawal feels like theft disguised as a transaction. Even so, people continue to use this system. They have no choice.

Do you have a bank card? Great. Try using it?

There is no power. There's no internet. No POS machines. When you show your card to a seller, they shake their head.

People print screenshots of account balances that they cannot access. Some walk around with expired bank documents, hoping

someone will think they're "good enough" as a pay guarantee.

Nobody does.

There are a few sellers who accept so-called "digital wallets", but those are few, and so are people who have them.

In Gaza today, money you can't touch is equivalent to no money at all.

And so people have to resort to other means.

At the market, I saw a woman standing with a plastic bag of sugar. Another was holding a bottle of cooking oil. They did not speak much. I just nodded. Traded. Left.

This is what "shopping" in Gaza looks like right now. Trade what you've got. A kilo of lentils for two kilos of flour. A bottle of bleach for some rice. A baby's jacket for several onions.

There is no stability. One day, your item will be worth something. The next day, nobody wants it. Prices are guesses. Value is emotional. Everything is negotiable.

"I traded my coat for a bag of diapers," my uncle Waleed, a father of twins, told me. "He looked at me as if I were a beggar. I felt like I was giving up a part of my life."

This is not a throwback to simpler times. This is what happens when systems disappear. When money dies. When families are forced to sacrifice dignity for survival.

People don't just suffer—they shrink. They lower their expectations. They stop dreaming. They stop planning. What future can you plan when you can't afford tomorrow?

"I sold my gold bracelet," Lina, my neighbour by tent, told me. "It was for emergencies. But now, every day is an emergency."

Gaza's economy did not collapse due to bad policy or internal mismanagement. It was broken on purpose.

The occupation has not just blocked goods entering Gaza; it has also blocked currency and with it, any sense of financial control. It has destroyed the banking system. It has made liquidity a weapon.

Cutting off Gaza's money is part of a larger siege. There is no need to fire a bullet to destroy a people. Simply deny them the ability to live.

You can't pay for bread, for water, for medicine, so how do you sustain life?

If this trend continues, Gaza will be the first modern society to completely return to barter. There are no salaries. There is no official market. Only personal trades and informal deals. And even those will not last forever. Because what happens when there is nothing left to trade?

If this isn't addressed, Gaza will be more than just a siege zone. It will be a place where the concepts of money, economy, and fairness will die forever.

## Europe and its influence in the Middle East

Andrew Hammond

As British Prime Minister Keir Starmer prepares to make a big decision next month on whether the UK will officially recognize the state of Palestine, the reality is that Europe's voice in the Arab-Israeli conflict has rarely been weaker.

Starmer is working with allies, in Europe and beyond, on a long-term strategy to establish peace "as part of a two-state solution." However, as much as that might be still the right vision to pursue, it has declining traction outside Europe and the prime minister has admitted that "without both sides engaging in good faith in negotiations, that prospect is vanishing before our eyes."

The diminished clout of Europe in the Middle East, not only in the Arab-Israeli conflict but beyond it, too, is a significant change from only a generation ago. The Venice Declaration of 1980, for instance, provided momentum toward international recognition of the Palestinian right to statehood. The region was also a significant player in the 1990s Oslo accords.

One of the reasons for Europe's declining influence in the Middle East has been internal divisions. A small number of regional leaders hold pro-Israel views, such as Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, a staunch ally of his Israeli counterpart, Benjamin Netanyahu. Others nations, such as Spain and Ireland, have adopted much more pro-Palestinian stances.

These splits have resurfaced regularly since the

Hamas-led terrorist attacks against Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, and Israel's subsequent military offensives in Gaza.

Another key reason for Europe's declining influence in the Middle East is the deepening of disagreements with the US. The transatlantic discord on the subject, and on a range of wider issues including the rise of China on the global stage, highlight the ways in which Europe is diverging politically from Washington. While these Western fissures did not begin with President Donald Trump's presidential terms, they have been exacerbated by them.

The starkness of the present transatlantic divide on some issues related to the Middle East was evident this week when the US ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee, blamed Europe for stalled Gaza peace talks. He said the "noise that has been made by European leaders recently ... is having the counterproductive effect that they probably think that they want. If they believe that unilaterally calling for a two-state, a Palestinian state recognition, immediately brings them closer, the sad truth is it's taking them further away."

What Huckabee highlights here is Europe's growing concern with the actions of Israel, including its recently announced proposed takeover of Gaza City. The results of this concern include the recent decision by German Chancellor Friedrich Merz

not to authorize any further exports of military equipment that could be used in Gaza "until further notice."

This represents a break from the so-called Staatsrason, meaning "reason of state," a traditional cornerstone of postwar German international policy that views Tel Aviv's security as being tightly linked to Berlin.

Other regional politicians, including Antonio Costa, the president of the European Council, have similarly reacted strongly to Netanyahu's latest plan for Gaza. Costa slammed the takeover plan, arguing that it, alongside "the illegal expansion of settlements in the West Bank, the massive destruction in Gaza, the blockade of humanitarian aid, and the spread of famine," runs contrary to the requirements of international law and violates the agreement reached with the EU last month to improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

This is the context in which Starmer will make his big decision next month. He has already condemned the recent announcement by the Israeli security Cabinet in strong terms, stating: "Israel's decision to further escalate its offensive in Gaza is wrong and we urge it to reconsider immediately. What we need is a ceasefire, a surge in humanitarian aid, the release of all hostages by Hamas and a negotiated solution."

One of the ironies for Europe in its declining influence in the Middle

East is that the fortunes of both regions have never been more interlinked. Economically, the troubling recent tensions in the Middle East have created significant tailwinds for the European and wider global economies, including in energy markets.

While neither Israel nor the Palestinian territories are major oil producers, the wider Middle East accounts for a third of global output. Some with long memories even warn of the possibility of an oil shock similar to that of 1973-74, during which the price of a barrel of oil nearly quadrupled in less than a year.

Another factor influencing economic tailwinds in the past few years has been the significant number of Houthi attacks on international vessels in the Red Sea. As a result of this, much commercial shipping has been diverted to avoid the area, via South Africa and the Cape of Good Hope.

Another key reason why Europe has a particularly keen interest in the Arab-Israeli conflict at the present time is the fact that it is widely considered to be complicating its support for Ukraine. For instance, some countries in the Global South believe some Western counterparts have been hypocritical in their condemnation of Russia while offering support for Israel.

Europe therefore faces an uphill task in its efforts to restore lost influence in the Middle East. This project might require a long-term, concerted strategy, including efforts to reduce intra-European divisions on key regional issues.

## A tale of two summits

Yossi Mekelberg

Now that the fanfare surrounding the two hastily convened international summits that took place thousands of miles apart over the past week in an effort to end the war in Ukraine has subsided, the main resulting sentiments are relief that the outcomes of both meetings are not likely to exacerbate an already ghastly war, and cautious optimism for future diplomatic negotiations that might end it. But not much beyond that.

The first summit was between US President Donald Trump and his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, in Anchorage, Alaska on Aug. 15. The second took place three days later in Washington, where Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky was accompanied during his meeting with Trump by the leaders of several major European nations who provided a human shield (in the nicest possible sense) around him.

As with all such meetings, they were as much about optics as they were about the actual content of the discussions. Considering the ill-tempered meeting between Trump and Zelensky six months earlier, during which the former ambushed the latter in front of the media, there was a collective sigh of relief that this time their meeting was conducted in a much better spirit, and that the damage caused by the American president rolling out the red carpet a few days earlier for the otherwise internationally outcast Putin seemed not to have had any lasting impact.

Beyond the choreography of the two occasions, which was mainly to do with the ways in which Trump conducts domestic and international politics, any expectation that they might result in instant agreements in the glare of publicity would either have been naive or the result of lack of understanding about how diplomacy works.

Summits exist to finalize and announce to the world an outcome after behind-the-scenes and quiet back-channel negotiations achieve a breakthrough. Otherwise, they are most likely mere grandstanding.

What the Trump administration fails to understand is that no amount of smiles or flattery can hide the fact that underlining this conflict is the long-standing view in Moscow that Ukraine has no right to exist independently of Russia. Putin does not hide this belief. As recently as late June, he told the St. Petersburg Economic Forum: "I have said many times that the Russian and Ukrainian people are one nation, in fact. In this sense, all of Ukraine is ours."

This was no slip of the tongue, simply repetition of what Putin and those very close to him have been claiming for a long time: that Ukraine is an artificial state and the Ukrainian people are, in fact, Russians. As long as this remains the prevailing mindset, any agreement will amount to no more than a ceasefire deal that Russia would be ready to violate at the first opportunity. Watertight security guarantees are therefore paramount.

Putin's strategy is to drive a wedge between the US and Europe and, in doing so, weaken Kyiv both on the battlefield and on the diplomatic one. His meeting with Trump in Anchorage was hardly a resounding success, but the Russian leader was already the main beneficiary of it even before his plane touched down in Alaska, simply because he had been invited to meet the sitting American president while still shunned by most Western nations since his ill-fated, full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Putin gained international recognition from the very country that is supposed to be the leader of the free world, basically for nothing, while all of Washington's major allies continue to regard him as a complete outcast. This encouraged him to be audacious enough during the post-summit press conference to state that if a peace agreement is to be reached, the "root causes" of the conflict will have to

be eliminated. For him, this is a euphemism either for the disappearance of Ukraine altogether, or for the country to agree to be subservient to Moscow.

This subtext completely eludes Trump. He genuinely wants to reach a peace deal but for this to happen he needs to refrain from rewarding a head of state for whom the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for war crimes in March 2023. A head of state who continues to demand immediate recognition of Russian sovereignty over the Ukrainian regions of Crimea, Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson, and that Ukraine agrees to demilitarization, neutrality, no foreign military involvement in the country, and to hold new elections — all of which are bound to be rejected, and rightly so, by Ukraine and the rest of Europe.

One of the cardinal mistakes made by the US administration was to conclude the summit in Anchorage with no mention of a desperately needed ceasefire agreement, first and foremost to stop the killing but also to create conditions more conducive to peace negotiations, which cannot exist under fire. Putin departed feeling reassured that he was not facing further sanctions or any other "severe consequences," as Trump had threatened ahead of the meeting should a ceasefire deal not be achieved. Yet, as much as there was the strong feeling that Putin had the upper hand in the summit, it nonetheless did leave the door open for future negotiations.

When the diplomatic theater moved to Washington for the meeting between Trump and Zelensky, it was obvious that it was, to a large extent, a massive exercise in damage limitation. In an unprecedented development, no fewer than seven heavyweight European leaders — including French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, Italian and British Prime Ministers Giorgia Meloni and Keir Starmer, and NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte — gathered to prevent a repeat of the farcical meeting between Trump and Zelensky in February, knowing that not only was the future of Ukraine at stake, but also European security and America's commitment to it.

Recognizing that pleasing Trump is now part of contemporary diplomatic engagement with the US, the Ukrainian president abandoned his usual military fatigues in favor of a business suit and, in front of the cameras, thanked the American president countless times in the space of a few minutes.

No much progress was made, then, but Trump's call for direct talks between Putin and Zelensky, which he might also join should they take place, might yet mark a significant development. Moreover, although still not fully committed, this was also the first time that Trump has pledged that the US would help to guarantee Ukraine's security, though he still views Europe as the "first line of defense."

Significantly, the European leaders showed backbone by pushing back against Trump's dismissal of the suggestion that a ceasefire was needed before negotiations could take place to end the war. Merz was very clear on this, saying: "I can't imagine that the next meeting would take place without a ceasefire. So, let's work on that and let's try to put pressure on Russia."

A ceasefire agreement is not only an obvious demand to make in order to stop the killing, it would enable more flexibility in negotiations, which remains impossible as long as Ukrainian soldiers and civilians are being killed by Russia every day. Most importantly, Europe — in mobilizing its heavy-hitting leaders, who almost invited themselves to accompany Zelensky to the White House — displayed a united front that made it clear they will not allow Ukraine and its occupied territories to be sold out in any agreement between Washington and Moscow.



# Iraq and the shifting tides of US and EU policy

Hafed Al-Ghwel

Iraq, long characterized as a theater of regional and international competition, is rapidly evolving into a strategic epicenter for Western policy in the Middle East. The current administration in Baghdad is asserting a form of conditional sovereignty, balancing complex relationships with regional powers while simultaneously deepening security and economic ties with the US, China, and European partners.

This reorientation is not incidental but the product of deliberate statecraft, economic necessity, and a recalculated foreign alignment under Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani, who was ranked by CEOWorld magazine this year as one of the “Most Powerful Political Leaders Shaping the World.”

With a population exceeding 40 million and proven oil reserves of more than 140 billion barrels, Iraq’s demographic and economic significance is substantial. Yet its actual strategic value extends beyond hydrocarbons. It lies in the nation’s potential to anchor a more stable regional order, provided it can successfully navigate its own internal contradictions and external pressures.

For now, Al-Sudani’s government in Baghdad has achieved measurable gains in efforts to stabilize the nation’s security environment. Attacks by extremist groups have plummeted to a mere five documented incidents this year, a figure that belies the complex and persistent threat posed by Iran-backed militias that operate with significant autonomy.

In a definitive assertion of state authority, the prime minister this month dismissed two brigade commanders from Kataib Hezbollah following a lethal clash at a government office. This move, supported by a rare public mandate from the country’s supreme Shiite religious authority, signaled an unprecedented willingness to challenge armed factions that wield significant influence and possess large arsenals.

Albeit long overdue, this recalibration of civil-military relations aligns with a concerted, internationally

supported effort to professionalize a security sector historically compromised by parallel command structures. However, this is all happening amid intense legislative pressure to codify these very militias into law, in a move that could formalize external influences that view Iraqi sovereignty as antithetical to their interests.

Meanwhile, Al-Sudani’s government has made significant progress on the economy and given credible commitments to structural reforms. However,

**The fragility has led to a strategic push for energy autonomy, alongside urgent upgrades to electricity distribution, where losses reached 55 percent in 2024 due to theft and inefficiency. Central to this effort is the Gas Growth Integrated Project, a \$27 billion venture designed to capture 600 million cubic feet of associated gas from southern oil fields each day; an initial 50 million cubic feet processing facility is already under construction. Simultaneously, Baghdad is working to deploy a floating liquefied natural gas import terminal by next year to circumvent terrestrial pipelines and geopolitical blackmail. Such projects are more than simply technical fixes, they represent a fundamental recalibration of Iraq’s political sovereignty.**

Iraq remains crippled by a debilitating energy paradox that is key to its vulnerability to external coercion. The country’s power grid continues to suffer catastrophic losses, for example shedding 5,000 megawatts in May alone as a result of politically motivated interruptions to

Iranian gas supplies, a dependency that costs billions each year and leaves nearly a third of the Iraqi population prone to recurrent blackouts.

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Moreover, Baghdad is complementing these efforts with tangible fiscal measures, including better-targeted subsidies and efforts to strengthen tax administration. Despite financing limitations and a

despite threats from armed factions and internal discord, reflects a strengthening of state institutions compared with the protracted crises that followed the 2018 and 2021 elections.

This democratic exercise, however imperfect, offers a channel for political competition that does not rely solely on coercion or external patronage.

Regionally, Iraq is repositioning itself as a conduit for cooperation rather than conflict. Talks continue for the revival of a dormant oil pipeline connection to the

Mediterranean through Syria that could carry up to 2.25 million barrels a day, thereby providing Baghdad with alternative export routes and reducing its dependence on southern terminals. This project, if realized, would integrate Iraq more closely with Levantine economies and enhance its strategic value to European energy security.

Simultaneously, Baghdad is engaged in trilateral water negotiations with Türkiye and Syria, seeking to modernize outdated agreements and better manage the flow of the Euphrates River. These initiatives reveal a pragmatic approach to regional diplomacy, one that seeks to leverage geography for economic gain while avoiding entanglements in ideological struggles.

On the global stage, Iraq’s relationship with the US is slowly transforming from a security-centric partnership toward a more multifaceted engagement. The reduction of American

troop numbers has allowed the relationship to shed some of its paternalistic character, creating room for cooperation in energy, trade and governance. It is a shift symbolic of a long-delayed redefinition: where once the relationship was dominated by boots on the ground, lethal aid, and counterterrorism, it now increasingly involves technical assistance, private investment, and diplomatic support for Iraqi sovereignty.

Even Europe is cognizant of Iraq’s brimming potential. European energy companies, such as TotalEnergies, are leading key gas-capture projects, and diplomatic engagement has intensified around issues of governance, climate, and economic reform.

Brussels sees in Iraq not only a potential energy partner but also a stabilizing force in a volatile region. Iraq’s willingness to engage on issues such as water management, electricity grid modernization, and judicial reform creates opportunities for soft-power influence that complement US efforts. This European interest provides Baghdad with additional options and reduces its vulnerability to coercion by any single external power.

Overall, Iraq’s emergence as a regional hub remains contingent on its ability to navigate formidable obstacles. Corruption, institutional weaknesses, and the lingering influence of armed factions continue to pose risks to stability and reform. Moreover, the government’s strategy of balance requires constant recalibration, as regional tensions could easily spill over and disrupt careful diplomatic arrangements.

Nevertheless, the direction of travel is clear: Iraq is gradually becoming a center of gravity in the Middle East, one in which US and European interests can find expression through economic partnerships and diplomatic engagement rather than military presence alone.

This transformation, if it can be sustained, could make Iraq the most consequential emergent regional partner for the West over the coming decade.

# Where can the migrants go?

Peter Harrison

There is an increasing lack of compassion in the world. People want to stop the alleged influx of unauthorized foreigners entering their countries but fail to offer any solutions for where these people should go instead.

The outright racism behind such a view is no longer even thinly veiled; politicians, media outlets, and extremist right-wing groups all openly state that these people are “not their problem” and “someone else should deal with them.”

But let us look at the actual numbers for a moment. According to the Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford, the number of unauthorized arrivals in the UK grew slightly from 16,281 to 17,100 in 2020, then began to spike in 2021, reaching 36,218.

But surely this was inevitable? The lockdowns imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic had started to be lifted, Afghanistan was handed back to the Taliban, and the war in Ethiopia was escalating, to name but three contributory factors.

Then, in 2022, when Russia invaded Ukraine and the UK’s COVID lockdowns were fully lifted, the number of unauthorized entries into the country once again spiked, at 54,702. The number later fell, to 36,949 in 2024. There was a slight increase in the number of people arriving in small boats, from 29,437 in 2023 to 29,851 in 2024.

Do these numbers really reflect a crisis? Migrants in the UK have been described by some as “second-class,” and without any evidence labeled as rapists and child abusers. In fact, there are few crimes of which they have not been accused.

In UK news outlets and on social media, there are claims on a daily basis that so-called “illegal” migrants are committing crimes against women, bleeding the economy dry by claiming government handouts, taking up scarce housing space, and receiving “free healthcare.”

No amount of statistical evidence to the contrary can seem to convince the accusers that their claims are unfounded. In fact, the majority of crimes in the UK — minor, major, violent or abusive — are committed by British citizens.

Yes, of course there are occasions on which the perpetrators are individuals who arrived in the country illegally on boats or in the back of a lorry. But in general, most crime is home-grown. That is just a fact.

There is a push in the UK for more information to be provided about how many offenses are committed by migrants. But in the very likely event that wider availability of such information reveals that migration is largely not to blame for incidences of crime or public disorder, the former of which have actually fallen in recent years, will this be acknowledged by the same right-wing extremists, media outlets, and social media users who continue to spread such disinformation?

Similarly, migrants are not receiving generous handouts from the British government; they receive as little as \$40 (\$53) a week for food.

Yes, like everyone else in the UK, they have access to free healthcare “at the point of entry.” This is a

given for everyone in the country and the foundation on which the National Health Service was built.

There is also a widely shared belief that there has been a massive increase in the UK in the number of houses used for multiple occupancy, with each room rented out individually, again because of the so-called migrant crisis. Yet this is nothing new; when I left my parental home in 1988 I lived in shared accommodation until about 2004.

But again, no amount of facts or other contradictory information seem to get in the way of a good old fashioned right-wing protest. If you believe everything you read on certain news platforms or while scrolling through social media, you would be forgiven for thinking all crime in the UK was committed by migrants from other countries.

Sadly there seems to be a

million sought asylum, 36.8 million were refugees and 5.9 million were in need of international protection. The main narrative in so many Western countries right now is that they are being “overrun” by people who cross their borders illegally. Really? In 2024, UNHCR reported that 76 percent of refugees and asylum seekers were hosted by low- and middle-income countries, and about 70 percent were in countries that border their own. The report went on to state that “only a minority make it to wealthy countries in Europe or North America.” Before I am accused of being a left-wing rabble-rouser, it is clearly apparent that there are indeed some people who arrive from other countries and subsequently commit offenses against women and children, or who steal. But the majority do not.

continuing trend of deliberate misinformation that is pushing this message, with some success. Politicians around the world, certainly in the West, are scapegoating people a lot less fortunate than themselves in a bid to maintain power.

Anti-migrant protesters say we should just send the refugees back home and their own countries should deal with them. Yes, in an ideal world, all countries should indeed look after their own. But what about people who have no choice but to flee their home nations? What about those to whom we owe a debt of gratitude, such as the Afghan nationals who helped the International Security Assistance Force during the war in Afghanistan?

A report published by UNICEF in February said: “The world is experiencing more armed conflicts today than ever in recent human history. Two years ago, around 400 million children lived in conflict and war zones. That number had risen to 473 million by the end of 2024.”

The UNHCR Refugee Data Finder report found that 123.2 million people worldwide had been forcibly displaced by the end of 2024. Of those, 8.4

million sought asylum, 36.8 million were refugees and 5.9 million were in need of international protection.

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According to the UK’s

# Saudi Arabia’s water sector turns scarcity into opportunity

Arif Alkalali

Green water refers to moisture held in soil and consumed by plants, while blue water describes water visible in lakes, rivers and aquifers. In Saudi Arabia, both are scarce. Yet despite this extreme aridity, the Kingdom has emerged as a global leader in water governance.

The UN-Water body recently recognized Saudi Arabia as the SDG 6 Country Acceleration Case Study for its progress on integrated water resource management, represented by SDG 6.5.1. That recognition is supported by measurable progress.

Between 2020 and 2023, the Kingdom’s score on this indicator jumped from 57 percent to 83 percent — a remarkable leap achieved not by changes in climate, but by the strength of its management, governance and long-term planning. These improvements are

enshrined in Vision 2030, which sets water security at the core of sustainable development.

Saudi Arabia’s journey of water innovation dates back more than a century. The late King Abdulaziz ordered the construction of Red Sea water condensing machines in the early 20th century, a prescient recognition that science and technology would be essential for survival.

Political commitment has remained constant; the Basic Law of Governance anchors the principle that resources must be developed for the benefit, security and prosperity of society, always within a sound scientific framework.

That principle now drives the National Water Strategy, which brings together 10 interlinked programs spanning policy,

emergency planning, resource development, research and innovation.

The strategy has created a uniquely integrated and coordinated system, with clear institutional mandates and sustainable financial models.

This coherence has produced tangible results: Since the strategy’s launch, Saudi Arabia has nearly doubled drinking water production, doubled the capacity of its water conveyance and storage systems, and achieved clean water access for almost 100 percent of the population. At the same time, the reuse of water has nearly tripled.

Privatization is central to sustaining these gains. The Saudi Water Partnership Company now oversees investments worth SR47 billion (\$12.5 billion)

across the water supply chain, creating opportunities for innovation, efficiency and private-sector participation.

By driving down the cost of desalination and investing in clean energy, the sector has reduced its carbon footprint in line with the Kingdom’s pledge to achieve net zero by 2060.

Innovation underpins this transformation. Saudi Arabia is developing plans to reuse 90 percent of urban and industrial water, mining wastewater for precious metals, experimenting with lower-salinity seawater for agriculture, and deploying advanced groundwater metering.

Each of these steps reflects a broader ambition: To transform water scarcity into a platform for technological progress and economic opportunity.

Today, the Kingdom is the world’s largest producer of desalinated seawater, but its leadership goes beyond scale. It lies in the way policy, governance and innovation are combined to reframe challenges as opportunities.

In doing so, Saudi Arabia is not only quenching its blue-water thirst but also making its soils greener through extensive water reuse.

As the world increasingly recognizes water as a driver of security and economic growth, Saudi Arabia’s example shows how political will, strategic planning and investment can turn one of the harshest environments on earth into a laboratory of global solutions.

Vision 2030 ensures that water will remain both a foundation of national resilience and an engine of future opportunity.

Hassan Al-Mustafa

In his latest article published in Foreign Policy Magazine on Aug. 15, former Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif called for what he described as a “paradigm shift.” He considered that “the time has come for a critical transition from an approach centered on confronting threats to one focused on exploiting opportunities.”

This key phrase encapsulates what Zarif wants to propose: moving away from the “perpetual threat” rhetoric that has defined the post-revolutionary Iranian discourse, and opening up to new partnerships, particularly with the country’s neighbors. He emphasized the “expansion of ties with neighbors and Global South countries, and a new regional partnership among Muslim West Asia.”

Zarif proposed a conceptual shift from a “deeply ingrained threat paradigm” to an “empowering possibilities paradigm.” Such a step requires changing fun-

damental pillars of Iran’s political doctrine, particularly those related to “exporting the revolution” and “supporting the vulnerable,” both of which are stipulated by the Iranian constitution. Iran interfered in the internal affairs of many neighboring Gulf states, in addition to Iraq, Yemen, and Lebanon, under the banner of “defending the oppressed” or “resistance.” This behavior fueled deep tensions between Tehran and its neighbors, who have consistently rejected these policies. Therefore, changing the “paradigm” will require Iran to adopt a new approach by shifting away from the revolutionary discourse and embracing diplomacy as a state that upholds the UN charter and international law.

Zarif’s article, when read from a strategic perspective and placed within the context of Iran’s and the region’s political experience, raises key questions: How can Iran move away

from a discourse that has been enforced since 1979 and built on ideological and revolutionary foundations, and follow the path of genuine diplomacy? What makes this transition possible or impossible?

The former foreign minister is clearly trying to highlight the importance of opening up to neighboring countries by referring to a “new partnership in West Asia.” Realistically, this could take the form of enhanced dialogue with the Gulf Arab states, especially Saudi Arabia. However, the fundamental problem lies in the lack of mutual trust.

Gulf capitals have directly experienced the impact of negative Iranian influence in recent decades. Kuwait, Riyadh, and Manama have also suffered due to activities carried out by cells linked to the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps. These activities included recruitment operations, weapons training, and bombings targeting vital facilities. Therefore, any true

“opportunities paradigm” must begin with honest trust-building measures. At the top of the list would be ending support for militias, controlling inflammatory media behaviors, and creating a transparent security mechanism for direct communication. This is even more significant considering that the Gulf Arab states, specifically Saudi Arabia, unequivocally opposed Israel’s attack on Iran, condemning it strongly and publicly. This position stemmed from the Kingdom’s belief that the Middle East needs peace, not more wars and violence.

Decision-makers in the Gulf realize that the future of regional security depends on three issues that are subject to Iran’s direct influence: Yemen, Iraq, and Lebanon. These three countries reflect Iran’s ability to control local actors through allies directly linked to it. In Yemen, there will be no strategic shift without

Tehran pushing the Houthis to reach a comprehensive agreement with the government. This would include a ceasefire and the implementation of a balanced political solution.

In Iraq, it is essential to redefine the role of the Popular Mobilization Forces and restrict the control of arms to the state to prevent them from being used as tools of cross-border influence. These are considered necessary conditions for any regional economic openness to Iraq and for the flow of investments that would develop the country and enable it to recover from years of chaos, corruption and terrorism.

In Lebanon, Hezbollah should be returned to a comprehensive Lebanese national framework, the control of arms restricted to the Lebanese Army, and the use of the militant group as a proxy against Israel ended. These are considered crucial steps that

would confirm Iran’s readiness to transition from a logic of “permanent confrontation” to a “stable partnership.”

In this context, one of the most sensitive and problematic issues can be raised. In his article, Zarif resorted to a flexible diplomatic language. However, he failed to address a fundamental question: How can a “regional partnership” be established while the IIRC continues to adopt an expansionist strategy based on a revolutionary doctrine and proxy interventions?

In fact, the IIRC is the key actor when it comes to the issues of ballistic missiles, drones and regional presence. If its role is not redefined within a new equation that sets a clear limit for its influence, no one will believe that Zarif’s call represents a genuine strategic shift, and the article will continue to be viewed as an ineffective or elitist point of view.

However, a real opportu-

nity presents itself. The 2023 Beijing-sponsored reconciliation between Riyadh and Tehran showed that channels can be established. It also proved that the countries’ interests in the energy and economic fields, as well as the religious ties between the Saudi and Iranian peoples, can form a solid foundation for any agreement. This would indeed be the case, provided the Iranians approach these matters honestly and seriously, without duplicity in decision-making or delays the implementation of necessary commitments.

Zarif considers that “there is now a crucial window of opportunity,” highlighting that “Iran, alongside Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Türkiye, and the UAE... must seize this moment.” He is right, but observers of Iranian policy think that the decisive factor will primarily be Iran’s behavior, without overlooking external

factors such as Israel’s disruptive role.

Zarif’s proposition is not without merit. It is rather a call to rethink the regional trajectory, especially in light of the broad reformist movement in Iran and the large portion of the population that supports it and wants to improve the economic situation, freeing themselves from the burden of international sanctions, isolation, and constant worry.

However, the value of this idea is measured by the Iranian political leadership’s willingness to transform it into an actionable roadmap if it wishes to be a force that promotes stability rather than a source of threat. The rhetoric employed by Zarif will then resonate with elites in neighboring Arab countries, turning his diplomatic article into a strategic vision that promotes development, cooperation, stability, and legitimate competition, far removed from violence and chaos.





# SCCI and JBF to work together for rehabilitation of flood-hit people

## Moqem praises forum for swift relief operation

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) and Jamiate Business Forum (JBF) decided to work together for rehabilitation and resettlement of the flood-affected people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The decision was taken during a meeting of Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Fazal Moqem Khan and Senior vice president Abdul Jalil Jan with a delegation of Jamiate Business Forum (JBF) led by its provincial convener Pervez Khan Khattak here at the chamber house, said in a statement here on Sunday.

The Jamiate Business Forum provincial leader Asif Iqbal Daudzai, Dr Masood Gul, Yousaf Khan, Rahim Khan, Qari Ali Raza, Muhammad Ibrahim, Hashim Khan, Haji Saddiq, Dr Waqas Kakakhel, Qaiser Khan and other members were amongst the delegation.

The delegation briefed the SCCI president Fazal Moqem Khan and Senior vice president Abdul Jalil Jan about ongoing relief activities in flood-affected districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, carried out by the Jamiate business forum and its allied welfare organization Ansarul Islam.

Leaders of the Jamiate Business forum appreciated

the Businessmen forum leadership and SCCI for their proactive role in the resolution of the business community.

The JBF has always supported the Businessman Forum and vowed to collaborate for flood-affecteds, economic growth, prosperity and progress in the province.

The leaders of the JBF urged the SCCI to extend donations to the forum's allied organization Ansarul Islam to rehabilitation and resettlement of the flood-affected families.

Fazal Moqem Khan while speaking on the occasion stated the SCCI has launched a fund-raising campaign and decided to

fully contribute toward rehabilitation and resettlement of the flood-hit people after the collection of donations from the business community.

SCCI president praised the Jamiate Business Forum and its organization Ansarul Islam for proactive and swift relief operation in flood hit areas of the province.

President SCCI Fazal Moqem assured the full support and all kind of assistance for the forum.

Leaders of the Jamiate Business Forum also extended cooperation and support to the SCCI for collection of donations for the flood-affected people of the province.



DHAKA: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan meeting with Managing Director and senior management of Square Pharmaceuticals PLC.

## SCCI holds fund-raising event for flood victims

SIALKOT (APP): Sialkot Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SCCI) office bearers hosted a fund-raising event for flood victims in collaboration with Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry Sialkot (WCCIS) here on Sunday.

SCCI President Ikram-ul-Haq chaired the event. Representatives from Helping Hand Sialkot and Al-Khidmat Foundation gave on-ground briefings about the extensive relief activities being carried out in flood-affected areas of Buner, Matta, and Mingora Swat (KPK), highlighting both their emergency response and rehabilitation efforts.

During the event, the business community of Sialkot generously raised Rs 27,550,000, with many further pledges in process, reflecting their strong sense of social and national responsibility.

The Sialkot Chamber of Commerce & Industry President said that relief efforts would continue until adequate assistance and rehabilitation was ensured for the affected families.

The event was attended by Sialkot business community.

## Kissan Ittehad for fair prices to farmers

MULTAN (APP): Chairman Pakistan Kissan Ittehad, Khalid Mahmood Khokhar said on Sunday that crop cultivation would decline if farmers were not paid fair prices for their produce.

Speaking at a press conference at Multan Press Club, Khokhar demanded that farmers be given at least 25 percent profit over production costs. He said that reduced rainfall in South Punjab had already lowered crop yields, while excessive sugarcane cultivation could further deprive other crops of water.

He urged the government to focus on cotton and ensure price protection for wheat, cotton, rice, and other crops to boost production.

"Farmers play a vital role in national development and their problems must be addressed on priority basis," he said.

Pakistan, once an exporter of cotton, was now forced to import it due to declining production, he added.

# FRIA cautions against over-reliance on stock market

### F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Ferozepur Industrial Association (FRIA) has welcomed signs of steady economic improvement but cautioned that over-reliance on stock market performance and remittances cannot substitute for genuine industrial revival.

FRIA Chairman Shahbaz Aslam, in a statement, said that Pakistan's path to sustainable growth lies in strengthening its industrial base, boosting exports, and ensuring productive credit flows into manufacturing rather than speculative investments.

He acknowledged Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's satisfaction over the stock market index crossing 148,000 points and noted that declining inflation and a surplus of USD 2.1 billion in the current account for July-June 2025 were encouraging. However, he

pointed out that large-scale manufacturing remained in negative growth of 1.21 percent during 2024-25, while exports fell and the trade deficit widened to USD 26.785 billion compared to USD 22.177 billion the previous year.

"These figures clearly show that industry is under pressure. Rising credit to the private sector has unfortunately gone into the stock market rather than industrial production, which is why our exports are shrinking. Unless industry grows, no stock market surge can be called real progress," Shahbaz Aslam remarked.

He stressed that poverty levels, at 44.7 percent as reported by the World Bank, highlight the disconnect between financial market gains and the ground realities of the economy. "The poor and vulnerable benefit only when factories expand, jobs are created,

and exports rise. That requires long-term industrial policies and reduced cost of doing business," he added.

While appreciating the rise in remittances — up from USD 2,994 million in July 2024 to USD 3,214.4 million last month — the FRIA chairman warned that dependence on overseas Pakistanis is not sustainable. He urged the government to use the IMF programme as an opportunity to reform taxation and cut wasteful expenditure, instead of squeezing industry further.

"Pakistan's reserves have improved but remain fragile due to heavy reliance on rollovers. The only way out is industrial growth. The government must work with business associations like FRIA to chart a genuine roadmap for manufacturing-led development," Shahbaz Aslam concluded.

# ‘Strong industrial base policy vital for growth’

LAHORE (APP): Former president of the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry Iftekhar Ali Malik has stressed that in today's globalized world no country can progress without developing strong industrial foundations focused on competitiveness, innovation, and value-added exports.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, he said sustainable growth and an export-oriented industrial policy were the need of hour to strengthen the economy and accelerate national development. He emphasized that a well-designed strategy would enable industries to diversify beyond traditional products, enter high-value markets, and boost exports through investment in modern technology, research,

and workforce skill development.

He underlined that sustainability must remain central to growth, urging industries to adopt eco-friendly practices, energy-efficient technologies, and renewable energy solutions to minimize environmental impact. He said such measures would not only help Pakistan meet global climate commitments but also make its products more acceptable in environmentally conscious markets while reducing reliance on imported fuel.

Highlighting the economic benefits of prioritizing exports, he noted that this approach could earn valuable foreign exchange, cut trade deficits, and generate millions of jobs. A long-term sustainable

industrial policy, he added, must ensure self-reliance, resilience, and inclusive economic growth, positioning Pakistan as a strong global competitor.

He suggested that special economic zones, tax incentives, and ease of doing business reforms could attract local and foreign investors to establish export-driven industries.

He further emphasized the need to facilitate small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to integrate into global supply chains, thereby increasing export volumes and reducing dependency on imports. He urged the government, private sector, and academia to collaborate in formulating policies that foster innovation, enhance productivity, and strengthen competitiveness.

## PARC organized event

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) has organized a two-day national symposium on pulses in order to promote the production of the pulses in country.

The event was organized in collaboration with Australian Center for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) Pulses

Project, also aiming at to share the knowledge and international best practices to enhance per-acre output of pulses production for meeting local consumption.

The other objective was to promote pulses production, marketing, and value chain development, with a strong emphasis on gender inclusion and value addition to reduce the reliance

on imported commodity.

The symposium featured four thematic sessions namely pulses production, value addition, marketing and rural enterprise, said a press release.

The policy implications and way forward and gender Inclusions in pulses value chain were also discussed during the symposium.

# CHCS provide medical care to more than 2000 flood affectees

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The teams of Customs Health Care Society (CHCS), a non-profit organization operating since 1998 under its mission of serving humanity in distress, has provided medical care to more than 2000 affectees of catastrophic floods in Buner and Swabi districts.

Dr. Asif Mehmood Jah, Federal Tax Ombudsman and Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Ombudsman Association (OICOA), is personally leading the humanitarian efforts of CHCS and has also visited the most damaged areas of Buner district for the help of flood victims.

The medical teams of CHCS consists of lady doctors who are checking up of patients including female who are suffering from different diseases including skin infection, eyes irrita-

tion, diarrhea etc.

Customs Health Care Society in its week long relief efforts in flood affected areas has distributed essential ration supplies besides organizing critical medical aid to support those in need during this challenging time.

In order to meet the food requirements of children, instant meals like noodles were distributed among them.

The CHCS officials also made assessment of damages to houses due to ferocious deluge and hopefully measures would be taken for reconstruction.

After spending one week in Buner, the CHCS teams visited Dalori Bala and Dalori Payan areas of Swabi which are badly affected by floods.

Federal Tax Ombudsman, Dr. Asif Mehmood Jah again headed the teams to supervise relief operation in Swabi.



The organization will continue its relief operation for the help of flood victims in different parts of the country.

Meanwhile, prominent businessman and Member Media Advisory Committee FTO, Zia-ul-Sarhadi has highly appreciated the humanitarian services carried by CHCS under the supervision of Federal Tax Ombudsman, Dr. Asif

Mehmood Jah.

Zia said helping victims of disaster is a religious, moral and national responsibility which is very appropriately done by Dr. Asif Mehmood Jah.

Zia requested people to extend support to Customs Health Care Society for continuing this noble cause of helping affectees of the devastating floods in the country.

# PIAF sounds alarm over collapse of cotton industry

### F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) has raised a strong alarm over the collapse of the country's once-thriving cotton industry, warning that Pakistan's economic backbone faces a deep crisis as cotton output has plunged from 14 million bales to barely four million in recent years.

PIAF Chairman Faheemur Rehman Saigol, senior vice chairman Nasrullah Mughal and vice chairman Tahir Manzoor Chaudhary, in a statement stressed that reviving the cotton sector must be treated as a national emergency. He warned that with-

out immediate corrective steps, Pakistan would lose not only a vital cash crop but also the foundation of its textile and export-based economy.

"We cannot afford to let our cotton industry collapse. It is not just about farmers; it is about the entire value chain from ginners to spinners to exporters. Cotton has always been the lifeline of our economy, and its downfall has left a damaging impact on industrial competitiveness, employment, and foreign exchange earnings," Faheem Saigol said. He added that Pakistan's textile industry, which contributes the largest share to the country's exports, cannot survive without a strong domes-

tic cotton base.

The PIAF chairman highlighted that the cotton crisis is not just a seasonal or weather-driven problem but the result of years of neglect, outdated farming practices, and lack of research-based solutions. He urged the government to introduce modern technology, strengthen agricultural universities, and invest in high-yield, pest-resistant seed development to boost productivity.

"Pakistan is an agrarian economy. Any investment in cotton, livestock, or allied agricultural sectors is directly an investment in national growth. We have to understand that without strengthening agriculture, industrial

recovery will remain a dream," Saigol remarked.

Senior Vice Chairman of PIAF Nasrullah Mughal added that Pakistan must look towards international cooperation and technology transfer to regain its lost strength in cotton production. Referring to bilateral training programmes and international partnerships, he said that learning advanced farming techniques and research applications could prove transformative for local farmers.

"We need to equip our young professionals with the latest agricultural knowledge. Skilled manpower in farming and cotton research can make the difference between

decline and revival. Just as countries like China have shown remarkable innovation in agriculture, Pakistan must replicate similar practices to unlock the true potential of its cotton and livestock sectors," the Senior Vice Chairman said.

Vice chairman Tahir Manzoor Chaudhary observed that the cotton crisis has a direct impact on employment, as millions of workers are tied to agriculture and textile value chains. "Every decline in cotton output translates into job losses, reduced industrial output, and shrinking export earnings. The government must see this as a national security issue,

not just an agricultural one," he warned.

Faheem Saigol called for research-driven cooperation between Pakistan's provinces, noting that Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Azad Jammu & Kashmir could all contribute to a diversified cotton and livestock revival strategy.

The PIAF chairman said that while Pakistan had achieved a measure of macroeconomic stability with improved foreign exchange reserves and modest GDP growth, long-term progress would not be possible without addressing the structural weaknesses in agri-

culture. "We cannot build sustainable economic growth on imports. Revival of cotton is the most effective way to ensure industrial strength,

export growth, and rural prosperity," he maintained.

### Disownment Notice

I have disowned my son, Luqman Hakeem, due to his disobedience, and I hereby remove him from any right to my movable and immovable property. Anyone conducting any kind of transaction with him shall do so at their own risk. I will not be responsible for any dealings made by him in any capacity. Public is hereby informed.

Muntazir Khan, Son of Muhammad Kareem Khan, Resident of Bajkata, Tehsil Gagra, District Buner.

تبدیلی نام  
میرا صحیح نام عیسیٰ نواز  
ولد محمد نواز ہے جبکہ  
میرے تعلیمی دستاویزات  
میں غلطی سے عیسیٰ ولد  
محمد نواز لکھا گیا ہے۔ لہذا  
درستگی کی جائے عیسیٰ  
نواز ولد محمد نواز۔ پتہ  
ڈاکخانہ شیخان پایان  
تحصیل ضلع پشاور۔





In brief

Fatiman wins medal

QUETTA (PPI): Quetta's Sarwat Fatima has secured a silver medal for Pakistan in the South Asian Regional Badminton Championship, prompting praise from Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti. Bugti commended Fatima's athletic achievement, calling it a source of pride for the entire nation. A statement from the Chief Minister's Secretariat highlighted Fatima's dedication, enthusiasm, and skill. The Chief Minister emphasized that the accomplishments of Balochistan athletes inspire the younger generation. He affirmed the provincial administration's commitment to fostering sports and supporting athletes. Bugti pledged to provide all possible aid to gifted competitors like Fatima.

Tenpin Bowling C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): A 4-member national team will participate in the Senior World Tenpin Bowling Championship being played at the National Bowling Stadium, Reno, Nevada, USA from October 13 to 23. According to Secretary General, Pakistan Tenpin Bowling Federation, Lt. Col. (R) Kamran Khalid Janjua, the national team will be led by Ijaz-ur-Rehman while other players include Muhammad Hussain, Shabbir Lashkar and Aleem Agha. Ahmed Sheikhani and Amjad Mahmood will be the Manager and Coach of the national team respectively. The Players Training camp for preparation event will begin in Islamabad from September 1, 2025, and Tanveer Ahmed, has been appointed as the camp Coordinator/Commandant.

Coaching Courses

ISLAMABAD (APP): A 2-day Orientation Coaching Courses-2025 will start from August 29, under the auspices of Pakistan Students Olympic Association at Mini Sports Complex, Nazimabad, Karachi. According to President, Pakistan Students Olympic Association, Magbool Arian, the Sports Teachers/Officials, Coaches and Players from all over the country will take part in the two-day course. The International and National Lecturers/Sports dignitaries will deliver the lectures on awareness of basic rules and regulations, and Physically coaching tips for various 4 sports including Throwball, Catchball Rope Skipping and Pickleball on international levels daily. The certificates will be distributed at the concluding ceremony of the Coaching Course on August 30. The registrations for the participants will be opened till August 30.

Vingegaard wins

LIMONE (AFP): Jonas Vingegaard won stage two of the Vuelta a Espana on Sunday on a cool, rainy 10km climb to Limone with Italy's Giulio Ciccone following the new red jersey holder home in second place at the end of a white knuckle struggle to the line. Briton Tom Pidcock had attacked first but Vingegaard and Ciccone swept past him inside the final 100m. Denmark's Vingegaard climbed to the top of the rankings with his first stage win since February as overnight leader Jasper Philipsen struggled and was dropped in the finale. "Super happy with how I felt and how the team did today, also having the red jersey," Vingegaard said.

# Three tons as record-breaking Australia crush South Africa

MACKAY (AFP): Cameron Green slapped a 47-ball century with Travis Head and Mitchell Marsh also blasting tons as Australia crushed South Africa by 276 runs in a record-breaking third and final one-day international on Sunday in Mackay. The hosts were playing for pride, down 2-0 in the series, and responded magnificently, posting an ominous 431-2 after opting to bat -- their highest ODI total on home soil. They then dismissed the Proteas for 155 in the 25th over, with spinner Cooper Connolly taking 5-22.

Head was supreme in blazing 142 off 103 balls, ably supported by skipper Marsh (100 from 106). Their 250-run platform at Great Barrier Reef Arena was Australia's highest ever opening partnership against the Proteas, bettering the 170 by Matthew Hayden and Adam Gilchrist in Durban in 2002.

Green then took over with a whirlwind 118 not out to mark the first time Australia's top three have all scored centuries. Alex Carey was unbeaten on 50, with the 18 sides slogged between them also a record at home. "A pretty crazy day, a full performance by the lads," said Marsh. "But full credit to South Africa, they played outstandingly well in the first two games and were too good for us." South Africa did themselves no favours by resting quicks Nandre Burger and Lungi Ngidi, with their second-string attack outplayed.

After Marsh won the



Cameron Green high-fives Alex Carey as he completes his hundred



Travis Head and Mitchell Marsh shared a double-century stand

toss, the openers made an aggressive start, driving Australia to 86 after the 10-over powerplay. Head was in ominous touch, crunching boundaries with ease to reach his half-century off 32 deliveries. At

the other end, Marsh slammed two big sixes as he also got in the groove, going after the Proteas' fresh new-ball pairing of Kwen Maphaka and Wiaan Mulder. Batted beautifully

With the bowlers running out of ideas, Head cruised to a seventh ODI century, pushing Senuran Muthusamy for an easy single. He then really let rip with a series of big hits before being caught in the deep by Dewald Brevis off Keshav Maharaj after crunching 17 fours and five sixes.

Marsh battled to three figures soon after but was out next ball, taken on the run by wicketkeeper Ryan Rickelton after he skied Muthusamy. But the onslaught was far from over with Green producing a sizzling display of power-hitting, including three giant sixes in a row off Muthusamy to post his maiden ODI century.

Only Glenn Maxwell (40 balls) has scored a faster hundred for Australia. "The two openers, they batted beautifully so me and 'Kez' (Carey) could just bat with a lot of freedom," said Green. South Africa's chase started badly with four wickets down for 50 inside nine overs.

Sean Abbott accounted for Aiden Markram (two) and skipper Temba Bavuma (19) while Xavier Bartlett took care of Rickelton (11) and Tristan Stubbs (one).

The visitors' big hope was Brevis and he produced some fireworks in his 49 before Green caught him on the ropes off Connolly, who then cleaned up the tail. "We were under the pump from the first ball and didn't really pitch up today," said Bavuma. "They put us under pressure and we didn't have the answers."

# Pujara announces retirement from Indian cricket



MUMBAI (AFP): Batsman Cheteshwar Pujara announced his retirement from all forms of Indian cricket on Sunday, bringing to an end an international sporting career that spanned over a decade.

Pujara has played in 103 Tests and five ODIs in his international career, last featuring for India in the World Test Championship 2023 final against Australia.

The batter made his Test debut for India in 2010 and throughout his playing journey racked up 7,195 Test runs at an average of 43.60.

On Sunday, the 37-year-old said he was hanging up his boots, noting that "all good things must come to an end".

"Wearing the Indian jersey, singing the anthem, and trying my best each time I stepped on the field -- it's impossible to put into words what it truly meant," Pujara said in a social media post.

"But as they say, all good things must come to an end, and with immense gratitude, I have decided to retire from all forms of Indian cricket."

"As a little boy from the small town of Rajkot, along with my parents, I set out to aim for the stars; and dreamt to be a part of the Indian cricket team," the cricketer continued.

"Little did I know then that this game would give me so much -- invaluable opportunities, experiences, purpose, love, and above all a chance to represent my state and this great nation."

Pujara, a rare five-day specialist in the age of T20 and white-ball performers, has in the past attributed his staying power to discipline.

"I have certain routines, fitness, little bit of meditation, yoga and pranayama (a breathing technique) because it is necessary to shut the outside noise, even if it is positive," he told reporters in 2023.

"We play nine Tests on an average, and when you go back home, unless you have domestic cricket, you are not in touch with the game. Keep challenging yourself, keep training, looking forward."

# Raducanu thrashes Ena for first win

NEW YORK (Agencies): Four years since her three life-changing weeks in New York, Emma Raducanu overcame a significant mental hurdle as she earned her first victory at the US Open since her 2021 title run in impressive fashion, dismantling the qualifier Ena Shibahara 6-1, 6-2 to finally return to the second round.

After painful first-round defeats against Alizé Cornet and Sofia Kenin, plus a withdrawal in 2023 during her recovery from three surgeries, Raducanu showed her growth and newfound self-assurance by putting together a solid, clean performance against an inferior opponent.

It also signified a confidence-building first grand slam victory alongside her new Spanish coach, Francisco Roig, who again offered his charge a constant stream of positive

reinforcement from a corner of Louis Armstrong Arena. "It's my first win since 2021 here so it's extra special," Raducanu said afterwards.

With the victory, the British No 1 is now 20-4 against lower-ranked players over the past year. She has gradually evolved into a reliable player against lesser opponents, which has been a key part of her steady rise up the rankings. Having been one spot away from being seeded, a much tougher challenge could await Raducanu on Wednesday as she faces either the 24th seed, Veronika Kudermetova, or Janice Tjen, a qualifier.

This was a good first-round draw for Raducanu, but Shibahara is an interesting figure in her own right. An American-born Japanese player, the 27-year-old is a former top five doubles player and the

2022 French Open mixed doubles champion. Shibahara only opted to prioritise singles last year and she has performed admirably, rising from outside the top 500 to her current ranking of No 130. However, she entered the court against Raducanu having never defeated a top-50 opponent and this contest marked just the second grand slam main draw appearance of her career.

From the beginning, Raducanu was ready as she curled an ace out wide on her opening point of the tournament before marching through an assured love hold. She quickly took control of the baseline, forcing herself to take service returns early and striking the ball cleanly as she forced herself inside the baseline. In windy conditions, which have been her undoing in past years, Raducanu



importantly also played within herself and offered very few unforced errors.

Although Shibahara possesses a sweet, potent top-spin forehand and variation in her game with her drop shot and slice, her game is underpowered against elite opposition and she needs considerable time to unwind her strokes. In their first ever meeting, Raducanu

showed that she prepared well for the Japanese player by constantly rushing her forehand. The pressure she imposed throughout the match yielded a constant stream of errors from the Japanese player.

Before the tournament, Raducanu spoke in depth about how the US Open has generated conflicting emotions for her over the years.

This tournament represents the defining moment of her career, but with the pressure and expectations that followed her victory in 2021, she did not enjoy her two subsequent appearances in New York. Last year was a particular low point as she arrived in New York having been absent from most of the US hard-court season and lost in the first round against Kenin. During her post-match press conference, Raducanu broke down in tears, a rare occurrence despite her numerous difficulties in recent years.

Things are clearly different now. Over this summer, Raducanu has worked herself into a more match tough and confident player than at any point over the past four years. Now she will try to turn that conviction and contentment into another positive run in New York.

# Pakistani tigers roar in Malaysia

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's three young athletes from Swat created history by winning four medals at the MBW International Taekwondo Championship 2025 in Malaysia, an event that drew over 4,200 athletes from 32 countries, raising the national flag high on the global stage. Ayesha Ayaz, celebrat-

ed as Pakistan's youngest taekwondo champion, displayed her extraordinary talent once again by clinching both a gold and a bronze medal. Known for her prodigious skill since childhood, Ayesha has long represented Pakistan internationally, inspiring young women across the country to pursue sports at the highest level.

Her elder brother, Mohammad Zaryab Khan, added further glory to the family and the nation by winning a gold medal after a series of commanding performances.

Meanwhile, their youngest sibling, Gulalai Ayaz, was named Best Fighter of the Tournament and secured a bronze medal, earning

admiration for her courage and determination.

This marks the first time in Pakistan's history that three siblings have collectively secured four medals at an international taekwondo event.

Their victory has sparked celebrations in Swat and across the country, where people see their success as a beacon of pride and motivation for the younger generation.

Speaking after her victory, Ayesha Ayaz said: "I thank Almighty Allah for this success. I am deeply grateful to my father, who has been my greatest source of strength, and to all the supporters who always believed in me. I especially thank Hassan Nisar, CEO of Metrix Pakistan, for continuously encouraging me and supporting my journey."

Sports analysts stressed that the siblings' achievement underscores the need for greater institutional support for martial arts and other under-represented sports. With enhanced training facilities and international exposure, they said, Pakistan's athletes could emerge as formidable contenders on the world stage.



RAWALPINDI: Players are in action during the Royama Cup 2025 organized by Kyokushin Kan Karate Organization Pakistan held at Shahbaz Sharif Sports Complex in Rawalpindi. —PPI Photo

# Argentina stun All Blacks with historic 29-23 upset win

BUEENOS AIRES (AFP/APP): An inspired Argentina played with greater discipline to upset New Zealand 29-23 in a bruising Rugby Championship Test Saturday and record their first ever home win over the All Blacks.

The Pumas were out-scored three tries to two in Buenos Aires but replacement fly-half Santiago Carreras landed three second-half penalties to push them clear and respond in style to last week's 41-24 defeat in Cordoba.

Damian McKenzie landed a late penalty goal to earn New Zealand a bonus point, meaning they top the Rugby Championship standings after two rounds. All four teams have recorded a win and a loss after the Springboks earlier beat the Wallabies 30-22 in Cape Town. It was a maiden win over New Zealand on home soil in 16 attempts for Argentina, who had lost on 14 other occasions and drew once, in 1985. The seventh-ranked Pumas fully deserved victory, dominating all facets against a New Zealand who will cling to their number one world ranking.

The visitors' cause wasn't helped by conceding three yellow cards, including two late in the first half that left them defending with 13 men. Argentina suffered a blow when influential fly-half Tomas Alborno was forced out of the game, soon after scoring the opening points through a penalty goal. Trailing 6-3, the All Blacks enjoyed a period of dominance midway through the first half, with centre Billy Proctor and prop Fletcher Newell scoring tries from slick team moves.

However, a yellow card to New Zealand fullback Will Jordan for deliberate obstruction swung momentum. The Pumas drew level through flanker Juan Martin Gonzalez's try and All Blacks forward Tupou Vaa'i was sent to the sin bin for a deliberate knockdown during the same passage of play. Playing with a two-man advantage, the home side were foiled in their attempts to take a lead into the interval, with the scores instead locked at 13-all.

Carreras landed two penalties before Argentina pulled 13 points clear midway through the second stanza when scrum-half Gonzalo Garcia scored, popping the ball over the tryline after a rampaging charge from impressive back-rower Pablo Matera. New Zealand threatened a comeback following a driving maul try to Samisoni Tauke'aho but their hopes buckled when wing Sevu Reece was shown a yellow card for a deliberate foul.

# Pak wins two gold medals in int'l Combat Ju-Jutsu C'ship USA

MULTAN (APP): Pakistan team brought pride to the nation with an outstanding performance at the International Combat Ju-Jutsu Championship, held in Greensboro, North Carolina, USA.

Pakistani athletes showcased their strength and skill in Ground Combat Fight, securing two gold medals for the country as Haseeb Mustafa won Gold medal in the 85 kg category, after defeating a Moroccan opponent in the semi-final and overcoming a USA wrestler in the final.

Likewise, Abdul Hanan Butt clinched Gold medal in the 93 kg category, defeating a USA wrestler in the final to claim the top spot on the podium. The remarkable achievement highlighted the hard work, discipline, and determination of Pakistani athletes. The entire contingent received appreciation for their dedication and sportsmanship.

Coach Babar Ismail Butt played a key role in preparing the athletes, while President of the Combat Ju-Jutsu Federation of Pakistan, Shahzeb Nawaz Janjua, expressed his satisfaction over the team's performance, stating: "The historic victory in Ground Combat Fight is a proud moment for Pakistan. It proves that our athletes can achieve excellence on the world stage when provided with the right support and opportunities."

Adding to the celebration, Nawab Furqan Khan, Patron of the Combat Games in Pakistan, also expressed his joy and congratulated the team, said that the gold medals were a testament to the talent and resilience of our athletes. Their victories bring great honor to Pakistan and open new doors for the promotion of combat sports in the country." The success of Team Pakistan at this prestigious championship marked another milestone in the growth and recognition of combat sports in the country.

# MotoGP leader Marquez claims seventh straight win

BALATONFOKAJAR (Agencies): Marc Marquez claimed a seventh successive MotoGP victory as he won the Hungarian Grand Prix on Sunday.



The Spanish rider started from pole position on his Ducati and slipped to third on the opening lap, but he recovered to claim a confident win at the Balaton Park circuit in Balatonfokajär. The six-time MotoGP champion comfortably outpaced 21-year-old compatriot Pedro Acosta, who finished second on his KTM, while Italian Aprilia rider Marco Bezzecchi was third.

Marquez gained another 23 points on his brother Alex Marquez to extend his championship lead to 175 points, with eight races remaining. It was also the 32-year-old's seventh straight sprint-GP double - and his 10th of the 2025 season. After starting from pole, Marquez dropped back after making contact with Bezzecchi on turn two.

"When I saw that Marco was inside, I had to touch the brakes and go wide," he said. "Then I started to attack and I had a super nice rhythm. I was rolling round the track so I'm super happy." Alex Marquez had a crash at the start of lap two and the Ducati-Gresini rider ultimately finished 14th.

Reigning world champion Jorge Martin started in 16th place and fought back to finish in fourth, just behind team-mate Bezzecchi, who has had three straight podium finishes for the first time in his career. The race result also marks the first time Marc Marquez has won seven consecutive races since 2014, when he won 10 straight en route to his second MotoGP title. His most recent championship triumph came in 2019, but another looks a near formality.

The last time the leader did not win was when he finished third at the British Grand Prix on 25 May.





## In brief

## 25 outlaws arrested

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police teams from Aabpara, Secretariat, Sumbal, Sangjani, Khanna, Koral, Kirpa, Humak, Nilore, Phulgran and Shahzad Town police stations arrested 19 accused involved in different criminal activities. A police spokesperson told APP on Sunday that the teams also recovered 471 grams of heroin, 907 grams of ice, six pistols with ammunition and a dagger from their possession. He said cases have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are underway. Additionally, during a special campaign launched for the arrest of proclaimed offenders and absconders, various police teams apprehended six criminals. The spokesperson said that following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, the ICT Police continue their effective crackdown against crime and criminal elements to ensure peace and tranquility in the federal capital. He added that Islamabad Police remain committed to protecting the lives and property of the residents, stressing that no elements would be allowed to disturb public peace. Ensuring peace and protecting citizens remains the top priority of the ICT Police.

## Illegal arm holders held

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Police have intensified their campaign against the possession of illegal weapons, detained four illegal arm holders. Police have also recovered arms and ammunition during operations in different areas of the city. According to police spokesman, the raids were carried out in the jurisdictions of Bani Police Station, RA Bazar, and Gujjar Khan. The suspects were taken into custody after being found in possession of unlicensed weapons. Divisional Superintendents of Police (SPs) said the operations are part of a broader crackdown aimed at curbing incidents of aerial firing and the unlawful use of firearms. "No leniency will be shown to those carrying illegal weapons. Such elements pose a serious threat to public peace and security," SPs emphasized that strict legal action will be taken against all those arrested, and further investigations are underway. They added that the campaign will continue in full swing across the district, with a zero-tolerance policy against lawbreakers.

## 95% of GT Road cleared

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) said Sunday that it had cleared 95 per cent encroachments at 26 Number Chungi on GT Road, a key entry point to Islamabad. The joint teams of CDA, district administration, and Islamabad Police demolished 578 structures across a 16-kilometer stretch from 26 Number Chungi to Taxila, reclaiming more than 95 percent of the encroached land, its spokesperson told APP. He said the authorities also arrested 113 individuals for resisting or obstructing the operation. The CDA drive, he said, had not been limited to GT Road. In T-Chowk to Rawat, authorities cleared six kilometers of roadway, demolishing 191 small and large structures. In Saidpur Model Village, CDA reclaimed more than 210 kanals of land out of 370 kanals previously under illegal occupation. The spokesperson noted that the CDA chief Randhawa stressed that Saidpur's restoration would both safeguard state property and enhance the village as a premier tourist destination.

# Bahraini Interior Minister calls on Mohsin Naqvi

ISLAMABAD (DNA) : Bahrain's Interior Minister, Lieutenant General Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, today held a telephonic conversation with Pakistan's Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi.

The Bahraini Interior Minister expressed sorrow to his Pakistani counterpart over the loss of lives

caused by rains and floods in Pakistan. He conveyed heartfelt sympathies and condolences to the bereaved families. He also offered every possible assistance for the flood-affected people.

Speaking on the occasion, the Bahraini Interior Minister said that Bahrain stands with the Pakistani brothers and sisters in this

difficult hour and is ready to help the flood victims.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi thanked his Bahraini counterpart for expressing solidarity with the flood victims. He said that Pakistan is one of the most climate-vulnerable countries, where the devastation caused by floods, rains, and cloudbursts cannot be expressed in words.

## Islamabad residents fearful of stray dogs

ISLAMABAD (APP): The streets of Islamabad have become a daunting place for residents, particularly in sectors G-9/4, G-13/4, I-10, G-7, G-8, I-9, E-11, and Barakahu, where stray dogs roam in packs, instilling fear and anxiety among locals.

Residents are fearful of venturing out, especially at night, as packs of aggressive stray dogs roam the streets, posing a significant threat to their safety and well-being, and making everyday activities a daunting task.

Residents are requesting the immediate action, with some suggesting the establishment of dedicated dog shelters away from residential areas and public awareness campaigns promoting safe cohabitation.

Javed Ali, a resident of G-9/4 said, the rising num-

ber of stray dogs is putting public safety at risk, with several people falling victim to dog attacks and bites.

He said it has become increasingly difficult for him to even go for a walk because of the large number of stray dogs in the surrounding areas.

"Every time we open our gates, we risk being chased or attacked by aggressive dogs," he stated. He urged the authorities to take preemptive measures to address the issue.

Similarly, Amina, a mother from G-8/1, expressed concern that her children cannot go out to nearby parks and playgrounds in the evening due to stray dogs.

"I was terrified when I once saw around 15 to 20 dogs in a park near my

home. Since then, I have stopped visiting that place, especially with my kids. Children need physical activity, but unfortunately, stray dogs have made it impossible," she said.

She further said that they are living like prisoners in their own homes. An official from Capital Development Authority (CDA) said they have taken notice of the issue many times and also tasked special teams to survey all sectors.

He told that a 24-hour emergency helpline for reporting aggressive or rabid dogs has also been proposed. He assured that in the future, they will implement comprehensive measures to effectively control the stray dog population, ensuring a safer environment for Islamabad's residents.



ISLAMABAD: Children curiously look at colorful chicks displayed for sale by a vendor at H-9 Weekly Bazaar. —APP Photo

## Search and combing operation conducted

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police on Sunday carried out a grand search and combing operation in various areas of Police Station Bani Gala under the supervision of the Rural Superintendent of Police (SP).

A police spokesperson told APP that teams from the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) and ladies police also took part in the operation,

which was preceded by a detailed briefing to the deployed personnel.

During the operation, police checked 137 individuals, 100 households, and 50 shops. A total of 90 motorcycles and 19 vehicles were inspected, out of which two motorcycles without legal documents were shifted to the police station.

The operation was aimed at curbing criminal activities and ensuring the safety and security of residents in the area.

The spokesperson said that the Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Islamabad Police had already issued directives for grand search operations across the district to root out crime.

He further appealed to citizens to fully cooperate with police teams during checking, as public cooperation is vital in maintaining peace and eliminating criminal elements from society.

## AIOU to begin MS/MPhil, PhD admission tests

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has announced the schedule of entry tests for the admissions of MS, MPhil and PhD programs with setting up test centers in five major cities.

According to the University's spokesperson on Sunday, the tests would be begin on Monday, August 25 and continued for four days under four faculty programs, said a press release.

"The Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies test will be held on August 25, the Faculty of Social Sciences on August 26, the Faculty of Sciences on August 27 and the Faculty of Education on August 28. All tests will start simultaneously at 9:00 in the morning," he said.

On the special instructions of Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, test centers have been established in five major cities including Islamabad (Main Campus), Gilgit-Baltistan, Multan, Karachi and Quetta regional campuses to facilitate stu-

dents, so that, they could appear at the nearest center of their choice, he underscored.

The University administration has confirmed that all necessary arrangements for the entry tests have been completed, he said, emphasizing that transparency and merit must be observed strictly. The spokesperson further stated that AIOU remains committed to its mission of promoting research and higher education and these entry tests opened new opportunities for future researchers and scholars.

**ASA demands safe campus environment before fall 2025 semester at QAU:** The Academic Staff Association (ASA) of Quaid-I-Azam University (QAU) has urged for immediate action to ensure a safe, secure and conducive academic environment on the campus before the Fall 2025 semester beginning on the first Monday of September as per the University's rules.

ASA President Prof. Mazhar Iqbal emphasized that incomplete hostel allot-

ments, inadequate security checkpoints and persistent illegal occupations threaten the academic environment.

He noted the city administration's reluctance to assist in vacating the hostels, further complicating efforts to restore order. The ASA called on the Minister of Federal Education and Professional Training to activate the steering committee, emphasizing to enforce the proposed hostel policy and provide robust support to ensure a peaceful campus before the Fall 2025 semester approaches.

According to press release issued by ASA on Sunday, the QAU closed its hostels for annual maintenance on July 13, 2025, but some students continued to occupy it illegally. On July 29, the city administration conducted a clean-up operation, arresting several students. After release on bail on August 8, these students returned to campus via a University bus, which was hijacked by a group of students from the University workshop.



ISLAMABAD: A family curiously watching zebras inside their enclosure at a zoo along Expressway in the Federal Capital. —APP Photo

## AMI meters started auto power theft detecting

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO), Engineer Ch. Khalid Mahmood, has said that the introduction of Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) meters was a revolutionary step in power sector of Pakistan having many advanced features and fight against electricity theft and in ensuring transparency was one of those.

While giving a brief, Engineer Ch. Khalid Mahmood said AMI meters are equipped with modern features that automatically detect and report theft attempts and meter disturbances to the AMI Operation Centre, said a press release issued here on Sunday.

"Recently, numerous power theft and meter accuracy disturbance cases automatically flagged by AMI system

after which timely raids were conducted and power pilferers were apprehended by field formations after getting intimation by the AMI central control room. Power pilfers meters have been removed detection bill charged and for legal proceeding applications have given for FIR registration against culprits."

The IESCO chief said that the deployment of AMI meters was a breakthrough for IESCO. This technology not only curbs theft but also ensures billing transparency, strengthens consumer confidence and improves the efficiency of our distribution system, he said and added that if any one played with AMI meter or would disturb the meter accuracy using any mode now they can't hide this anti state activity and IESCO team would catch them immediately

by using AMI advance technology

The CEO also appreciated Chief Engineer Development, Ch. Kamran Aftab, Project Director AMI, Mohsin Raza Gillani, and the entire AMI team for their remarkable achievement of installing one million AMI meters in Rawalpindi City and Rawalpindi Cantt Circle. He said this milestone reflects the team's dedication and the organization's commitment to technology-driven reforms in the power sector.

Engineer Khalid Mahmood reaffirmed the IESCO's commitment to expanding technology-based initiatives, adding that AMI meters would play a central role in reducing line losses, supporting the government's anti-theft campaign and providing consumers with a more reliable power supply.

## Railways deploying advanced communication, signaling systems

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Railways has embarked on a large-scale programme to digitize and automate its network in a bid to enhance safety, cut down delays and bring efficiency to passenger and freight movement across the country.

According to official documents available with Wealth Pakistan, advanced communication and signalling systems are being deployed across key sections of the national railway network.

The upgradation includes installation of a computerized interlocking system at Landhi, Jummagoth, Badal Nala and Sarhad stations to replace manual controls, significantly improving train routing and accident-

prevention capability.

In parallel, the Karachi-Lahore section telecom system is being overhauled with a digital microwave radio communication system, ensuring uninterrupted and secure data transmission for train operations.

A Push-to-Talk digital communication network is also being gradually rolled out in Rawalpindi, Lahore, Sukkur and Karachi divisions to strengthen real-time coordination between field staff and control rooms.

A senior Pakistan Railways official told Wealth Pakistan that over 80 percent of the current signaling system relies on mechanical and relay-based technology, which is prone to theft, environmental damage, and operational

failures. The new automation drive is expected to replace such equipment with intelligent, sensor-based systems capable of monitoring track conditions and ensuring compliance with safety protocols.

He said as part of broader automation reforms, Pakistan Railways is also digitizing its bridge safety inspections and upgrading vulnerable structures through sensor-based monitoring.

This, along with enhanced communication systems, is expected to bring greater transparency, accountability, and operational efficiency in Pakistan's century-old railway network.

To complement these technological upgrades, Pakistan Railways has launched rehabilitation of

multiple stretches, including Rohri-Khanpur, Tando A d a m — R o h r i , Kemari-Hyderabad and Khanawal-Shahdara via Shorkot, Faisalabad and Qila Sheikhpura. A new rail line is also under construction to link Thar Coal with the national network at New Chhor and Port Qasim, supported by digital monitoring tools to track freight movement.

Moreover, the railways plans to introduce 230 newly designed passenger coaches capable of running at 160 km/hr and 820 high-capacity freight wagons, equipped with modern brake and monitoring systems. These will be integrated into the digital network to allow real-time fleet tracking and predictive maintenance.

## Meeting reviewed dengue situation in Murree

RAWALPINDI (APP): A meeting was held under the chairmanship of Member National Assembly Raja Osama Ashfaq Sarwar at RHC Phagwari regarding anti-dengue measures. The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner General Kamran Sagheer, Chief Executive Officer Health Dr. Azhar Mahmood Abbasi, and officers from other departments. The meeting reviewed anti-dengue measures, particularly in the affected areas of Aliot, Potha, Phagwari, Lower Dewal, and Upper Dewal.

Addressing the meeting, Raja Osama Ashfaq Sarwar said that all possible measures are being taken to combat dengue in District Murree. Immediate relief and preventive actions are being carried out on a priority basis in the affected areas. Health departments, Rescue 1122, PIRA, Education Department, Agriculture Department, Food Authority, EPA, and Suthra Punjab teams are jointly working in the affected areas.

In Union Council Phagwari, Numb Roomal, and Lower Balt,

door-to-door campaigns are providing immediate medical assistance. Citizens are urged to follow the guidelines issued by the Health Department to protect themselves from the dengue virus.

On the other hand, as part of the anti-dengue campaign, Bilal Yamin Satti, MPA and Assistant Commissioner Kotli Sattian Dr. Sana Ramchand distributed pamphlets to raise public awareness. In the affected areas, PDMA distributed 1000 nets, 10,000 mosquito coils, and anti-mosquito lotion.



ISLAMABAD: A police personnel stand near the closed hiking trail on Margala Hills. Authorities decided to closed hiking trails for the public amid a heavy-rainfall.



Student killed, 4 hurt in blast

MAIDAN SHAHR (Pajhwok): A school student has been killed and four others wounded when a mortar shell exploded in Chak district of Maidan Wardak. The incident occurred on Saturday afternoon in Koz Khwat Lur village. The students had been playing with the unexploded mortar shell when it went off. A 15-year-old boy died in the blast, while four others, aged between 12 and 16, sustained injuries, the department said in a statement.

Thousands benefitted

BAGHLAN (BNA): Afghan Red Crescent Society has delivered health services to over 13,000 people in Baghlan. Health workers provided vital services across various districts and villages in the province. 4,354 patients received treatment, which included medical examinations, medications, wound dressings, vaccinations, malnutrition assessments, and both prenatal and postnatal health counseling, as well as family planning services.

Afghani value up 21% against foreign currencies

KABUL (TOLOnews): Da Afghanistan Bank says that in the past four years, the value of the Afghani has increased by 21 percent against foreign currencies, especially the US dollar. Bank officials state that efforts are underway to stabilize the country's economy, which include strengthening the Afghani's value, expanding the banking sector, and boosting financial support. The bank's spokesperson added that they have been able to protect the Afghani's value by implementing appropriate monetary policies and to prevent severe fluctuations in the currency market. Hasibullah Noori, the spokesperson of Da Afghanistan Bank, said: "In the past year, the Afghani has had a 0.79 percent positive change against foreign currencies, particularly the dollar, which indicates the stability of the Afghani. Our effort is to maintain the Afghani's stability in a better way and not allow severe fluctuations to occur

in this regard." He emphasized that important progress has been made in the banking sector and in relations with international banks. Currently, the institution is in contact with 200 international banks and is working to further expand global banking interactions, so traders can conduct international financial transactions more easily. Some economic analysts, pointing to the banking restrictions of the past four years, say that expanding relations with international banks could play a key role in reducing the impact of these restrictions. They stress that in order to preserve the Afghani's value, it is necessary to explore alternative financial reserves or backing. Trader Omid Haidari said: "The current problem we face in Afghanistan's banking sector is the lack of support from private banks for our national traders. Whenever we deposit money in private banks,

2 dead and 12 injured in traffic accidents

GHAZNI CITY (Pajhwok): At least two people have been killed and 12 others injured in two separate traffic accidents in southern Ghazni province, police official said on Sunday. Police spokesman Abu Khalid Sarhadi told Pajhwok Afghan News that the first accident occurred on Saturday near the Mohammadi Pump Station in the 4th police district of Ghazni city, the provincial capital, when two passenger vehicles collided. The collision left two people dead and nine others injured, according to Sarhadi. In a second incident, a car overturned in the Tawdachina area of Aab Band district, leaving three people injured, including two women. Highway police promptly responded to both scenes, transferring the injured and the deceased to Ghazni Civil Hospital and handing over the vehicles to the traffic department, Sarhadi added.

Pension payments resume for civilian, military retirees

KABUL (Khaama Press): Afghanistan has resumed pension payments for civilian and military retirees after document verification, offering financial relief to thousands of families following delays and halted payments under the current administration. The Ministry of Finance has announced the resumption of pension payments for civilian and military retirees across Afghanistan, following direct instructions from the Taliban leadership. The process applies to those whose documents have been verified and approved by the designated court. Mohammad Rahmani, Director General of the Pension Fund at the Ministry of Finance, stated that payments will be made according to a specific schedule nationwide. The Director General of the Pension Fund emphasized that only retirees with officially validated documents will receive their pensions, ensuring an organized and transparent distribution process. The current list of eligible retirees includes personnel from the National Standards Authority, the Disaster Preparedness Directorate, the Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled, the Directorate of Physical Education, the Administrative Reform



Commission, the Ministry of Economy, the Environmental Directorate, and the former National Security Council office. Since the Return of the Taliban, pension payments had been halted due to the need to verify and stabilize retiree records. To address this, a special court was established to review and confirm the identity and documentation of retirees. Retirees were asked to submit official documents to this court, and now, with partial verification completed, payments have resumed. According to Ministry of Finance sources, approximately 152,000 retirees are now eligible for pension payments. The United Nations had estimated last year that around 170,000 individuals were entitled to receive pensions. Previously, many retirees had raised complaints regarding delays and non-payment of their dues. The Ministry emphasized that only retirees whose documents have been fully processed and approved by the court will receive payments.

FAO to build 120 cold storage units in six provinces

KABUL (Pajhwok): The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) will construct 120 zero-energy cold storage units for onions in six provinces of Afghanistan with financial support from the World Bank. FAO's office in Afghanistan wrote on its Facebook page that each cold storage unit would have the capacity to store 20 metric tonnes of onions. The initiative is aimed at reducing food wastage and helping farmers preserve onions for longer periods, thereby increasing their incomes. The organisation said the cold storage units would be set up in Paktia, Ghazni, Daikundi, Ghor, Badakhshan and Kandahar provinces, but it did not provide details about the cost of the project. Earlier, on 31 July, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) had announced plans to build 240 zero-energy cold storage units for potatoes in Afghanistan, with each unit capable of storing 30 metric tonnes.

KUNAR (TOLOnews): With the shutdown of the Managi power plant in Kunar, the operations of 30 percent of the province's industrial factories have come to a halt. Although promises have been made for years to build new power plants on the Kunar River, the Managi power plant—built during the previous government—has been out of operation for the past three years. Officials at the Kunar

30 per cent of factories halted in Kunar after power plant shutdown

Chamber of Commerce and Investment say this has stopped the activity of 30 percent of factories in the province, leaving industrialists worried. Ziaullah, head of the Kunar Chamber of Commerce and Investment, said: "So far, around 30 percent of factories have been closed. Other factories are running on solar and diesel power, which comes at a very high cost. Our request is that the repair work on the Managi power plant be completed quickly so that the factories can

restart and the problems can be resolved." Some other industrialists in Kunar say that due to the lack of government electricity, they have turned to diesel generators, which have caused them heavy financial losses. They urge that the problem be addressed as soon as possible. Industrialist Ashiqullah said: "The lack of electricity has severely affected our work. Even when we buy 200 Afghanis worth of fuel per day, it doesn't last half a day. That makes 6,000 Afghanis per month. If

government electricity were available, the costs would be far lower compared to diesel, as we now have to fuel our own generators to run the factory." Another industrialist, Musafar Khan Mamund, said: "The sandals that are sold for 300–400 Afghanis in Jalalabad cannot be sold at that price here because it is not profitable for us. In Jalalabad, they have government electricity, but in Kunar, there is none. The electricity problem is huge. The lack of power has pushed our work toward

collapse, and we cannot afford to set up solar power either." Meanwhile, officials from the Kunar Electricity Department say that the contract for the reconstruction of the Managi power plant has been put out for open bidding, and the winning company will begin practical repair work. Omar Gul Naib, head of Kunar Electricity, said: "The companies that applied for the reconstruction of the Managi power plant have been given all the conditions and guide-

lines. Based on those, they will prepare their proposals, and the winning company will begin repair work. We want quality work from them—not something that lasts only two or three months and then breaks down again, like the current situation." This comes as a number of private companies have recently begun investing in solar energy projects in Afghanistan to help resolve the electricity shortage, with hopes that such initiatives will ease the country's power crisis to some extent.

Work launched on water supply projects in Ghor



FEROKOH (Pajhwok): Construction work has been initiated on two water supply projects at a cost of 14 million Afghanis in western Ghor province, an official said on Sunday. Funded by the World Bank, the projects are being implemented with technical cooperation of DACAAR organisation in Taywara and Pasaband districts of the province, said Zabihullah Ghosizada, an official at the Rural Rehabilitation and Development Department. He told Pajhwok Afghan News that the schemes were being carried out in Deh Khwaja village of Taywara district and

Khoshk Aba village of Pasaband district. He added: "With the implementation of these water supply projects, 468 families will gain access to safe drinking water. In addition, these projects will create job opportunities for dozens of local residents." Residents of the two districts voiced satisfaction over the launch of the projects. Noor Ahmad, a resident of Taywara district, said: "We are very happy that a water supply project has been launched in our area. For years, our people struggled with a shortage of clean water. Now that attention is being paid to

us, we are very pleased. We hope such projects will also be implemented in other areas." Habibullah, a resident of Pasaband district, also said: "We are very pleased with the start of this water supply project. In the past, we were forced to fetch drinking water from wells and springs, which was very difficult. Now that a water supply network is being built for us, we hope our problems will be solved." The development comes as many residents of Ghor province continue to face serious challenges in accessing safe drinking water.

Afghan Hindus happy with security, seek lands' restitution

KABUL (Pajhwok): A representative of the Hindu and Sikh community in Afghanistan, stating that their living conditions are now "better and safer than in the past," has called for the restitution of their usurped properties. The Islamic Emirate, while supporting their rights, also said that in case of such problems, with referral to the relevant authorities, "extraordinary cooperation" will be provided. Some reports indicate that in the 1970s, it was estimated that around 700,000 Hindus and Sikhs lived in Afghanistan. This number dropped to about 220,000 in the 1980s and by late 2021, reduced to around 150 people. Manjeet Singh Lamba, representative of the Hindus and Sikhs in Afghanistan, confirming that previously around 700,000 Hindus and Sikhs lived in the country, said that due to war and insecurity most of them left, and by 2021 only 170 families remained in Afghanistan. He added that the majority of these families left by the end of that year after Canada granted them visas. According to him, after

the re-establishment of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and the announcement by the Ministry of Justice regarding the restitution of seized properties, a number of Hindus have returned to reclaim their properties and invest in the country. Lamba, who himself is among those who returned from India, says that currently around 100 Hindus and Sikhs live in Afghanistan, and if India resolves their visa issues, more families will return to the country, since security problems are now resolved. He added: "Our living conditions are now much better and safer than before, and we live in Afghanistan in a peaceful environment without ethnic discrimination." According to him, Hindus living in Afghanistan this year celebrated their Vaisakhi festival in Kabul, Nangarhar and several other provinces in a secure environment. He added: "On the day of Vaisakhi, the forces of the Islamic Emirate cooperated with us to ensure the security of the ceremony, and we are grateful for the support of the Islamic

Emirate." Manjeet Singh Lamba said: "Everyone knows that we are harmless people; we do not interfere with anyone, we have nothing to do with politics, we are only busy with our work and livelihood. But in the past, our elders left the homeland because of excessive harassment: people used to come to their shops, extort them, and cause them problems. But now, thanks to God, the Islamic Emirate has come, no one interferes with anyone, and we are living peacefully." Without providing details, he said that in the past four decades, and before the return of the IEA, the lands, houses and shops of Hindus and Sikhs in Afghanistan were "excessively" usurped. Lamba said: "Our elders from the UK, Canada and Australia have returned to Afghanistan to invest in various sectors. They say, 'We are from Afghanistan, we want to invest in our homeland.'" Calling the usurpation of their properties the main problem, he urged the IEA to help in restoring their lands and seized assets. He proposed that a spe-

cial committee or court be established for the restitution of the Hindu and Sikh community's properties. Zabihullah Mujahid, chief spokesman for the IEA, told Pajhwok: "The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan addresses the rights of all Hindus in the country. If they submit their cases, God willing, cooperation will be provided." He added: "We want our Hindu compatriots to refer their cases regarding restitution of their lands, temples, and other properties, if lost, to the relevant authorities. Extraordinary cooperation will be provided to them and greater attention will be paid to their rights. The government has the duty to protect the rights of all citizens, to address their problems, and to meet their needs." Regarding the Hindu community's visa issues, Mujahid said: "The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan strives to protect the rights of its citizens, and particularly our Hindu and Sikh compatriots who are returning to the country—we welcome them to return and live peacefully. God willing, their lives, their property, and their dignity will

be protected." He added that regarding travel and movement, facilities will be provided for them like for other Afghans. Mujahid continued: "We are in talks with various countries, and wherever Afghan citizens face visa issues for travel, we will arrange and find appropriate solutions. God willing, for Hindus as well, there will be no difference compared to other Afghans, and utmost efforts will be made to resolve their problems." Meanwhile, Abdul Wahid Haqqani, Head of Foreign Relations of Afghanistan's Supreme Court, said that within Afghanistan's judicial system, there is a single court to address the cases of all people—including Afghans, foreigners, and Ahl al-Dhimma (non-Muslims under protection)—and cases are not registered or reviewed separately. The Head of Foreign Relations of the Supreme Court added: "In the courts, everyone is equal, and according to the principles of Islamic Sharia, the problems of all citizens of the country are addressed."

16 killed in Afghanistan last week in various incidents

KABUL (Pajhwok): Some member states of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) voiced concern over the presence of "terrorist groups" in Afghanistan last week, but the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) rejected those concerns. Meanwhile, Iran announced plans to expel two million more Afghan refugees by the end of this year, while Kabul hosted the sixth meeting of the foreign ministers of Afghanistan, China and Pakistan. **Casualties:** Last week, sixteen people were killed and one injured in various incidents of violence across Afghanistan. Local officials said six members of a family were

killed by unidentified gunmen in Surkh Rod district of eastern Nangarhar province, four people were killed and one woman wounded in Kapisa due to a personal feud and in Nimroz, a man killed his wife before taking his own life. Security forces said two armed men were killed in western Herat province and three armed robbers were shot dead in Balkh. However, Pajhwok received no reports of casualties due to criminal and security incidents in Afghanistan in the previous week. Before the regime change in 2021, hundreds of civilians, insurgents and security forces would get killed and maimed every week in addition to crimi-

nal incidents. **Afghanistan–Pakistan–China meeting in Kabul:** Last week, Kabul hosted the sixth trilateral dialogue of the foreign ministers of Afghanistan, China and Pakistan. The meeting reviewed previous commitments and stressed the strengthening of political, economic and transit cooperation. Afghan Foreign Minister Maulvi Amir Khan Muttaqi said the trilateral mechanism provides Afghanistan with an opportunity for practical and focused discussions to further expand cooperation. China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi described his country's ties with Afghanistan as developing and noted that

cooperation in several fields had already expanded. Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar also called the meeting important, describing it as a good opportunity to broaden cooperation among the three nations. In addition to the trilateral talks, Wang Yi also held separate meetings with Afghanistan's Prime Minister Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund, Foreign Minister Muttaqi and Interior Minister Khalifa Sirajuddin Haqqani. The discussions covered long-term relations, economic, trade, transit and security cooperation, counter-narcotics, border security and coordination of border forces, trade, agriculture and training pro-

grammes. Wang Yi said his country was eager to officially include Afghanistan in the "Belt and Road" project. In his meeting with PM Akhund, Wang Yi said China remained steadfast in its friendship with Afghanistan, but hoped its security concerns would be understood. For his part, Mullah Hassan Akhund said that the two countries were old friends and stressed that the Islamic Emirate does not allow the Afghan soil to be used against any other country—something, he said, had been proven in practice over the past four years. Foreign Minister Muttaqi urged Pakistan to take practical steps to resolve

issues affecting trade, transit and joint projects. **Statements about "terrorist" groups in Afghanistan:** Reports indicated that during last week's UN Security Council session, Pakistan, China and the UN Secretary General's deputy expressed concern over the presence of Daesh and other "terrorist" groups in Afghanistan, calling on the Islamic Emirate to act. Separately, Iran's permanent representative to the UN, Amir Saeed Iravani, claimed that some militants were being transferred from Syria to Afghanistan. Zabihullah Mujahid, chief spokesman for IEA, dismissed such concerns as baseless, saying: "While

we reject these allegations, we call on all those raising such concerns not to try to portray Afghanistan as unstable without evidence. There is no proof to substantiate these claims. We ask: in whose interest, and for what purpose, are baseless concerns being raised? Instead of unfounded accusations, let us consider Afghanistan's current security and progress as an opportunity for cooperation." **Afghan refugees:** The forced expulsion of Afghan refugees from Iran and Pakistan continues. Officials said that last week alone, around 34,500 Afghans returned from the two countries, most of them from Iran. Meanwhile, Iran's interi-

or minister said that over six million Afghan refugees currently live in Iran and that two million of them would be deported gradually by the end of this year. He stated: "Under the agreed programme, the first phase will see around two million undocumented and illegal migrants expelled. Managing these over six million Afghans in Iran naturally requires serious national and international cooperation." Earlier, on 30 July, Afghanistan's Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation announced that in just the past three months nearly two million Afghans had returned from Iran and Pakistan, of whom around 1.8 million were forcibly deported.



# Flash floods claim 788, lives, injure 1,018, damage 6,630 homes NDMA

ISLAMABAD (APP): Torrential rains and flash floods have claimed 788 lives, injured 1,018 people, damaged 6,630 houses, and killed 5,548 livestock across Pakistan since June 26, according to the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA).

The authority continues to coordinate relief efforts amid ongoing weather threats.

At least 788 people, including 200 children, 471 men, and 117 women, have lost their lives across the country in incidents related to torrential rains and flooding.

In Punjab, at least 165 people died, including 71 children, 63 men, and 31 women. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 469 fatalities in were reported—81 children, 329 men, and 59 women. Sindh recorded 51 deaths, comprising 16 children, 29 men, and 6 women.

Balochistan reported 24 deaths, including 14 children, 6 men, and 4 women. In Gilgit-Baltistan, 45 people died—8 children, 29 men,

and 8 women. AJK recorded 23 fatalities due to flash floods, comprising 5 children, 10 men, and 8 women. In Islamabad Capital Territory, 8 individuals lost their lives, including 4 children, 3 men, and 1 woman.

A total of 1,018 people were injured in flood-related incidents across the country, including 279 children, 493 males and 246 females. Punjab reported the highest number of injuries at 584, comprising 175 children, 277 males and 182 females.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 285 individuals were injured, among them 58 children, 184 males and 43 females. Sindh recorded 71 injuries, including 35 children, 24 males and 12 females.

Balochistan reported five injuries, with two children, two males and one female affected. In Gilgit-Baltistan, 42 people sustained injuries, including three children, 38 males and one female. Azad Jammu and Kashmir reported 28 injuries, com-

prising four children, 18 males and six females. In Islamabad Capital Territory, three people were injured, including two children and one female, with no male injuries reported.

A total of 25,644 individuals have been rescued in 512 operations carried out nationwide as part of a coordinated response, according to the latest figures released by the NDMA.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa recorded the highest number of rescues, with 14,317 people evacuated in 211 operations. Punjab followed with 9,211 rescues conducted across 245 operations.

In Azad Jammu & Kashmir, 940 individuals were rescued in 18 operations, while Gilgit-Baltistan saw 1,027 evacuations in 25 operations. Sindh reported 95 rescues in five operations, Balochistan 19 in four, and Islamabad Capital Territory 35 in four operations.

NDMA, in collaboration with the Pakistan Army and partners, has

distributed over 83,649 relief items to flood-affected communities.

Key supplies include tents, blankets, hygiene kits, ration bags, food packs, and drinking water. Additional support—such as solar panels, de-watering pumps, and generators—has been provided to aid recovery efforts.

Widespread flooding has caused extensive damage across the country, affecting at least 6,630 homes—1,562 of which were completely destroyed, while 5,068 sustained partial damage.

The disaster has also led to the loss of 5,548 livestock, compounding the impact on vulnerable communities.

To ensure swift humanitarian response, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has set up 564 relief and medical camps across the country. Of these, 45 medical camps have provided treatment to 3,227 individuals, while 519 relief camps have extended shelter and essential services to 29,311 people.



KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney take part in a joint press conference on Ukraine's Independence Day in Kyiv, Ukraine, on Sunday.

## Ukraine drone hits Russian nuclear plant

Sparks huge fire at Novatek's Ust-Luga terminal

MOSCOW (Reuters): Ukraine launched a drone attack on Russia on Sunday, forcing a sharp fall in the capacity of a reactor at one of Russia's biggest nuclear power plants and sparking a huge blaze at the major Ust-Luga fuel export terminal, Russian officials said.

Despite talk of peace by Russia and Ukraine, the deadliest European war since World War Two is continuing along the 2,000 km (1,250 mile) front line accompanied by missile and drone attacks deep into both Russia and Ukraine.

Russia's defence ministry said at least 95 Ukrainian drones had been intercepted across more than a dozen Russian regions on August 24, the day that Ukraine celebrates its declaration of independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.

The Kursk nuclear power plant, just 60 km (38 miles) from the border with Ukraine, said that air defences shot down a drone that detonated near the plant just after mid-

night, damaging an auxiliary transformer and forcing a 50% reduction in the operating capacity at reactor No. 3.

Radiation levels were normal and there were no injuries from the fire which the drone sparked, the plant said. Two other reactors are operating without power generation and one is undergoing scheduled repairs.

The United Nations' nuclear agency, the International Atomic Energy Agency, said it was aware of reports that a transformer at the plant caught fire due to military activity and stressed that every nuclear facility should be protected at all times. A thousand km north, on the Gulf of Finland, at least 10 Ukrainian drones were downed over the port of Ust-Luga in Russia's northern Leningrad region, with debris sparking fire at the Novatek-operated terminal - a huge Baltic Sea fuel export terminal and processing complex, the regional governor said.

PLUME OF BLACK SMOKE

Unverified footage on Russian Telegram channels showed a drone flying directly into a fuel terminal, followed by a huge ball of fire rising high into the sky followed by a plume of black smoke billowing into the horizon.

"Firefighters and emergency services are currently working to extinguish the blaze," Alexander Drozdenko, governor of Russia's Leningrad region, said. There were no injuries, he added.

According to Novatek (NVTK.MM), opens new tab, the Ust-Luga complex, which opened in 2013, processes gas condensate into light and heavy naphtha, jet fuel, fuel oil and gasoil, and enables the company to ship oil products as well as gas condensate to international markets. Novatek produces mostly naphtha for Asia, including China, Singapore, Taiwan and Malaysia, as well as jet fuel with delivery to Istanbul.

Rosaviatsia, Russia's

civil aviation authority, said flights were halted for hours on end at several Russian airports overnight, including at the Pulkovo airport in the Leningrad region.

Ukrainian drones also attacked an industrial enterprise in the southern Russian city of Syzran, the governor of the Samara region said on Sunday. A child was injured in the attack, according to the governor, who did not specify exactly what had been attacked.

Earlier this month, the Ukrainian military said it had struck the Syzran oil refinery. The Rosneft-owned (ROSN.MM), opens new tab refinery was forced to suspend production and crude intake after the attack, sources told Reuters.

There was no immediate comment from Ukraine. Kyiv has said its strikes inside Russia are in response to Russia's continued attacks on Ukraine and are aimed at destroying infrastructure deemed crucial to Moscow's overall military efforts.

## US Republican firebrand Marjorie Taylor Greene slams Israel over Gaza

LONDON (Arab News): Marjorie Taylor Greene, the US congresswoman from Georgia, has enraged fellow Republicans by condemning Israel and urging support for Gaza on social media.

She has described Israel's war in the Palestinian enclave as "genocide," and took to X to condemn the country's "day and night" bombing of civilians.

"This is what is happening to Gaza where in spite of what we have all been told, many innocent people and children are being killed and they are not Hamas," Greene posted.

"Does Hamas deserve it? Yes. Do innocent people and children deserve it? No," she said. "The innocent people in Gaza did not

kill and kidnap the innocent people in Israel on Oct 7th. Just as we spoke out and had compassion for the victims and families of (Oct. 7), how can Americans not speak out and have compassion for the masses of innocent people and children in Gaza?"

Israel maintains significant cross-party support with senior politicians in the US, particularly Republicans.

Since the start of the Gaza war, which has killed more than 60,000 Palestinians, the US has given around \$18 billion to Israel in military aid.

"I don't know about you, but I don't want to pay for genocide in a foreign country against a foreign people for a foreign war

that I had nothing to do with," Greene said. "And I will not be silent about it."

Her post prompted a fierce response, including from self-described "proud Islamophobe" Laura Loomer, who last week celebrated the State Department's suspension of US visas for Palestinian children with special medical needs.

"Why are you advocating for GAZANS to come to the US? How is Islamic immigration 'America First'?" Loomer posted in response to Greene.

Last month, Greene criticized Republican colleague Randy Fine after he suggested that Gaza should be starved until Hamas releases the hostages it still holds from Oct. 7, 2023. He also said claims of

famine in the enclave are "all a lie anyway."

Greene said on X: "I can only imagine how Florida's 6th district feels now that their Representative, that they were told to vote for, openly calls for starving innocent people and children."

She added: "It's the most truthful and easiest thing to say that Oct 7th in Israel was horrific and all hostages must be returned, but so is the genocide, humanitarian crisis, and starvation happening in Gaza."

"But a Jewish U.S. Representative calling for the continued starvation of innocent people and children is disgraceful."

Loomer responded to Greene: "There is no genocide in Gaza."

## Sudan's paramilitary forces kill 13 people in Darfur

CAIRO (AP): Sudan's notorious paramilitary forces attacked a group of people on a road in the country's troubled Darfur region on Sunday, killing at least 13, mostly women and children, a medical group said.

The killings were the latest by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces and came a day after the RSF shelled a hospital in the besieged city of el-Fasher in North Darfur. The road

where the attack took place links el-Fasher to the nearby town of Tweila.

The Sudan Doctors Network, a group of medical professionals tracking the Sudanese civil war, said five children, four women and four older people were killed, claiming it was an ethnically motivated attack.

The killing was "another episode in the ongoing campaign of ethnic cleansing and genocide being perpe-

trated by the RSF against unarmed civilians in Darfur," the doctors' group said.

On Saturday, the RSF shelled a hospital in el-Fasher, wounding a healthcare worker and six patients, the doctors' group said. Among the wounded patients were a child and a pregnant woman.

The RSF didn't immediately respond to a request for comment on the killing

and the hospital shelling.

The attacks were part of RSF's ongoing campaign to seize control of el-Fasher, the Sudanese military's last stronghold in Darfur. The U.N. human rights office said it documented the RSF killing of at least 89 civilians, including 16 who were "summarily executed" in el-Fasher and the nearby Abu Shouk displacement camp, in a span of 10 days this month.



MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA: Pro-Palestine demonstrators march on Sunday in Melbourne, Australia. Protests were held around the country as the international community continues to seek a sustainable solution for the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza.

## Kim Jong Un supervises test of new anti-air missiles

SEOUL, South Korea (AP): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un supervised the test-firing of two types of new anti-air missiles, state media said Sunday, displaying his expanding military capabilities as the South Korean and U.S. militaries carry out joint drills.

The North's official Korean Central News Agency said the test Saturday proved the missiles effective in countering aerial threats such as drones and cruise missiles, and that Kim assigned unspecified "important" tasks to defense scientists ahead of a major political conference expected early next year.

The report did not specify the missiles that were tested or where the event took place. It did not mention any remarks by Kim directed at Washington or Seoul.

The test coincided with new South Korean President Lee Jae Myung's trip to Tokyo for a summit with Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba, where they vowed to strengthen bilateral cooperation and their trilateral partnership with the United States to address common challenges, including North Korea's nuclear ambitions. Lee was to depart for

Washington on Sunday for a summit with U.S. President Donald Trump.

Kim's government has repeatedly dismissed calls by Seoul and Washington to restart long-stalled negotiations aimed at winding down his nuclear weapons and missiles programs, as he continues to prioritize Russia as part of a foreign policy aimed at expanding ties with nations confronting the United States.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Kim has sent thousands of troops and large shipments of weapons, including artillery and ballistic missiles, to help fuel President Vladimir Putin's warfighting.

That has raised concerns Moscow could provide technology that strengthens Kim's nuclear-armed military, with experts pointing to North Korea's aging anti-air and radar systems as a likely area of cooperation. South Korea's previous conservative government said in November that Russia supplied missiles and other equipment to help strengthen air defenses of the North Korean capital of Pyongyang, but did not specify which systems were provided. Kim held a ceremony in Pyongyang last week to honor North Korean soldiers

who fought in Ukraine, awarding state "hero" titles to those who returned and placing medals beside 101 portraits of the fallen, praising them as "great men, great heroes and great patriots," state media reported.

According to South Korean assessments, North Korea has sent around 15,000 troops to Russia since last fall and about 600 of them have died in combat. Kim has also agreed to send thousands of military construction workers and deminers to Russia's Kursk region, a deployment South Korean intelligence believes could happen soon.

