

Imran's hearing adjourned
F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: The hearing of the Toshakhana II case against PTI founder Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi has been postponed. The hearing was scheduled to take place today at Adiala Jail before the Special Central Judge Islamabad, but the court has now adjourned the proceedings. The court staff formally informed Imran Khan's lawyer, Khalid Yousaf, about the postponement.



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Israeli forces kill 21 aid seekers — Gaza starvation death toll rises

GAZA: Israeli attacks have killed at least 39 people, including 21 seeking humanitarian aid and 11 who starved to death, over 24 hours in Gaza, Palestinian health authorities say. Gaza's Ministry of Health said on Saturday that the total number of malnutrition deaths has reached 212, including 98 children, since Israel launched its war on Gaza in October 2023.

Most of the deaths have occurred in recent weeks as Israel continues to impose severe restrictions on aid supplies entering Gaza after partially lifting a total blockade in late May. Mohammed Abu Salmiya, the director of al-Shifa Hospital in northern Gaza, told Al Jazeera that famine continues to pose a serious risk "especially among children and the elderly". "Malnutrition among children leads to decreased immunity and may lead to death," he said.

On Friday, the World Food Programme (WFP) called on Israel to allow the delivery of at least 100 aid trucks per day to Gaza, noting that only 60 of its aid truck drivers have been vetted and approved by the Israeli military to date. The 100 trucks per day the organisation called for is a fraction of the 600 per day other United Nations agencies and Gaza authorities have said are needed to meet the basic needs of Gaza residents. "Since July 27, 266 WFP trucks arriving at crossing points were turned back, 31 percent of which had initially been approved," the agency's latest report said.

"Convoy movements are frequently hampered by last-minute changes by Israeli authorities, and heavy insecurity due to military activities along convoy routes." In its latest statement on Saturday, the UN agency for Palestinian

refugees, UNRWA, noted that it has not been allowed to bring any humanitarian aid into Gaza, including food and medicine, for more than five months, depriving hungry and ailing Palestinians of what they need to survive.

UNRWA has been calling on Israel to lift its siege on Gaza, saying the ongoing airdrops of humanitarian aid from several countries "are very expensive and ineffective" at reaching those urgently in need. The warnings come as Israeli forces continued to escalate their attacks across the territory. Six people were killed by Israeli soldiers while waiting for aid near the Netzarim Corridor in central Gaza, medical sources told Al Jazeera.

Two other Palestinians were also killed and transported to the Nasser Medical Complex from a GHF aid distribution site in the southern part of the territory. One woman was killed and another person was wounded in an Israeli air strike targeting an apartment in Khan Younis in the south. According to the Gaza Health Ministry's latest count, at least 39 people have been killed in 24 hours.

Israel's war on Gaza has killed at least 61,369 Palestinians in Gaza and wounded 152,850. An estimated 1,139 people were killed in Israel during Hamas-led attacks on October 7, 2023, and more than 200 were taken captive. As the death toll continues to soar, international condemnation of Israel's conduct in the war is growing, with several countries raising alarm over Israel's plans to seize Gaza City in an operation that could forcibly displace hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to concentration zones in southern Gaza.

A rare emergency UN Security Council meeting has been sched-

uled on Sunday to address the plan approved by Israel's security cabinet this week. In Gaza City, residents were defiant, promising not to leave in the event of a new Israeli ground offensive. Umm Imran told Al Jazeera that there was nowhere safe in Gaza.

"They say go south, go to al-Mawasi, but there is nowhere safe any more — north, south, east or west. No one and nowhere is safe. We will stay here," Al Jazeera's Hani Mahmoud, reporting from Deir el-Balah in central Gaza, said residents were unable to sleep on Friday night after the announcement by Israel. "People are wondering what's going to happen to them, what's going to be left of Gaza if Israel moves on with its approved plan to occupy the entire Gaza Strip, starting with Gaza City," he said.

The Israeli plan has also been condemned by the foreign ministers of Australia, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. In a joint statement on Saturday, the diplomats warned that Israel's plan will "aggravate the catastrophic humanitarian situation, endanger the lives of the hostages, and further risk the mass displacement of civilians". "Any attempts at annexation or of settlement extension violate international law," Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan also urged Muslim nations to work in unison to oppose Israel's plan.

Speaking at a joint news conference in El Alamein with his Egyptian counterpart after meeting Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, Fidan said members of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation had been called to an emergency meeting to tackle the crisis. — Aljazeera



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Saudi Arabia, Nawaf bin Said Al-Malky called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

14 Indian sponsored Khwarij killed: ISPR

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Security forces have killed another 14 Indian sponsored terrorists during sanitisation operation in surrounding areas of Sambaza along Pakistan-Afghanistan Border.

The Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) said the operation was conducted on night between August 8 and 9 following the successful engagements by security forces in area of Sambaza, Zhob District, Balochistan on August 7-8. Weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from the killed terrorist. The number of khwarij killed in two days has risen to forty seven.

The security forces remain committed to secure the nation's frontiers and thwart attempts at sabotaging peace, stability and progress of Pakistan, the military's media wing said.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif appreciated the security forces for eliminating 47 elements of Fitna al Khwarij during the last two days, after they made infiltration attempt at Pakistan-Afghanistan border area near District Zhob.

Bilawal pays tribute to Sufi saint

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has paid a glowing tribute to the revered Sufi saint and legendary poet of Sindh, Hazrat Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai (RA), on the occasion of his Urs, calling him a timeless beacon of love, peace, tolerance, and spiritual resistance.

According to the press release, Chairman PPP said in his message that Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai's poetry is not just literature — it is a soulful guide that speaks to the conscience of humanity. "Shah Latif's message is a call to heal — to build a society rooted in compassion, equality, and respect for all faiths and peoples," he added.

Bilawal reaffirmed his party's commitment to the ideals of Shah Latif, saying, "PPP has always drawn inspiration from Shah Latif's vision of an inclusive and just society, where all people — regardless of caste, creed, or class — are treated with dignity."

PM's promise solar plant for GB fulfilled

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif's another promise made with the residents of Gilgit-Baltistan, regarding the provision of a 100-megawatt solar photovoltaic power plant, was fulfilled.

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) approved a 100-megawatt solar photovoltaic power plant project for various locations in Gilgit-Baltistan, two days after the prime minister's announcement.

Following the ECNEC's approval, formal work on the project would now kick-start. The project will be completed within three years and cost a total of Rs24.957 billion, PM Office Media Wing, on Saturday, said in a press release on Saturday. During his recent visit to Gilgit, the prime minister had announced that ECNEC would soon approve 100-megawatt solar power plant project for Gilgit-Baltistan.

The Central Development Working Party (CDWP) had already approved the project earlier. The districts of Astore, Daryal, Tangir Diamer, Ghanche, Ghizer, Gilgit, Hunza, Ishkoman, Nagar, Rondu, Skardu, and Shigar will benefit from the functioning of the project. In the first phase, the district of Skardu will be provided with 18.958 megawatts of electricity.

In the second phase, the districts of Hunza, Gilgit, and Diamer will get 6.005 MW, 28.013 MW, and 13.126 MW of electricity respectively. While in the third phase, the remaining districts will receive 16.096 megawatts of electricity. The project will also provide 18.162 megawatts off-grid electricity to the hospitals and government offices.

Saudi Crown Prince invites Premier to attend FII

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Nawaf bin Said Al-Malky on Saturday called on Prime Minister and handed over a signed invitation letter from Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud to participate in the ninth Future Investment Initiatives (FII) Forum to be held in Riyadh from October 27-30. While accepting the gracious invitation extended to him, the prime minister conveyed his warm greetings and respectful regards for Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud as well as to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. Recent developments in the region were also discussed during the warm and cordial meeting.

Pakistan welcomes Azerbaijan, Armenia peace agreement

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday said that Pakistan welcomed the historic peace agreement signed between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia at the White House Summit under the auspices of US President Donald J. Trump. "This landmark development marks the dawn of a new era of peace, stability, and cooperation in the South Caucasus, a region that has endured decades of conflict and human suffering. We congratulate President Ilham Aliyev and the people of Azerbaijan on this historic agreement, that reflects wisdom, foresight and sagacity in charting a course for a peaceful future for their region," the prime minister posted on X account. He further said that Pakistan had always stood by the brotherly nation of Azerbaijan, and stood with them at this proud moment of their history. "We also appreciate the facilitation role of the United States, under President Donald Trump, in bringing the two sides together and securing an agreement that opens new avenues for trade, connectivity, and regional integration. It is our hope that this spirit of dialogue will serve as an example for other regions facing protracted conflicts," he added.

Progress, prosperity of Balochistan, among govt's top priorities: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that the progress and prosperity of Balochistan province and its natives had been among the government's top priorities.

He said that the government was committed to provision of equal opportunities of education and jobs to the youth of Balochistan. The prime minister

expressed these views during a meeting with President National Party Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch, who called on him, the PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

Dr Abdul Malik Baloch thanked the prime minister for making special efforts for the progress and prosperity of the province. During the meeting, PM's Advisor Dr Touqeer Shah was also present.

Jirgas on law and order hosted by KP CM concluded

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The series of regional consultative jirgas on law and order, hosted by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, has concluded on Saturday.

The fourth and final jirga in this series was held on Saturday at the Chief Minister's House in Peshawar, with a large turnout of tribal elders from Upper, Central, and Lower Kurram, representatives of political parties, and relevant members of the provincial and national assemblies, says an official statement here.

The jirga was also attended by the Chief Minister's Adviser on Information and Public Relations, Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif; Senator Noor-ul-Haq Qadri; Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah; Inspector General of Police Zulfiqar Hameed; as well as the concerned commissioners, deputy commissioners, and police officials. In their recommendations, the jirga participants



praised the Chief Minister for convening the tribal elders' gatherings to promote peace and for resolving the Kurram issue through peaceful means. They expressed gratitude to the provincial government for announcing a special development package for the area, for launching helicopter services for Kurram during difficult times, and for extending full support to the local population.

They noted that due to the Chief Minister's special efforts, peace had been restored in Kurram for the time being, and stressed the need to sustain it. The elders affirmed that both Sunni and Shia communities in Kurram stand united for peace and are ready to fully

cooperate with the government in this regard.

"Peace is our fundamental need. Where there is peace, there will be development," they said. The jirga members also reiterated their opposition to all forms of terrorism and pledged support for the government's peace efforts. They recommended the formation of an empowered jirga comprising representatives of the federal and provincial governments, security agencies, and local elders to hold negotiations with Afghanistan, as the peace situation in Kurram is closely linked to the neighboring country. They further proposed opening trade routes with Afghanistan to create employment opportunities for local residents.

Asif refutes statements of IAF chief

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has strongly refuted recent statements by the Indian Air Force (IAF) chief Amar Preet Singh regarding Operation Sindoor, dismissing claims of Pakistani jet losses as "implausible" and "ill-timed."

In a robust response shared on social media, Asif maintained that India's military leadership is masking the "strategic short-sightedness" of Indian politicians, labeling them as "faces of monumental failure."

Asif highlighted that for over three months, India remained silent on these claims, while Pakistan provided detailed technical briefings to international media post-Operation Sindoor. Independent observers, including world leaders, senior Indian politicians, and foreign intelligence, acknowledged the destruction of multiple Indian Air Force aircraft, including Rafales.

He said that Pakistan successfully neutralized six Indian jets, S400 air defense systems, and unmanned aircraft, while disabling several Indian airbases. He emphasized that no Pakistani aircraft were hit during the operation, and Indian losses along the Line of Control were significantly heavier.

UK arrests 200 backing Palestine Action group

LONDON (AFP): Police in London arrested at least 200 people Saturday for supporting Palestine Action at the latest and largest protest backing the group since the government banned it last month under anti-terror laws.

The UK capital's Metropolitan Police said it expected to make further arrests at the demonstration in Parliament Square, as organizers claimed only a "fraction" of the hundreds who turned out had been detained. "That claim simply isn't true," the Met said in a statement, noting some of those there were onlookers or not visibly supporting Palestine Action.

"We are confident that anyone who came to Parliament Square today to hold a placard expressing support for Palestine Action was either arrested or is in the process of being arrested." The government banned the group days after several of its activists broke into an air force base in southern England, causing an estimated £7 million (\$9.3 million) of damage to two aircraft.

Britain's interior ministry reiterated ahead of Saturday's protests that its members were also suspected of other "serious attacks" that involved "violence, significant injuries and extensive criminal damage." But critics,

including the United Nations and NGOs like Amnesty International and Greenpeace, have lambasted the move as legal overreach and a threat to free speech. A group called Defend our Juries, which organized Saturday's protests and previous demonstrations against the ban, said "unprecedented numbers" had risked "arrest and possible imprisonment" to "defend this country's ancient liberties."

"We will keep going. Our numbers are already growing for the next wave of action in September," it added. Attendees began massing near parliament at lunchtime bearing signs saying "oppose genocide, support Palestine Action" and other slogans, and waving Palestinian flags. Psychotherapist Craig Bell, 39, was among those holding a placard.

He branded the ban "absolutely ridiculous." "When you compare it to an actual terrorist group who are killing civilians and taking lives, it's just a joke that they're being prescribed a terrorist group," he told AFP. As police moved in on the demonstrators, they applauded those being arrested and shouted "shame on you" at officers.

"Let them arrest us all," said Richard Bull, 42, a wheelchair-user in atten-

dance. "This government has gone too far. I have nothing to feel ashamed of." London's Met Police and other UK forces have made scores of similar arrests on previous weekends since the government outlawed Palestine Action on July 5.

Anyone expressing support for a proscribed group risks arrest under UK anti-terror laws. Police announced this week that the first three people had been charged in the English and Welsh criminal justice system with supporting Palestine Action following their arrests at a July 5 demo. Being a member or supporting the group is now a criminal offense punishable by up to 14 years in prison.

Seven people have so far been charged in Scotland, which has a separate legal system. Amnesty International UK Chief Executive Sacha Deshmukh wrote to Met Police chief Mark Rowley this week urging restraint be exercised when policing people holding placards expressing support for Palestine Action. The NGO has argued arrests of such people are in breach of international human rights law. A UK court challenge against the decision to proscribe Palestine Action will be heard later this year.

Trail of Rs1 trillion in Punjab corruption leads to Portugal: Saif

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Information, Barrister Dr. Saif, has stated that a financial scandal exceeding one trillion rupees from Punjab has been traced to Portugal. According to him, taxpayers' money from Punjab, previously funneled to London, is now being transferred to Portugal, where high-profile individuals have allegedly purchased properties.

Barrister Dr. Saif emphasized the need for an independent investigation into what he termed the "Portugal Scandal." He asserted that, following a transparent inquiry, an estimated Rs. 1 trillion of Punjab's public funds would be

recovered from Portugal.

The Advisor further remarked that the "illegitimate" government has broken corruption records of the past 78 years within just two and a half years. He accused senior political figures of systematically looting public funds, stating, "The uncle rules the federal government while the niece controls Punjab's treasury, looting the country."

Referring to recent political developments, Barrister Saif claimed that Khawaja Asif's talk of resignation is merely a tactic to protect his frontman. He alleged that corruption has become a hallmark of the Sharif family, who have built lavish palaces abroad by siphoning off taxpayers' money — yet their greed remains unfulfilled.

Contrasting this with the previous administration, he stated that former Prime Minister Imran Khan had recovered stolen assets and deposited them back into the national treasury whereas the current leadership is not only plundering the national exchequer but also setting new records of corruption.

He concluded by criticizing the incumbent government for its indifference to public suffering, noting that while the people are being crushed under the weight of inflation, the so-called "illegitimate rulers" are engrossed in luxury and extravagance.

Meanwhile, addressing the International Criminology Conference, Barrister Dr. Saif stated that the concept of "justice" is a

complex, broad, and continuously evolving term, and it is not possible to achieve a perfect or complete form immediately. He emphasized that the successful implementation of law depends on the effective enforcing machinery and the underlying social and cultural factors.

According to Dr. Saif, legislation alone cannot curb crime, as its roots often lie in societal mindsets and institutional weaknesses, which must be addressed through broader social, psychological, and political reforms. To effectively prevent crime in Pakistan, we must go beyond the superficial structure of laws and address the societal problems embedded within.

PHC restrains PESCO from final decision

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has intervened in the recruitment process of new officers in the Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) by restraining the company from making any final decisions on the appointments. A divisional bench comprising Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice

Farah Jamshed issued notices to the relevant authorities and sought their response.

The petitioner challenged the advertisement issued by PESCO for the recruitment of new officers. The petitioner argued that PESCO's new policy requiring existing officers to resign from their current positions if they apply for new positions is illegal.

The petitioner claimed that the new recruitment process would adversely affect them.

PHC after hearing the petitioner's arguments, directed PESCO to continue with the recruitment process but restrained it from making any final decisions on the appointments. The court also sought the response of the relevant authorities on the petition.

‘KP assembly to be digitized for efficiency’

PESHAWAR (APP): The Special Assistant to Chief Minister for Science and Information Technology, Dr. Shafqat Ayaz, announced a plan to fully digitize Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly aiming streamline legislative processes, improve efficiency of assembly sessions, and ensure a more transparent

and faster transfer of records.

In a handout issued here Saturday, the move, which Dr. Ayaz said aligns with vision of PTI founder Imran Khan and Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, was a key step toward promoting digital governance in the province.

Dr. Ayaz chaired a meet-

ing with KP Assembly's IT Department to review various projects, including digital file management, an online voting system, and automated agenda and proceedings transmissions.

He has directed the department to submit a detailed report to facilitate implementation of this digitization plan.

Meeting on proposed legislation regarding acid, burn incidents

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A consultative meeting on the proposed legislation to address incidents of acid attacks and burns was held at the office of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women (KPCSW). The meeting was chaired by Ms. Amna Durrani, Director Programs at the Commission.

The session brought together representatives from the Law Department, Health Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bar Association, Prosecution Department, and other experts from relevant sectors. Participants shared valuable recommendations and constructive suggestions aimed at strengthening the draft law.

The recommendations included measures for



immediate medical treatment, psychological rehabilitation, legal aid, financial assistance for survivors, swift arrest of perpetrators, stricter bail provisions, and expedited trial processes.

Participants also emphasized closing gaps

in the existing legal framework to ensure more effective prevention and justice delivery.

The Commission extended its gratitude to all attendees and assured that their feedback would be incorporated into the draft bill. Reaffirming its commit-

ment, the KPCSW stated that it will continue to collaborate with all stakeholders to make the legislation stronger, more effective, and fully implementable, with the aim of eradicating such heinous crimes and ensuring swift justice for survivors.

National flag hoists everywhere in KP Independent day festivities paint prosperous picture for artists

PESHAWAR (APP): As the green and white flags flutter proudly across the streets of Peshawar and the air buzzes with patriotic songs, Independence Day celebrations are not only lifting spirits but also livelihoods.

With Pakistan poised to mark its 78th Independence Day on August 14, the hus-

tle and bustle in local markets of Peshawar has brought a welcome windfall to small traders and street artists in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

For 45-year-old Nizam Khan, a car painter in Nowshera, the days leading up to August 14 have brought more than just paint stains on his hands

but also they have brought prosperity.

Usually painting five to six vehicles daily, Nizam now finds himself working late into the night, handling as many as 20 to 25 orders each day. "People want their vehicles to shine in green and white colours these days and youth enthusiasm was overwhelming. It's their way of showing love for Pakistan," he says with a proud smile, wiping sweat from his brow.

"Yes, load shedding has been a problem, but I rented a generator and hired extra workers to keep up."

A similar surge in demand can be felt at the hands of henna artist Shafeef Begum, 52, who runs a modest shop on Pabbi bazaar. Traditionally known for bridal designs, her henna cones are now being emptied into symbols of patriotism.

"Both boys and girls are coming in for designs with stars, crescents, and 'Pakistan Zindabad' written

in green dye," she shared. "It's beautiful to see this kind of enthusiasm especially by youth on Jashin e Azadi." Despite the rising demand, Shageef Begum has kept her rates steady at Rs200 per customer. "This is a day of joy for all. Why should I take advantage of it?"

Customers like Sundas Bibi, Sumbal Riaz and Meena Gul, young women from Pabbi tehsil, believe these small expressions go a long way. "We came to get our face painted in the colours of our national flag to avoid rush on 14 August," they said with faces adorned with green and white. "It's our way of showing unity and pride on Jashin-e-Azadi1."

But it isn't just artists who are benefiting from the Independence Day boom. In the narrow alleys of Mohalla Jahangi, near the Qissa Khwani Bazaar, printing presses have been working over-

Jashin e Azadi grand firework show on Aug 13

PESHAWAR (APP): A grand fireworks and musical event will be held at Karnal Sher Khan Stadium in Peshawar at midnight on August 13 as part of the Pakistan Day celebrations. According to a statement issued by the office of the Commissioner Peshawar Division, a spectacular fireworks and music show has been organized at Sher Khan Stadium, Peshawar, at 12 AM on Wednesday, August 13, in celebration of Pakistan Day. The public can attend the event with their families through free entry by registration. Eight locations have been designated for free registration, which will begin on Saturday, August 9. These locations include Hayatabad Sports Complex, University of Peshawar, FG Public School (Girls), Stadium Road, Peshawar, Kabeer Medical College, Peshawar, City University, Peshawar, Askari 6, Nasir Bagh Road, Cantt Facilitation Center, Peshawar and GRP.

PHC issues notice to FIA F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar PHC has issued a notice to the Director FIA in response to a petition filed by a commission agent, Fazal Elahi, challenging the reopening of a closed inquiry under the Anti-Money Laundering law.

The inquiry against Fazal Elahi was initiated in 2021 but was later closed by the FBR as no evidence of money laundering or illegal activities was found. The petitioner works as a commission agent and imports vehicles for overseas clients under the SRO regime, the lawyer said.

The petitioner's lawyer, Mukhtar Maneri Advocate, argued that the FIA's decision to reopen the inquiry after five years was unjustified and without any new evidence. He contended that the petitioner had been cleared of any wrongdoing in the initial inquiry, and reopening the case would cause undue harassment.

PHC divisional bench comprising Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Farah Jamshed issued a notice to the FIA Director.

Shama Banspati presents: Bint-e-Hawa Achievement Awards 2025 ceremony held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Governor's House Peshawar was the setting for a truly inspiring evening, as the 4th Bint-e-Hawa Achievement Awards 2025, powered by Shama Banspati, honored over 40 extraordinary women who are making a significant impact across Pakistan. The awards celebrated the courage, resilience, and remarkable leadership of these women in a wide range of fields.

The event was graced by the Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, who praised the awardees for their unwavering dedication and contributions to creating a brighter, more inclusive Pakistan. The evening served as a powerful testament to the influence and strength of women shaping the nation's future.

Honoring excellence across diverse fields

The Bint-e-Hawa Achievement Awards recognized phenomenal women from various sectors, highlighting the depth and breadth of female talent in the country. The list of celebrated awardees includes:

Sports:
Sana Mir - Pakistan Cricket Team
Sakina Afridi - Sports Player
Aila Malik - Off-road Racer
Samar Khan - Cyclist / Adventure Sports

Media & Journalism:
Farzana Ali - Journalist
Anmol Sheraz - Journalist
Rabia Tabassum - RJ & Voice Over Artist
Hania Fahimi - TV Host
Healthcare:
Dr. Zubaida Sirang
Dr. Meena Khan Nazim
Dr. Nadia Khattak
Education:
Prof. Dr. Razia Sultana
Beenish Asmat Ullah
Dr. Tabassum Asad
Social Work & Community Leadership:
Nasreen Aman - Founder, Spark of Hope
Rukhshanda Naz - Social Worker
Safirah Bibi - Founder, MASS
Business & Entrepreneurship:
Marriam Kaiwan - CEO,

Khud Mukhtar Sawi
Faryal Kehkashan - Entrepreneur
Kulsoom Sharyar - Founder, Eventagious
Afshan Khan - CEO, FastMove Packages SMC Pvt Ltd
Culinary Arts:
Madiha Salman - Master Chef
Saira Khan - Master Chef
Saira - Food Blogger
Ayesha Akbar - Food Blogger
Hira Bangash - Food Blogger
Other Noteworthy Achievements:
Gulmina Bilal Ahmad - Chairman, NAVTEC
Saima Sharif - Police
Rahima Naz - alias Rodaba Esa Khan - Literature
Zahra Kamal Khan

Haya Parveez - Fitness Trainer
Dua - Miss Pakistan
Maria Khan - Tour Guide
Syeda Sana Shah - Motivational Speaker
Anusha Ihtesham - Real Estate
Laila Fareed - Extraordinary Talents
Nazish Begum - Information Technology

The 4th Bint-e-Hawa Achievement Awards was not just a ceremony but a powerful statement on the potential and achievements of women in Pakistan. The organizers extend their heartfelt congratulations to all the award winners for their exceptional contributions and for serving as an inspiration to countless others.

Japanese business delegation visits Khyber Pakhtunkhwa BOIT

PESHAWAR (APP): In a positive outcome of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's strategic participation at the Osaka Expo 2025, a high-level Japanese delegation led by Otani, CEO of Frontier LLC, visited the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment and Trade (KPBOIT) to explore avenues of collaboration and investment in the province.

The delegation's visit follows the successful representation of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at the Osaka Expo earlier this year, where KPBOIT extended an open invitation to the Japanese business community to visit the province and discover its diverse investment and tourism potential.

During the visit, the KPBOIT team gave a comprehensive briefing on the province's growing business landscape, investment-friendly policies, and the proactive initiatives taken to attract foreign investment.

Special focus was placed on sectors with high growth potential including Information Technology, Agriculture, and startups.

The visit culminated in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between KPBOIT and Frontier LLC, aimed at fostering mutual cooperation in the fields of IT, Agriculture, and development of the startup ecosystem in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Speaking on the occasion, Secretary Industries, Commerce & Technical Education / CEO KPBOIT Masood Ahmad, appreciated the relentless efforts of the KPBOIT team in building international linkages and facilitating foreign investors. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to creating a conducive environment for business and investment in the province and stressed the need for a long-term strategic plan to support incoming investment initiatives.

GHSS Naudeh Payan shines in board exams F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Government Shaheed Ameen Khan Higher Secondary School Naudeh Payan has produced exceptional results in the recent board examinations, with 14 students securing A+ grades and 33 achieving A grades.

According to the school administration, students who secured first, second, and third positions in internal assessments also performed well in the board exams. Muhammad Hassan secured 561 marks, Abdul Basit 554, and Zubair Khan 550 marks. Among the top scorers, Asadullah obtained 1,015 marks, Akash scored 1,016, and Khaleel secured 983 marks. The school principal commended the efforts of the students and teaching staff, terming the results a reflection of academic dedication and institutional discipline.

Light breeze and rain cuts power for hours: Residents

Sajjad Muhammad Khan

PESHAWAR: Residents of the densely populated areas of University Road Shaheen Town, Gharibabad, and surrounding neighborhoods in Peshawar are facing severe difficulties due to prolonged and unannounced electricity load shedding. Locals report that even the slightest breeze or a few drops of rain cause the electricity to disappear for an indefinite period.

According to details, frequent and extended power outages have become a daily ordeal, especially in areas like Shaheen Town. Citizens say that during windy or rainy weather, power is immediately cut off and often not restored for several hours, leaving residents in distress.

Despite receiving inflated electricity bills in recent months, residents claim they continue to make time-

ly payments. However, there is still no reliable system in place for uninterrupted power supply. Voltage fluctuations, repeated tripping, and unscheduled load shedding have disrupted daily life, household routines, and business operations.

Students' education, patients' comfort, and small-scale businesses are all suffering as a result. Residents have called on

relevant authorities - particularly PESCO, NEPRA, and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government - to take immediate and effective action to resolve this critical issue.

Locals have warned that if the situation continues, they will be left with no choice but to launch a protest movement, for which all responsibility will rest on the concerned departments.



The bloody verdict of Degari: Love, honour, tribal justice and silent graves

Khawaja Wajih u Din

On the outskirts of Quetta, in the town of Degari, a tragic incident unfolded-one that not only claimed two lives but cast a dark shadow over the institutional infrastructure of the country, the futures of nine children, and two tribes. While the event has now gripped social media, its roots stretch back weeks-deep, painful, and quietly devastating.

A video circulating in the media, where a woman and a man were shot repeatedly, upset many of us so much that people like me had sleepless nights. They were called Sheetal and Zarak. Initial news on social media was that they had married for love and died for it. The sympathy wave became much stronger. However, later

their names were revealed to be Bano and Ihsan, both already married and had five and four children respectively from other spouses. It was also revealed that the woman and the man loved each other and started living together. Some say they were married, but there are people who say that she was not married with the man (Ihsan) as she was already in a matrimonial bond with her husband, Noor Muhammad. After a lot of outcry on social media, the government started action. The Chief Minister of Balochistan and the IGP have also made statements. Many people have been arrested. A post-mortem report indicates the occurrence was on June 4, 2025.

In the context of customary law, the incident was considered a stain on col-

lective honor and tradition. The wound festered silently. Two years later, a reconnection with her former family was made, and Bano was persuaded to return. Under the leadership of the tribal elder, it was decided she would be accepted back. The man from the Sarmalani tribe was fined under tribal custom, and the matter was resolved quietly-kept within a circle of trusted individuals.

The matter was aggravated when the Sarmalani man, unable to let go, kept returning-pleading for her to return, challenging decisions, and stoking tensions. Days before Eid-ul-Adha 2025, the situation escalated. Her relatives eventually captured him. She was called back from Quetta, and then both were executed-shot dead.

Among the Baloch people,

particularly in parts of Balochistan (Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan), tribal customs and codes of honor-known broadly as "Balochi Riway" (customs)-hold immense weight in social life. One of the most controversial and tragic manifestations of these customs is the practice of honor killings, locally tied to notions of "Ghairat" (honor) and "Siakhari" (sexual impropriety). With the weak judicial and justice-seeking setups, customs have flourished unabated. People have few options because either the government system isn't at all in place or it is not able to deliver and does not come up to the expectations of the people.

Where was the state? Where were the voices of justice when it mattered? The reality is that both fam-

ilies had already made their decision in silence. No police complaint. No tribal battle. Just a quiet end because in such cases, truth, dignity, and tradition are often buried in the same manner.

This is not an isolated case. Countless similar incidents occur across Pakistan, often without any record, prosecution, or outcry. When a woman exercises her right to marry by choice, the consequence is frequently fatal. Yet not every story ends in bloodshed. There are instances where dialogue and understanding prevailed, where families embraced change peacefully. I personally adjudicated upon a case of such nature, where a Pakhtun father forgave his daughter for her marriage of choice.

The problem arises when

ego, power, and distorted concepts of honour override law and humanity. Not every Baloch or person in the rest of Pakistan thinks or acts the same. Like any society, there are those who resist violence and those who cling to it. The story in question is not just about a woman or a man-it is about children, tribes, systems, institutions, justice delivery, and generations to come. It is a moment that demands empathy, not sensationalism. We should be focusing more on institutional development rather than declaring the deceased as having died for love.

Unfortunately, we have turned social media into a sacred stage for outrage, where posting a corpse becomes a badge of honour. Without verification or thought, we become judge and jury-forgetting that a single

post can destroy families, reputations, and futures.

As far as the law is concerned, the legislation is the Criminal Law (Amendment) (Offences in the name or pretext of Honour) Act, 2016. This Act has amended sections 290, 302, 309, 310, 311, 338E, and 345.

Fasad-fil-arz, a concept used to decide the severity of punishment awarded, including the offender's past convictions, the extreme nature of the offence, and the offender being a danger to the community, now includes offences committed in the name of honour. The application of this concept automatically gives rise to severe punishments for honour crimes.

Murder committed in the name of honour is punishable with death or imprisonment for life.

For murder committed in the name of honour, even if the accused is pardoned by the Wali or other family members of the victim, the Court will still punish the accused with imprisonment for life.

Courts can only punish when there is a complainant. Here, there is none-and likely never will be. The silence is deafening. It is time to listen to that silence, to confront the causes, to reform the laws and mindsets that fuel such tragedies. Let this not be another story we scroll past in search of viral emotion.

This is a call for reflection. A call for reform. If ignored, these nameless murders and silent graves will keep filling our history-and we will remain mere spectators.

(The writer is former Registrar PHC)



In brief

Site allocates for taxi stands F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: The local administration identified an alternative site, adjacent to the tehsil premises on Saturday to relocate various taxi stands (Addas) from inside the main bazaar of Landi Kotal. It is to be stated here that various local taxi stands, established in the bazaar have caused a permanent blockade of the roads and on the complaints of the residents, the Assistant Commissioner (AC), Landi Kotal Afraseyab Zubair directed the concerned officials to seek a lasting resolution of the issue. Tehsildar Landi Kotal, Temoor Afridi along with traffic in-charged, Landi Kotal bazaar Naikamal Afridi and other officials inspected the site and assigned it for the taxi stands of Kam-Shelman, Loy-Shelman, Mukhtar Khel, Shiekmal Khel, Piro Khel and Mirdad Khel villages of Landi Kotal. The relocation of the taxi stands will be carried out in four days to ensure smooth traffic flow in the bazaar, the official said. AC, Landi Kotal urged the taxi stands owners to cooperate with administration in the best interest of the masses and shift the Addas to the designated location and assist them to clean the bazaar of all encroachments. The locals expressed their satisfaction over the replacement of the Addas from inside the bazaar and said the initiative will not only encourage visitors to visit there but will also enhance local trade.

Events started at schools F.P. Report

SHANGLA: In celebration of Pakistan's Independence Day 2024, schools across Tehsil Chakesar, district Shangla, held spirited events and competitions under the directives of the Sub-Divisional Education Officer (Chakesar) and the supervision of Assistant Sub-Divisional Education Officer, Circle Chakesar, Najibullah. Assistant SDEO Najibullah visited several schools, attended the events, and praised the students' performances. He took part in flag-hoisting ceremonies and even joined the students in singing national songs. In his speeches, Najibullah highlighted the significance of independence, reminding students that Pakistan was achieved through immense sacrifices and that protecting it is the duty of every citizen. He urged students to not only excel academically but also uphold moral values, discipline, and patriotism in their daily lives. The events included speeches, national songs, and quiz competitions on Pakistan's history, which were warmly appreciated by parents, teachers, and local community members. Teachers remarked that such activities are vital in instilling national awareness and unity among the younger generation.

Two profiteers arrested F.P. Report

SARGODHA: The district administration arrested two shopkeepers over profiteering in various parts of city, here on Saturday. According to official sources, the price control magistrates inspected various points in the city and found that shopkeepers namely — Waris and Ashraf — were involved in profiteering. The magistrates got registered cases and also imposed fines on them.

Sterilization of instruments and proper waste segregation termed vital

Haleem Asad

LOWER DIR: Speakers at a workshop held at Chakdara said that healthcare workers were at greater risk due to their direct exposure to patients, and urged strict adherence to protective measures to safeguard both staff and clients.

A day long training workshop on "Infection Prevention, Ensuring Safe Service Delivery" was jointly organized by the Population Welfare Department (PWD), Lower Dir, and the Indus Hospital Infection Prevention Chapter at the Reproductive Health Services Centre (RHSC) in Chakdara.

The workshop began with welcome remarks from District Population Welfare Officer (DPWO) Kinan Pasha. In his lecture, Dr Asif Khan highlighted the growing prevalence of infectious diseases in the country, particularly HIV cases in Lower Dir. He stressed that healthcare workers were at greater risk due to their direct exposure to patients, and urged strict adherence to protective measures to safeguard both staff and clients.

The session included demonstrations on disinfection and sterilization of instruments, as well as proper waste segregation and disposal methods. Dr Khan emphasized that the correct use of protective gear during clinical examinations and surgical procedures is essential for preventing infections. Kinan Pasha praised the efforts of the Indus Hospital Infection



Prevention and Control Unit, expressing hope that the training would have a lasting impact on safe service delivery. Certificates of appreciation were presented to Dr Khan and the RHSC staff.

School building: Residents of Danwa, a village near Timergara, expressed concern over the deteriorating condition of the Government Primary School for boys, established in 1963, saying the building poses a serious threat to students' safety. The school, located on the bank of a seasonal stream, is at heightened risk of damage in case of flooding, locals said. They warned that the structure's vulnerability endangered the lives of hundreds of boys and girls studying there, yet no action has been taken by the authorities.

The residents urged the education department to build protective embankments along the stream and carry out urgent repairs and reconstruction work to ensure the safety of the stu-

dents.

Breastfeeding: The Lower Dir District Health Office, in collaboration with UNICEF and the Integrated Nutrition Programme, organized a seminar and awareness walk to promote breastfeeding at Timergara here the other day. Lady health workers, nurses, nutrition staff, and community members took part, carrying placards and banners highlighting the benefits of mother's milk.

Speakers, including DHO Dr Niaz Muhammad Afridi, said breastfeeding is a complete diet that supports a child's mental, physical, and immune development. Citing provincial statistics, they noted that while 64pc of births occur in government hospitals, only 22pc of newborns are given their mother's first milk. They urged parents, scholars, teachers, and media to spread awareness to improve child health and reduce infant mortality.

Matric result exposes Edu Dept performance

F.P. Report

KARAK: In the light of the annual academic results of the board, it has become necessary to have a surgical operation in educational institutions because the results of the reduction in the incidence of cheating have exposed the teaching performance of teachers and it has become clear that teachers who get academic degrees and government jobs through cheating and money or political recommendations have succeeded in making their own and their children's future prosperous, but they are responsible for making the educational future of the new generation dark.

The main reason for the

educational decline is continuous political interference in educational institutions and the construction of unnecessary primary schools to recruit class four for political loyalists, because there are also villages where there are eight to ten male and female primary schools in an area of one and a half to two square kilometers, some of which have forty students and some have fifty. Some have one teacher, some have two. For whom it is not possible to teach six classes.

The appointment of local teachers at the village council level and the establishment of PTC committees consisting of incompetent and illiterate people

are the other major reasons for the collapse of the education system. The appointment of illiterate and incompetent degree holders to responsible posts on political grounds. Teachers and students playing with mobile phones during teaching hours and the lack of checks and balances in educational institutions are the reasons for the destruction of the education system. There are libraries and books in schools, but there are no people available to read these books and learn from them. Without realizing these problems, the educational revolution is a dream. And this dream will lead to the destruction of the coming generations.

PASCO negligence led to fungus attacks on wheat

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Negligence and carelessness by officials and staff at the PASCO center in Kaleke have reportedly resulted in millions of rupees worth of wheat being infested with fungus and insects. Locals allege that instead of disposing of the spoiled grain, the officials have begun drying it and selling it for public consumption, a move that could expose the poor to serious diseases. The revelations have sparked a wave of anger among public and social circles.

According to reports, during the recent spell of heavy rains, PASCO officials failed to take appropriate precautionary measures at several procurement centers, including those in Sukheke, Kot Sarwar, and Kaleke. As a result, large stocks of wheat stored at these locations were submerged in water, rendering them unfit for human consumption.

At the Kaleke center, the wheat not only suffered water damage but also became infested with fungus and insects. Residents claim that the spoiled grain is being dried and redistributed instead of being destroyed, thereby endangering public health.

Outraged citizens have called on senior PASCO authorities and the provincial government to take immediate notice, hold those responsible accountable, and ensure that fungus-contaminated wheat is not supplied to the public.

Meanwhile, Deputy General Manager PASCO,

responding to the allegations, stated that the recent heavy rains damaged wheat stored at lower levels in certain centers. "We took immediate action to segregate the damaged wheat from the stocks," he said. "A special committee has been formed to investigate the matter, and strict departmental action will be taken against those found responsible in light of the inquiry findings."

Meanwhile, In Hafizabad, celebrations marking "Hasool-i-Azadi sy Tahaffuz-i-Azadi tak" are in full swing, with a series of Independence Day and "Battle for Truth" events being held across the district. The district administration and Municipal Committee have beautifully decorated all government buildings, main squares, intersections, roads, and key public places with green flags, banners, bunting, and dazzling illuminations.

Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad, Abdul Razzaq, stated that in connection with Independence Day and the Battle for Truth, national song and speech competitions are being organized in educational institutions. During these programs, teachers and guest speakers are acquainting students with the journey "Hasool-i-Azadi sy Tahaffuz-i-Azadi tak," as well as the tireless efforts and sacrifices of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Allama Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, and other leaders of the Pakistan Movement. Special tributes are also being paid to the bravery, courage, and eternal

sacrifices of the Pakistan Armed Forces in defending the nation.

As part of the festivities, the Deputy Commissioner's Office, along with the Municipal Committee, Education, Health, District Council, Revenue, Assistant Commissioner offices, and other government departments, have been adorned with attractive lighting. Additionally, key locations such as Jinnah Chowk, Kalma Chowk, Fountain Chowk, and Qila Sahib Singh Chowk, as well as various main roads and public spaces, have been decorated with colorful illuminations and electric lights.

Two killed in firing

F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: Two persons were killed in a firing incident that took place near Shehbaz Khail area of Lakki Marwat, tv channels quoting police sources reported.

According to initial reports, unidentified motorcycle opened fire at a Rickshaw passing through Shehbaz Khail area of Lakki Marwat.

As a result of firing, a man and his wife died on the spot. Police team after receiving reports rushed to the site and shifted the dead to hospital. Police team have also started search operation to trace the culprits behind this firing incident.

Officials directed to expedite work on projects F.P. Report

MARDAN: Provincial Minister for Food Zahir Shah Toru has urged departments responsible for public infrastructure to accelerate the pace of work on ongoing development projects and ensure their timely completion for the benefit of the public.

He made these remarks while presiding over a review meeting held at the office of the Deputy Commissioner Mardan regarding development works under DDP-I. The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner Finance and Planning Syed Fahad Ifikhar, Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Eid Nawaz Sherani, and officials from the Communication and Works Department, Public Health Engineering, Local Government, and Tehsil Municipal Administration.

The meeting focused on development schemes particularly in the minister's constituency, including projects related to schools, roads, hospitals and other public facilities. Challenges hindering progress were also discussed in detail.

The minister directed authorities to ensure the early completion of pending works at the Mardan Children's Hospital and the District Headquarters Teaching Hospital. He also called for expediting the dualization of the Nave Kali Toru Road and for immediate staff deployment at newly completed schools. Zahir Shah Toru further instructed officials to visit project sites regularly, gather public feedback, and ensure that all schemes are executed in line with public expectations and prescribed standards.

Sports festival kicks off F.P. Report

TANK: The "Maika-e-Haq Sports Festival" has begun in Tank, in collaboration with the Department of Sports, to commemorate Independence Day. The festival will run until August 14th.

On the first day of the festival, traditional wrestling matches were held, drawing a large crowd of enthusiasts. Wrestlers from Tank, Dera Ismail Khan, and Punjab participated in the event, showcasing their skills and receiving applause.

District Sports Officer Irfanullah Betni was the chief guest at the wrestling event. He stated that the sports festival aims to engage youth in positive activities and promote traditional sports. The festival will feature volleyball, javelin throw, cricket, and football competitions at various venues. The Department of Sports is committed to utilizing all resources to promote sports and develop playing fields. At the conclusion of the wrestling event, cash prizes and trophies were distributed among the top-performing athletes.

IJT hold protest F.P. Report

BUNER: Islami Jamiat e Tulba (IJT) held protest demonstration in favor sustainable peace in front of Buner Press Club. The protesters were holding banners and placards with slogans like "Students want peace. Students are against terrorism. Students need peace to get education".

The protesters also raised slogans for peace. District leader of the IJT Ikramullah addressed the protesters. Ikramullah declared that education, employment, and healthcare are the fundamental rights of all citizens. He emphasized that these fundamental rights are not possible without peace. He declared peace as the top priority.

IJTexpressed concern over the poor law and order situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and demanded that the federal and provincial governments shall unite against terrorism and provide a peaceful environment to the students and the public so that the students can study with full dedication and the public can earn their livelihood without fear and can earn two times meals a day with dignity and should return home safely with food for the children in the evening, and not let its corpse reach the house.

Conference highlights climate change threats to hilly agriculture



Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: The first three-day international conference on "Climate Change and Hilly Agriculture" concluded in Kanju Township Swat, organized by Agricultural University of Swat. The conference brought together agricultural experts, researchers, university professors, students, government and non-government representatives, and farmers from Pakistan and abroad, including Australia, China, and Afghanistan.

Experts emphasized the growing impact of climate change on Pakistan's agriculture, particularly in moun-

tainous regions like Swat, Dir, Chitral, and Shangla. These areas face severe threats due to their dependence on rainwater, limited land, and traditional farming methods. Pakistan is among the top 10 countries most affected by climate change.

The conference highlighted the challenges faced by farmers, including rising temperatures, unpredictable rainfall, drought, floods, and soil fertility loss. Dr. Daud Jan, Vice Chancellor of Swat Agricultural University, stated that the university has established a special department for mountain agriculture research and promotion. The participants

demanding urgent measures to protect hill agriculture, train local farmers, and introduce climate-resilient crop varieties. A joint declaration was issued, suggesting that promoting "climate-resilient agriculture" can pave the way for sustainable agricultural development in hill areas.

The conference aimed to exchange experiences, research papers, and inform policy-making institutions about specific agricultural problems in hill areas. Certificates were awarded to participants, and the declaration emphasized the need for collective action to address climate change challenges.

KUST holds 12th Senate meeting



Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: The 12th Senate meeting of Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST) was held under the chairmanship of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Higher Education, Mr. Mina Khan Afridi. The meeting focused on key financial and administrative matters, with members expressing satisfaction over the university's fiscal discipline and strategic development initiatives.

The session was attended by MPA Shafi Jan, Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Syed Zafar Ilyas, Registrar Zilladar Khan, Director Finance Muhammad Zafar Khan, and other Senate members. During the meeting, the

university presented its closing balance for the fiscal year 2024-25, amounting to PKR 180.839 million. Out of this, PKR 80 million was transferred to the university's reserve fund. For the fiscal year 2025-26, the university projected total revenue of PKR 1,798.748 million against expected expenditures of PKR 1,786.967 million - resulting in a surplus budget of PKR 11.781 million.

Minister Mina Khan Afridi praised the university's revenue generation strategy and lauded its overall financial management. He also announced a special grant of PKR 74.900 million from the provincial government for the university, further reinforcing official support for

its development plans.

The meeting also reviewed the university's second-year performance under its Five-Year Strategic Plan (2023-28). Additionally, the third-party audit report for FY 2023-24 was presented and unanimously endorsed by the Senate. Other key documents tabled and approved during the session included the revised estimates for 2024-25, budget projections for 2025-26, and the financial roadmap for 2026-30.

Concluding the meeting, Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Syed Zafar Ilyas presented a commemorative shield to the Minister for Higher Education in recognition of his continued support for the university's academic and financial progress.

August 14 celebration starts at Orakzai

F.P. Report

KOHAT: The Independence Day celebrations have formally been inaugurated at Government Higher Secondary School Andkhel and Government Higher Secondary School Kalaya under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government "Awami Agenda" Program.

On this occasion, students enthusiastically participated in events including speech competitions, tableaux, quiz and singing national songs. The events were supervised by the District Education Officer Orakzai who highly praised

the students' passion and performance. Students who excel at the district level would advance to the divisional level competitions.

Survey of road linking completed: On the special directions of the MNA Shehryar Khan Afridi and MPA Daud Shah Afridi, the survey for a 14-Kilometre long road connecting Sur Gul, Kamar Dhand, and Chumbay has been completed.

According to the officials, the completion of this project will facilitate local transportation, boost agricultural and commercial activities and accel-

ate the regional development. The project will be executed in accordance with modern construction standards to ensure durable and safe travel facilities for the public.

Furthermore, the concerned departments have been directed to complete the remaining phases of the project in time so that citizens may benefit from this facility at the earliest. The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa continues to implement its development program for the public welfare and the improvement of basic infrastructure in full swing.

Independence Day celebration arrangements in full swing

F.P. Report

LARKANA: Mayor Larkana, Advocate Anwar Ali Luhur, has formed a committee to oversee the arrangements for the 14th August Independence Day celebrations on Saturday. Municipal Commissioner Larkana, Dr. Javed Ahmed Abbasi, has been appointed as Chairman, while Council Member Shahzaib Khan Abro has been made Secretary/Focal Person.

Additionally, Advocate Qadir Piryal Domki, Nisar Ahmed Mugheri, and Anthony Sothra have been appointed as members of the committee.

Mayor Larkana has directed the committee chairman and all members to complete the Independence Day arrangements as soon as possible. On 14th August, following the mayor's instructions, the Larkana Municipal Corporation will organize an Independence Day ceremony at the Municipal Stadium, which will be celebrated in a grand and dignified manner.

Protest held against

police failure in murder case: A resident of Motanpur locality of Ratodero city, along with his family, protested in front of the Press Club. On this occasion, laborer Muhammad Khan Lolai said that I am a very poor laborer and I feed my children by working.

He alleged that my 16-year-old son Sajjad Ali Lolai used to run a snooker shop near Shahdadkot stop in Ratodero city. On April 17, over a trivial matter, influential Khalid Hussain Lolai along with his friends shot and killed my son innocently and fled. When we were going to the police station to file a case, the influential people threatened us and we were sent back. They demanded from the DIG Police and SSP Larkana to file a case against my son's killers at Ratodero police station and give exemplary punishment to the accused so that justice is served for my son's blood.

Meanwhile, continuing the tradition of celebrating Independence Day from 1 to 14 August, a grand and

dignified ceremony titled "Mouarka E Haq Banyan Al-Marsoos" was held at Government Girls Degree College Badeh.

The special guests of the ceremony were the Chairman District Council Larkana Ajaz Ahmed Leghari, DC Larkana Wajahat Ghafoor Mirani, Additional Director Colleges Ajaz Ahmed Khaskheli, college-related officers, students and students participated in large numbers and raised slogans of Pakistan Zindabad & Pak Fauj Zindabad. On this occasion, the national flag of Pakistan was hoisted and a sapling was planted in the college park.

After that, gifts of Sindh culture Ajrak were presented to them. After that, gifts, tableaux and speeches were made by the college students, after which prizes and certificates of appreciation were issued to the students. Addressing the ceremony, the leaders said that our beloved country Pakistan Independence includes the sacrifices of the Pakistan Army and our elders.



How a cartoon skull became a symbol of defiance in Indonesia

JAKARTA: In the popular Japanese anime One Piece, black flags bearing a skull with a straw hat are carried by a rowdy crew of pirates who have made it their mission to challenge a draconian regime and fight for freedom. But in July, these emblems started popping up across Indonesia - along doorways, on the backs of cars, and painted on walls.

For many, they were a response to Indonesian leader Prabowo Subianto's call for Indonesians to fly their national red and white flag ahead of the country's Independence Day on 17 August. Instead, some Indonesians chose to raise these pirate flags, known as Jolly Rogers, as a symbol of their discontent, with many criticising what they say is an increasingly centralised government led by Prabowo. But the movement has not been well received by all. Earlier last week, the country's Deputy House Speaker criticised the flag displays, calling it an "attempt to divide the nation". Another lawmaker even suggested it could be treason. One Piece, first published in 1997 as a manga by Eiichiro Oda, is one of the most popular franchises in the world. The manga has sold more than 520 million copies while the TV series has run for more than 1,100 episodes.

The series has a large and dedicated fan base in Indonesia, where Japanese anime is well loved. In the same way the pirates in the series, led by their leader Monkey D Luffy, raise the Jolly Rogers as a symbol of freedom against their government, some Indonesian residents say raising the flag is a "symbol that we love this country, but don't completely agree with its policies". The anime reflects the injustice and inequality that Indonesians

experience, said Ali Maulana, a resident of Jayapura city in the Papua province. "Even though this country is officially independent, many of us have not truly experienced that freedom in our daily lives," he told BBC Indonesian.

For him and many others, the decision to fly the flag was a response to a speech given by President Prabowo in late July. "Raise the red and white flag wherever you are. Red represents the blood shed for our independence, white represents the purity of our souls," Prabowo had said. Dendi Christanto, who owns the Wik Wiki apparel store in Central Java, said he has received "thousands of orders" for the flags following the president's speech. "Since the end of July, I received hundreds of orders a day from all over Indonesia," Dendi told news outlet Jakarta Post. Some top officials however, have been less than impressed. Deputy House Speaker Sufmi Dasco Ahmad, widely regarded as Prabowo's right-hand man, described the movement as "a coordinated attempt to divide the nation". "We must collectively resist such actions," he had said earlier last week. Another lawmaker from the centre-right Golkar Party, Firmansoebagyo, suggested that displaying these flags could even amount to treason. But, the country's state secretary minister Prasetyo Hadi said the president himself had "no objection" to the flags as a form of "creative expression".

"However, it should not be used to challenge or diminish the significance of the red and white flag. The two should not be placed side by side in a way that invites comparison or conflict," his office said in a statement. In Indonesia,

there are no laws that restrict the display of fictional flags, but the law stipulates that if they are flown alongside the red-and-white national flags, the country's flag must always be hoisted higher. Police in the capital Jakarta have said they are "monitoring the use of non-national flags and symbols that don't align with the spirit of nationalism, including pirate or fictional-themed flags". Indonesia's hard-won democracy, the third largest in the world, has faced growing challenges in recent years. Its popular former leader Joko Widodo rose to power as a promising democrat, but his one-of-us image lost some of its sheen towards the end of his second term, when he revived the death penalty for drug traffickers and appointed Prabowo, a controversial ex-general, as his defence minister. Public frustration has intensified since Prabowo took over as president last October. In February, thousands took to the streets to protest budget cuts and legislative changes that would allow the military to take a bigger role in government. "The red-and-white flags are too sacred for us to raise now," said one user on Instagram, in a post that has been widely shared. And while some lawmakers have criticised the display of the Jolly Rogers, others say they accept it as a form of public expression. They are a way for people to "convey their expectations", said Deputy Home Affairs Minister Bima Arya Sugiarto. "Such a form of expression is a natural phenomenon in a democracy." "This kind of symbolic action is better than street protests that could turn violent," said Deddy Yevri Sitorus from the opposition Democratic Party of Struggle. - BBC

Georgia jails journalist for slapping police chief

TBILISI (Reuters): A Georgian court sentenced journalist Mzia Amaglobeli to two years in prison for slapping a police chief in a case seen by activists as symbolic of diminishing freedoms in the South Caucasus country. Amaglobeli, a founder of two independent media outlets, was convicted by a court in Batumi, Georgia's second city, for slapping the official during a protest in October.

A video of the incident, published by Georgian media, shows her engaged in heated conversation with the police chief, Irakli Dgebuadze, before slapping him lightly across the face. Her defenders say it was not serious enough to constitute assault under Georgian law. The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists called the sentence "outrageous". In court this week, Amaglobeli called the charges "malicious" and "insulting", according to Georgian media.

Unexpectedly, the judge downgraded the charge from assaulting a police officer to using violence against a protector of public order, which carries a lighter sentence. Georgia, previously one of the Soviet Union's most democratic successor states after winning independence in 1991, has been roiled by more than a year of protests against the ruling Georgian Dream party, which critics say is steering the country in an authoritarian and pro-Russian direction. Amaglobeli's allies say her treatment contrasts with the failure to prosecute those behind a violent crackdown on protesters last year.

A joint statement by 24 Western diplomatic missions including European Union countries, Canada and Britain condemned Amaglobeli's sentencing and the "escalating intimidation of journalists". Among those present in the courtroom were diplomats from the European Union and Germany, France and Poland, as well as former Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili, a critic of the ruling party.

Georgians have taken to the streets nightly since November to voice opposition to a government decision to halt accession talks to the European Union, a reversal of a longstanding national goal in the country of 3.7 million. The protests have shrunk in size in recent months and most of the country's prominent opposition leaders have been jailed for refusing to appear in front of a parliamentary commission they have dismissed as a front for pro-government propaganda.



GAZA: People mourn the loss of Palestinian journalist Hassan Eslaih, killed in an Israeli attack on Nasser Hospital, in Khan Younis.

Ukrainians' trust in Zelenskiy dips after wartime protests, pollster finds

KYIV (Reuters): Public trust in Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy fell to its lowest level in around six months following rare wartime protests against a move to curb the power of anti-corruption watchdogs, a leading Kyiv pollster said.

The survey, by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, is the first by a major Ukrainian pollster to measure public sentiment since Zelenskiy sparked anger with a move to subordinate the agencies to a hand-picked prosecutor-general. Thousands of Ukrainians had rallied in Kyiv and other cities late last month against the fast-tracked measures, prompting Zelenskiy and his ruling party to quickly reverse course.

The KIIS poll, which began a day after the controversial vote on July 22, found that 58% of Ukrainians currently trust Zelenskiy, down from an 18-month high of 74% in May and 67% in February-March. The move against anti-corruption authorities last month had fuelled discontent in particular because of what critics described as the speed and lack of transparency with which the measures were passed. Fighting corrup-

tion and improving governance are key requirements for loan-dependent Ukraine to join the European Union, a step many consider critical to fending off future Russian pressure. While much smaller, the demonstrations had prompted comparisons to Ukraine's 2014 Maidan revolution, when protesters toppled a leader accused of graft and heavy-handed rule in favour of closer ties with the West.

KIIS found that those who distrust Zelenskiy cited corruption and his handling of the war as the top two reasons, at 21% and 20%, respectively. Trust had already been decreasing before the protests, it added, but the demonstrations "undoubtedly had an impact" on the continuing slide. Zelenskiy's lowest wartime trust rating was 52% in December 2024, according to KIIS. The latest survey involved more than 1,000 respondents across government-controlled Ukraine.

In a research note, executive director Anton Grushetskiy said Zelenskiy still enjoyed "a fairly high level of trust" but said the gradual decrease should serve as a warning. "The persistent downward trend is a worrying signal that requires atten-

tion and thoughtful decisions from the authorities," he wrote. Zelenskiy, after bowing to pressure and submitting new legislation reversing the controversial measures last month, said he "respects the position of all Ukrainians".

However, some protesters interviewed by Reuters said the scandal had at least somewhat altered their perception of Zelenskiy, whose office has also faced allegations of using wartime to centralise power. It has denied those charges. "On the first day of the protests, I thought about...tattooing #12414 simply as a reminder," said 22-year-old IT worker Artem Astaf'yev, referring to the controversial law's designation. A first-time protester, Astaf'yev added that he would probably not vote for Zelenskiy's ruling Servant of the People party in future polls. Elections are currently suspended under martial law. Others like Yuriy Fylypenko, a 50-year-old veteran, said the public outcry had proven that Ukraine's traditionally vibrant civil society could be stoked even in wartime. "We have been convinced that Ukraine is not sleeping, that Ukraine is full of potential to defend democratic principles."

Rayner asks China to explain redacted embassy plans

LONDON: Angela Rayner has given China two weeks to explain why parts of its plans for a new mega-embassy in London are redacted. The deputy prime minister's Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government sent a letter asking for further information and requested a response by 20 August, the BBC understands.

Beijing's plans for the new embassy have sparked fears its location - very near London's financial district - could pose an espionage risk. Residents nearby also fear it would pose a security risk to them and attract large protests. The BBC has contacted the Chinese embassy in London for comment. A final planning decision on the controversial plans will be made by 9 September, the BBC understands. In a letter seen by the PA news agency, Rayner, who as housing secretary is responsible for overseeing planning matters, asks planning consultants representing the Chinese embassy to explain why drawings of the planned site are blacked out. The Home Office and the Foreign Office also received copies of the letter. It notes that the Home Office requested a new "hard perimeter" be placed

around the embassy site, to prevent "unregulated public access", and says this could require a further planning application. There are concerns, held by some opponents, that the Royal Mint Court site could allow China to infiltrate the UK's financial system by tapping into fibre optic cables carrying sensitive data for firms in the City of London. Pro-democracy campaigners from Hong Kong also fear Beijing could use the huge embassy to harass political opponents and even detain them. Last month, the UK condemned cash offers from Hong Kong authorities for people who help in the arrest of pro-democracy activists living in Britain. Alicia Kearns, the shadow national security minister, said: "No surprises here - Labour's rush to appease Xi Jinping's demands for a new embassy demonstrated a complacency when it came to keeping our people safe. Having deluded themselves for so long, they've recognised we were right to be vigilant." Responding to security concerns earlier this week, the Chinese embassy told the BBC it was "committed to promoting understanding and the friendship between the Chinese and British peoples and the development of

mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries. Building the new embassy would help us better perform such responsibilities". China bought the old Royal Mint Court for £255m in 2018. At 20,000 square metres, the complex will be the biggest embassy in Europe if it goes ahead.

The plan involves a cultural centre and housing for 200 staff, but in the basement, behind security doors, there are also rooms with no identified use on the plans. Beijing's application for the embassy had previously been rejected by Tower Hamlets Council in 2022 over safety and security concerns. It resubmitted an identical application in August 2024, one month after Labour came to power. On 23 August, Sir Keir Starmer phoned Chinese President Xi Jinping for their first talks. Sir Keir confirmed afterwards that Xi had raised the embassy issue. Rayner has since exercised her power to take the matter out of the council's hands amid attempts by the government to engage with China after a cooling of relations during the final years of Conservative Party rule. Senior ministers have signalled they are in favour if minor adjustments are made to the plan. — BBC

Norway's Labour govt has narrow poll lead

OSLO (Reuters): Norway's ruling Labour Party government and its left-leaning allies are favourites to win next month's parliamentary election, albeit with a reduced majority of seats in what is likely to be a narrow vote, an opinion poll showed.

Labour Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre, who governs in a minority with support from smaller parties, hopes to secure a second four-year term in office and prevent the populist right-wing Progress Party or the Conservatives from taking power. In a surprise move, Støre in February named former NATO boss and ex-prime minister Jens Stoltenberg as his minister of finance, bolstering Labour's standing in the polls among voters concerned by the war in Ukraine and turmoil in global trade.

Labour and smaller groups on the left look set to win 88 seats in the 169-seat assembly, down from 100 in 2021 but ahead of the 81 seats seen for the centre-right opposition, the poll by the Opinion agency for ABC Nyheter and Alttinget showed. Labour's support in the July 28-August 3 poll stood at 26.7%, in line with the 26.3% it won in 2021 and ahead of the Progress Party, which seeks tax cuts and lower immigration, on 23.6% and the centre-right Conservatives on 15.8%.

More than 400 indirect deaths linked to LA wildfires

LOS ANGELES: More than 400 additional deaths are estimated to be linked to the wildfires that ravaged Los Angeles earlier this year, according to a new study. The figure, published in the medical journal JAMA, looks at deaths that have been attributed to factors caused by the wildfires, like poor air quality and delays in accessing healthcare.

It is a higher figure than the official death toll tallied by Los Angeles County, which counts deaths caused directly by the fires and jumped to 31 last month after additional human remains were found. The study comes as hundreds of wildfires burn across the US and Canada, prompting air quality advisories in cities like Chicago, Buffalo and New York. The Palisades and Eaton fires tore through the Los Angeles area in January, destroying thousands of structures and leading to the evacuation of more than 100,000 in the area.

The latest study revealed that around 440 people are estimated to have died as a

result of the wildfires between 5 January and 1 February. Researchers said they tallied the figure by looking at all deaths and their causes in Los Angeles during the period of the fires, and comparing it to similar data from previous years.

The results show that there were nearly 7% more deaths during the wildfires. Some are attributed to lung and heart conditions exacerbated by smoke or stress, while others are more indirect - like delayed healthcare treatment for dialysis or cancer patients as a result of fire-related disruptions. The authors said that the findings underscore the need for officials to count both direct and indirect fatalities of wildfires and other climate-related emergencies when trying to quantify their impact. "They also highlight the need for improved mortality surveillance during and after wildfire emergencies," the authors said, noting that their figures are provisional as there may have been additional fire-related deaths beyond the scope of

the study. In response to an inquiry from the BBC, a spokesperson for Los Angeles County Department of Public Health said the agency had "no specific comment on the study". "However, it is not unusual for emergencies or disasters to unfortunately result in either premature or excess deaths," the spokesperson said. "These types of incidents often overwhelm systems, disrupt normal life-sustaining services, and often expose people to harmful environments, leading to earlier-than-expected and more-than-expected deaths." Another study released in JAMA that looked at the aftermath of the 2023 Maui wildfires showed that 22% of adults in the region had reduced lung function, and half displayed symptoms of depression. The fires, which broke out in August 2023 and were the worst to affect Hawaii in recent history, killed at least 102 people and destroyed more than 2,000 structures. The authors of the Maui study said their results show the need for "sustained clinical

monitoring and community-based mental health supports" months after a climate disaster.

A second study on the Hawaii fires suggests that Maui saw the highest suicide and drug overdose rates in the month of the 2023 wildfires. Wildfires have become more frequent in recent years as a result of climate change, driven by hotter and drier weather that fuels fire spread. In addition to directly threatening lives and structures, smoke from wildfires has been shown to have adverse health effects on people. Wildfire smoke has been found to be harmful to certain immune cells in the lungs, with a toxicity four times greater than particulates from other types of pollution. This can have a long-term impact on cardiovascular health, experts have said. Older people, pregnant women and young children, as well as those with underlying health conditions, such as heart disease or asthma, are more likely to get sick, experts say. But the smoke can also impact healthy adults. — BBC

Indian village swallowed by mudslide: What happened?

NEW DELHI: More than 100 people are missing and at least four people have died after flash floods swept through the village of Dharali, in the north Indian state of Uttarakhand. Teams from the army and disaster response forces are operating in the area to rescue people trapped under debris, local authorities have said.

"A massive mudslide struck Dharali village in the Kheer Gad area near Harisil, triggering a sudden flow of debris and water through the settlement," the Central Command of the Indian Army said in a post on X. Flash floods in Uttarakashi, where Dharali is situated, were triggered by intense rainfall known as a "cloudburst", which caused the Kheerganga river to swell, at around

1:30pm local time (08:00 GMT). The India Meteorological Department (IMD) warned that heavy rainfall will continue for the next few days. A cloudburst is an intense downpour that delivers a large volume of rain in a short time. It is often accompanied by thunder and hail and can cause flash floods. At any given time, clouds blanket about 70 percent of the Earth's surface. Cloudbursts are often associated with cumulonimbus clouds, which contain large amounts of water.

The IMD said that over the past 24 hours, extreme rainfall of 21cm (8.3 inches) or more had been recorded in parts of northwest India, including Uttarakhand, where the flash floods happened - more than the 10cm (3.9 inches) of rain per hour

required to be classed as a cloudburst, according to the IMD. Cloudbursts tend to occur over a small geographical region of 20 to 30 square kilometres (7.7 to 11.6 square miles) Uttarakhand, which has a large amount of mountainous and often unstable terrain, is prone to monsoon-related flooding. Dharali village is nestled in the Himalayas between the villages of Harisil and Gangotri. Uttarakhand is particularly vulnerable to climate change given the fragility of the Himalayan region. In particular, it is exposed to excessive precipitation, cloudbursts, flood events and periods of very cold weather (cold waves), according to a study published in the International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction. — Aljazeera

TOKYO (AFP): While torrential rains lash China, Pakistan and parts of India, sweltering heat has enveloped Japan and South Korea as extreme weather claims hundreds of lives in the region. Climate change has made weather extremes more intense, frequent and unpredictable, scientists say.

This pattern is especially pronounced in Asia, which according to the World Meteorological Organization is warming nearly twice as fast as the global average. The region has lost \$2 trillion (£1.5 trillion) to extreme weather - from floods to heatwaves and droughts - over the past three decades, according to the annual Climate Risk Index survey. Japan marked its hottest day on record, with 41.8C (107F) registered in Iseaki city, Gunma prefecture. The country had also experienced its hottest-

ever June and July this year. Fifty-six people are believed to have died from heatstroke between mid-June and the end of July, Tokyo's medical examiner's office said earlier this week. Authorities have suspended some train services over concerns that the heat could warp or deform the rails. "I'm really concerned about global warming, but when it comes to my daily life, I can't live without turning on the air conditioner," an office worker in Japan told AFP news.

"I don't really know what I should be doing, I'm just desperately getting through each day." This intense heat is expected to ease a little in the coming days, with some parts of Japan expected to see as much as 200mm of rain in the coming days. This rain and briefly cooler air will allow some relief from the swelter. South Korea

marked a record streak of 22 "tropical nights" in July where temperatures exceeded 25C. Last month, the country's emergency services also reported a surge in calls about heat-related illnesses. Government agencies and workplaces have relaxed their dress codes to help employees work more comfortably and reduce dependence on air conditioning amid the heat. Parts of Vietnam are also baking in unprecedented heat, with Hanoi recording its first-ever August day above 40C. The capital city has turned into "a pan on fire" in the last few days, Nam, a construction worker, told AFP. It's a different picture in China, where floods across the country, from Shanghai to Beijing, have killed many in recent weeks.

Southern China has been battered by heavy rain, and emergency workers raced to clear debris as the region braced for more landslides and floods. Hundreds of flights were cancelled or delayed in Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong province. The flooded streets are threatening to worsen an outbreak of the mosquito-borne chikungunya virus in the province. Such rains are frequent in southern China at this time of the year, but have been enhanced further by tropical storm activity - more especially in the last month. Just last week, there were three active storms in the West Pacific, whilst prior to June, tropical storm activity was almost non-existent. Mountainous districts of the capital Beijing late last month were hit by deadly floods late last month which killed dozens including 31 residents in an eldercare home.

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Trump remade global trading system

PRESIDENT Donald Trump has remade the global trading system. He's just getting started. Trump's "reciprocal" tariff regime went into effect just after midnight, solidifying the new world order fueled Trump's long-standing - and oft-doubted - aspiration to reorient seven decades of global commerce. But the days leading up to this moment provide a window into a president who advisers tell CNN is increasingly emboldened, confident and unyielding in his belief that his unprecedented use of tariffs for, well, just about everything, hasn't carried any downside.

It's a view corporate executives, foreign leaders and a veritable phonebook worth of economists would hotly dispute, citing an array of warning signs in underlying economic data, earnings calls and geopolitical maneuvering. Trump is unbowed and set to aggressively expand his imprint on a new global system of trade in the weeks ahead. "Tariffs are his Swiss Army Knife - there's isn't a single thing that cross his desk that can't be solved by their utility," a senior administration official told CNN. "I think the experience of the last few months has proven that approach correct - and probably made the Swiss Army Knife more of a Swiss Army chainsaw." Trump's reciprocal tariffs are now in place, as are tariff-laden bilateral trade frameworks with countries that make up roughly 60% of the world's gross domestic product. Steel, aluminum, copper, auto and auto parts sector tariffs are active as well. Soaring sector-based levies on semiconductors, pharmaceuticals, lumber, critical minerals, aircraft, polysilicon and trucks are in process and will be rolled out in the coming weeks. The exact dates appear almost entirely up to Trump and his trade teams. The actual rates for those sector tariffs? Same, but by all accounts, only moving upward by the week with Trump recently setting the level for chips and semiconductors at "approximately 100%" and threatening up to 250% for pharmaceuticals. The official was relaying the observation about Trump's all-purpose use of tariffs on steroids at roughly the same time the Swiss president, who had scrambled to Washington in a last-ditch effort to avoid Trump's soaring new tariff rate on her country, was departing the capital Wednesday without a deal in hand. It was a rather colorful - if telling - coincidence.

World leaders and their trade teams scrambled to cut deals to ease new rates, only to be rebuffed. Business leaders or their highly-paid Washington sherpas insisted there were clear opportunities to secure exemptions and carveouts but have discovered there would be no easy path. "Trump is always listening, always taking offers," one lobbyist. "But yesterday's price is not today's price based on my sense of things - he wants big numbers, big commitments, big demonstrations of success." Hundreds of billions of dollars in corporate pledges and investment commitments have served as Trump's most coveted elements of bilateral trade framework, officials say. Trump has specifically cited those commitments as a way countries could "pay down" the threatened tariff rates. Trump's advisers have formulated plans to utilize those commitments to shore up US supply chain weaknesses and vulnerabilities. The structure, while still very much a work in progress and subject to some dispute between the US and counterparts, serves as an innovative and certainly unprecedented vehicle to address national security concerns in critical industries and products, officials say. Trump's view of the investment commitments is framed in a somewhat different manner.

"If you look at Japan, we're taking in \$550 billion, and that's like a signing bonus that a baseball player would get. They give a signing bonus of a million dollars, or \$2 million or \$20 million, or whatever the hell they give today," Trump said this week on CNBC. "So I got a signing bonus from Japan of \$550 billion. That's our money. It's our money to invest, as we like." In other words, Trump wants exactly what Apple CEO Tim Cook provided in the Oval Office on Wednesday with the announcement of a new commitment to invest \$100 billion in US jobs and suppliers. The customized glass and 24-karat gold statuette that Cook theatrically unveiled in the middle of the announcement didn't hurt either. Trump, just hours before he and Cook appeared together in the Oval Office, slapped 25% tariffs on India for their purchases of Russian energy. That levy, should it go into effect in three weeks, would raise US tariffs on all imports from India to 50% - one of the highest levels world-wide. The underlying reason for Trump's escalation, despite the predicate of depriving Putin's war machine of critical cashflow, was India's refusal to drop nearly all of its tariffs to US producers, multiple officials told CNN. Punishing tariffs on India, where Apple has a significant manufacturing footprint, would seem to be a major problem for a CEO like Cook.

But White House officials made clear that in the near term, existing exemptions on specific technology products meant Apple wouldn't take a hit in the near term. Trump, in an unexpected announcement during the event, made clear those exemptions would stand for the long term, too. "We're going to be putting a very large tariff on chips and semiconductors, but the good news for companies like Apple is, if you're building in the United States, or have committed to build, without question, committed to build in the United States, there will be no charge," Trump said. There are no shortage of questions about the final shape of the trillions in investment commitments outlined in corporate pledges and the trade frameworks with foreign counterparts. There is significant technical and legal work ahead on the bilateral frameworks, which were in many cases revised and reshaped by Trump's own hand in Oval Office sit downs and are now subject to some dispute in foreign capitals. But Trump's advisers hardly seem concerned about their ability to finalize the terms in the months ahead. "The method to hold countries and the companies in these countries to their commitments is, of course, the tariffs," the senior administration official said.

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Five ways the Russia-Ukraine war could end

Nick Paton Walsh

A Trump-Putin meeting has been floated by both sides for some time. So why might either side want it to happen now? US President Donald Trump wants to bring the force of his personality to bear on forging a deal, believing that six months of intransigence from Moscow might be overcome by meeting the Kremlin head face to face. He seems still to cling to the idea the Kremlin can be cajoled into stopping the war, despite his Russian counterpart recently suggesting the maximalist position that the Russian and Ukrainian people are one, and wherever a Russian soldier steps is Russia.

Russian leader Vladimir Putin wants to buy time, having already rejected a European, US and Ukrainian unconditional ceasefire proposal in May, offering instead two unilateral, short and inconsequential pauses. His forces are surging ahead on the front lines in a summer offensive that might bring him close enough to his goals that negotiations in the fall are over a very different status quo in the war. If the two men do meet, one apparent American objective is a trilateral summit with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to discuss an end to the war - the very summit format Russia rejected in Istanbul in May. The Russian purpose is likely to allow Putin to drag Trump back into the orbit of Moscow's narrative.

Still, a summit - floated before, delayed before - may happen this time, and it raises the question of how the war might end. Here are five possible scenarios: Putin agrees to an unconditional ceasefire: Highly unlikely. It's improbable that Putin would agree to a ceasefire in which the front lines stay as they are - the United States, Europe and Ukraine already demanded such a pause in May, under the threat of sanctions, and Russia rejected it. Trump backed away from sanctions, preferring low-level talks in Istanbul which went nowhere. A 30-day ceasefire earlier this year against energy infrastructure met with limited adherence or success. The Kremlin is currently turning incremental gains on the front line into strategic advantages and would see no point in stopping this

progress now, as it reaches its height. Not even the threat of secondary sanctions against China and India - who appear resistant to US pressure - will change that immediate military calculus for the remainder of the summer. Until October, at least, Putin will want to fight because he is winning.

Pragmatism and more talks: The talks could agree on more talks later, that seal in Russian gains when winter sets in, freezing the front lines militarily and literally around October. Putin may

overheating economy.

European powers have already formulated advanced plans for a "reassurance force" to be deployed to Ukraine as part of security guarantees. These tens of thousands of European NATO troops could sit around Kyiv and other major cities, providing logistical and intelligence help to Ukraine as it rebuilds, and create a sufficient deterrent that Moscow decides to leave the front lines as they are. This is the very best Ukraine can hope for.

mandate to join a war for land inside Ukraine. Putin moves forward. NATO fails to deliver a unified response. This is Europe's nightmare, but is already the end of a sovereign Ukraine.

Disaster for Putin: a repeat of the Soviets in Afghanistan: Russia could blunder on, expending thousands of soldiers' lives a week, for relatively small gains, and seeing sanctions erode his alliance with China, and revenue from India. Moscow's sovereign wealth fund financial reserves could ebb, and its revenues dip. Dissent among the Moscow elite could rise at how the Kremlin has dismissed diplomatic off-ramps in its war of choice, in favor of military doggedness and an unsustainable proxy conflict with NATO. Trump becomes a lame duck, and the US focus after the mid-term elections returns to traditional foreign policy norms of opposing Moscow and its backer Beijing.

In this scenario, the Kremlin could meet a moment where its resistance to the banal inconveniences of reality, and the economic hardship of its own people, turns toxic. Similar poor political calculus sustained the Soviets' ultimately fruitless occupation of Afghanistan in another war of choice. Similar moments of unexpected Kremlin weakness have already emerged in the Ukraine war, as when Putin's confidante, Yevgeny Prigozhin, appears to have stumbled into leading a shortlived revolt on the capital.

Putin is strong on the surface, until he appears frail, and then he might be exposed as critically weak. It's happened before to both an expansionist Soviet Russia, and Putin. The problem with this scenario is it remains the best hope of Western strategists who can neither entertain NATO's full entry into the war to help Ukraine win, nor Kyiv's ability to push Moscow back militarily.

None of the options are good for Ukraine. Only one of them spells the actual defeat of Russia as a military power and threat to European security. And none of them can spring from Trump meeting Putin alone, without Ukraine becoming part of any deal later.

CNN

Trump backed away from sanctions, preferring low-level talks in Istanbul which went nowhere. A 30-day ceasefire earlier this year against energy infrastructure met with limited adherence or success. The Kremlin is currently turning incremental gains on the front line into strategic advantages and would see no point in stopping this progress now, as it reaches its height

have taken the eastern towns of Pokrovsk, Kostiantynivka and Kupiansk by then, giving him a solid position to sit the winter out and regroup. Russia can then fight again in 2026, or use diplomacy to make these gains permanent. Putin might also raise the specter of elections in Ukraine - delayed because of the war, and briefly a Trump talking point - to question the legitimacy of Zelensky and even unseat him for a more pro-Russian candidate.

Ukraine somehow

weathers the two years ahead: In this scenario, US and European military aid to Ukraine helps them minimize concessions on the front line in the coming months, and leads Putin to seek to talk, as his military have yet again failed to deliver. Pokrovsk may fall and other eastern Ukrainian strongholds may be threatened, but Ukraine could see the Russian advance slow, as it has before, and the Kremlin could even feel the bite of sanctions and an

Catastrophe for Ukraine and NATO: Putin could correctly see the cracks in Western unity after a summit with Trump that improves US-Russian relations but leaves Ukraine to fend for itself. Europe could do their utmost to back Kyiv, but fail to tip the balance without American backup. Putin could see small gains in the east of Ukraine transform into the slow rout of Ukrainian forces in the flat, open terrain between the Donbas and the central cities of Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia and the capital. Ukrainian defenses could prove weak, and Kyiv's military manpower crisis turns into a political disaster when Zelensky demands wider mobilization to prop up the country's defense.

Kyiv's safety looks in peril again. Putin's forces move forwards. Europe's powers assess it would be better to fight Russia in Ukraine than later inside actual European Union territory. But Europe's leaders ultimately lack the political

Samuel Ramani

wants to stop the senseless killing of thousands of young people every week. Trump also wants to end a war that believes his predecessor Joe Biden enabled and cement his legacy as a peace president.

Aside from these sentimental and egoistic reasons, Trump also has a geopolitical rationale for ending the war in Ukraine. The Trump administration wants to redirect its focus on winning the spiralling geopolitical confrontation against China. It sees peace in Europe as a prerequisite for that reorientation and regards Russia as a potentially useful partner in the US's containment efforts against China. Due in part to the US's diverted focus, Trump has been forced to tread carefully in his trade war with China. Trump has eased export restrictions on technologically sophisticated US chips to China and exercised uncharacteristic efforts to avoid provoking Beijing. The cancella-

tion of Taiwanese President Lai Ching-Te's transit through New York underscored Trump's focus on avoiding a repeat of the tariff-induced escalations of the early spring.

Trump's closest allies have tried to spin these concessions as shows of strength against China. AI advisor David Sacks argues that easing export restrictions will make China more dependent on US chips and blunt its competitive edge. Nonetheless, the perception lingers that Trump is trying to appease China and appears more eager than President Xi Jinping to have an in-person meeting on a comprehensive trade deal. The Trump administration is convinced that ending the Ukraine war will give the US the bandwidth to pursue a more confrontational stance towards China. Secretary of State Marco Rubio depicted the Ukraine conflict as a US-Russia proxy war and Under Secretary of Defence Elbridge

‘STOP fighting the Brexit wars.’ That’s what some say, including some in my own party, when I insist on talking about Britain’s relationship with the EU. Now it is obviously true that we face many major and urgent problems: the economic doom loop; super-high immigration; a public order problem exemplified by the illegal protest this weekend in support of Palestine Action; and much more.

But these issues have a common thread: government ineffectiveness and ineffectuality. Much current frustration and fragility in British society stems from the fact that the government and the permanent state apparatus don't seem to be up to the job. The previous Conservative government, exhausted after an orgy of state authoritarianism never before seen in this country, became a purveyor of palliatives, almost a commentator on the country's difficulties, part of the problem rather than the solution.

Labour promised something different. But almost immediately their own authoritarianism, their woeful out-of-touchness with the country, and now the alternately Leftist and damagingly progressive predilections of their own backbenchers have put them in the same position. Once again, everything is too difficult to handle. The underlying reason for this is that, during the long years of EU membership, our political establishment forgot how to run the country. They looked outwards to Brussels and to international institutions for help. Gradually it became easier to outsource decision-making than think hard about anything themselves. Even now, most are happier deferring to the European Court of Human Rights than exercising real control. In short, most of our leaders have simply forgotten how to define the British national interest and pursue it.

This is why Labour keep telling us leaving the EU has been damaging and we must move back into its orbit. Unfortunately they have been offered the perfect backdrop for this argument by the mess the country is in. So it is not surprising, perhaps, that we get opinion polls telling us that Britons would now vote to Remain after all. But post hoc is not proper hoc. Leaving the EU may have preceded our current problems, but it is not the cause of them. Rather, it is a necessary step towards solving them. Having taken back control, it must now be exercised. As so often, the British people are clearer about this than their leaders. And an important YouGov poll this week, led by Dr Richard Johnson of Queen Mary University London, shows this unambiguously. The poll deliberately excluded any mention of the EU or Brexit, since these polarising terms tend to distort opinion by putting people immediately on their "team". Instead, it aimed to test real opinions about where power should sit. Voters were asked neutrally whether they thought that decisions across 20 policy areas, all largely or entirely subject to EU control while we were a member, should be taken by the UK Government, international institutions, or a mix.

The answer was clear. Across all 20 areas, an average of 60 per cent (70 per cent if you take out don't knows) of all voters wanted policies decided by the

British Government alone. This was consistent across all parties bar the Greens: 56 per cent of 2024 Labour voters and 57 per cent of Lib Dem voters thought the same. In short: people still want decisions about this country to be taken in this country - as they did in 2016. But Labour is doing the reverse. Its so-called "reset" with the EU is based on a fallacy - the belief that there is popular support for what it is doing.

After all, Labour have just signed away our right to set our food standards, but 65 per cent of voters - including a majority of every party including the Greens - think that the UK Government should control them. They have signed away our fishing grounds, but 55 per cent of voters think fishing policy should be decided by the UK. They defer to the ECHR on immigration, but 58 per cent of voters think the British Government should have the final say here too. That 58 per cent is a particularly relevant number in the week that the UK-France agreement on returns was ratified (in secret, by the way). That treaty, which enables us to return a few small boats arrivals in return for accepting a similar number of French asylum seekers, effectively outsources control. The French can refuse anyone we want to return, but will tell us nothing about the people they want to send to us. The YouGov poll says that 67 per cent of voters think this country should be able to refuse entry to foreigners who have been in prison - but France now decides whether we can actually exercise that control.

The agreement is of course - we have come to expect this - almost laughably biased against Britain in other ways. We must meet all the costs of returns in either direction. France can refuse anyone with outstanding human rights or other claims in our justice system. And the number of returns they will accept is not even in the treaty and is, apparently, a closely guarded state secret. Labour's customary flaccid approach to EU negotiations delivered the same result here as it did in the reset. But - as we learnt under Theresa May - if you signal you won't walk away, you inevitably get a bad agreement. How depressing it is that our leaders still have not learnt, or do not care to learn, that less on.

The message of this week's poll is that Labour are walking on thin ice. Whatever the current political vibes, the majority of the British people are not up for signing away the powers Boris Johnson and I painfully won back in 2020. That's why we are right to keep trying to stop them. There is a wider lesson too for the Right. You don't stop fighting the war until you have won it. There is a political market to reverse the reset and to finish the job that was largely, but not entirely, done in 2020: in short, to make the UK including Northern Ireland a fully self-governing state once again, under our own parliament, setting our own laws. This week's poll shows the British people want our government in charge and actually exercising the powers they now have. The party that understands why that is important and necessary, unites behind it, and campaigns for it, is the one that will succeed.

The Telegraph

Brexit has been a success

David Frost

‘STOP fighting the Brexit wars.’ That’s what some say, including some in my own party, when I insist on talking about Britain’s relationship with the EU. Now it is obviously true that we face many major and urgent problems: the economic doom loop; super-high immigration; a public order problem exemplified by the illegal protest this weekend in support of Palestine Action; and much more.

But these issues have a common thread: government ineffectiveness and ineffectuality. Much current frustration and fragility in British society stems from the fact that the government and the permanent state apparatus don't seem to be up to the job. The previous Conservative government, exhausted after an orgy of state authoritarianism never before seen in this country, became a purveyor of palliatives, almost a commentator on the country's difficulties, part of the problem rather than the solution.

Labour promised something different. But almost immediately their own authoritarianism, their woeful out-of-touchness with the country, and now the alternately Leftist and damagingly progressive predilections of their own backbenchers have put them in the same position. Once again, everything is too difficult to handle. The underlying reason for this is that, during the long years of EU membership, our political establishment forgot how to run the country. They looked outwards to Brussels and to international institutions for help. Gradually it became easier to outsource decision-making than think hard about anything themselves. Even now, most are happier deferring to the European Court of Human Rights than exercising real control. In short, most of our leaders have simply forgotten how to define the British national interest and pursue it.

This is why Labour keep telling us leaving the EU has been damaging and we must move back into its orbit. Unfortunately they have been offered the perfect backdrop for this argument by the mess the country is in. So it is not surprising, perhaps, that we get opinion polls telling us that Britons would now vote to Remain after all. But post hoc is not proper hoc. Leaving the EU may have preceded our current problems, but it is not the cause of them. Rather, it is a necessary step towards solving them. Having taken back control, it must now be exercised. As so often, the British people are clearer about this than their leaders. And an important YouGov poll this week, led by Dr Richard Johnson of Queen Mary University London, shows this unambiguously. The poll deliberately excluded any mention of the EU or Brexit, since these polarising terms tend to distort opinion by putting people immediately on their "team". Instead, it aimed to test real opinions about where power should sit. Voters were asked neutrally whether they thought that decisions across 20 policy areas, all largely or entirely subject to EU control while we were a member, should be taken by the UK Government, international institutions, or a mix.

The answer was clear. Across all 20 areas, an average of 60 per cent (70 per cent if you take out don't knows) of all voters wanted policies decided by the

British Government alone. This was consistent across all parties bar the Greens: 56 per cent of 2024 Labour voters and 57 per cent of Lib Dem voters thought the same. In short: people still want decisions about this country to be taken in this country - as they did in 2016. But Labour is doing the reverse. Its so-called "reset" with the EU is based on a fallacy - the belief that there is popular support for what it is doing.

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The Telegraph

Trump just may pull off his own Nixon-goes-to-China coup

PRESIDENT Donald Trump is on the cusp of a diplomatic breakthrough to end Russia's invasion of Ukraine. After his Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff travelled to Moscow on August 6, Trump expressed optimism about a trilateral summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky to facilitate a ceasefire.

Trump's grand bargain announcement is his trademark, but will it succeed? The early signals suggest that Trump faces an uphill struggle. Although Russia claimed that Witkoff's visit was "constructive," even Trump was forced to admit that it produced no major breakthroughs. Kremlin aide Yuri Ushakov expressed openness to a Putin-Trump bilateral meeting but did not endorse Witkoff's proposal to include Zelensky in the discussions. While Russia refrained from large-scale drone and missile

strikes on Kyiv this week, its summer offensive is firmly underway. Russian troops are incrementally advancing in northeastern Sumy and on the Donetsk battlegrounds of Pokrovsk and Kostiantynivka.

The best-case near-term scenario remains a temporary aerial ceasefire. Yet even this de-escalation could play into Russia's hands. In recent days, Ukrainian drones have disrupted air travel in Moscow, ignited a fire around Volgograd railway station and damaged a key oil refinery in Krasnodar Krai. A respite of the economic disruptions caused from these strikes would be beneficial for Russia as it mitigates the consequences of US secondary tariffs and sanctions. Despite these long odds and the possibility of near-term public humiliations, Trump remains devoted to ending the Ukraine war. There are many reasons for his unwavering focus on Ukraine. Trump's rhetoric frames his commitment in humanitarian terms as he

wants to stop the senseless killing of thousands of young people every week. Trump also wants to end a war that believes his predecessor Joe Biden enabled and cement his legacy as a peace president.

Aside from these sentimental and egoistic reasons, Trump also has a geopolitical rationale for ending the war in Ukraine. The Trump administration wants to redirect its focus on winning the spiralling geopolitical confrontation against China. It sees peace in Europe as a prerequisite for that reorientation and regards Russia as a potentially useful partner in the US's containment efforts against China. Due in part to the US's diverted focus, Trump has been forced to tread carefully in his trade war with China. Trump has eased export restrictions on technologically sophisticated US chips to China and exercised uncharacteristic efforts to avoid provoking Beijing. The cancella-

tion of Taiwanese President Lai Ching-Te's transit through New York underscored Trump's focus on avoiding a repeat of the tariff-induced escalations of the early spring.

Trump's closest allies have tried to spin these concessions as shows of strength against China. AI advisor David Sacks argues that easing export restrictions will make China more dependent on US chips and blunt its competitive edge. Nonetheless, the perception lingers that Trump is trying to appease China and appears more eager than President Xi Jinping to have an in-person meeting on a comprehensive trade deal. The Trump administration is convinced that ending the Ukraine war will give the US the bandwidth to pursue a more confrontational stance towards China. Secretary of State Marco Rubio depicted the Ukraine conflict as a US-Russia proxy war and Under Secretary of Defence Elbridge

Colby believes that this proxy war is undermining US efforts to thwart Chinese hegemony in the Indo-Pacific region. Getting Europe to purchase US weapons for Ukraine frees up financial capacity to tackle the Chinese threat and ending the Ukraine war will allow US defence-industrial supply chains to follow suit.

As the US sharpens its decade-and-a-half-long defensive pivot to Asia, Trump sees Russia as a potential long-term partner. The case for a "reverse Kissinger" courtship of Russia based on Moscow's latent frustrations with economic overdependence on China and the surrender of great power status that accompanies to it. While Russia hails its no-limits partnership with China in multi-lateral forums, it chafes at Beijing's efforts to capitalise on its diminished influence in the South Caucasus and Central Asia. The Kremlin is attuned to Trump's vision and actively seeks to exploit it. Russian Direct Investment

Fund chief Kirill Dmitriev's proposals for Arctic cooperation with the US and enticing promotions of Russian rare earth metals align with Trump's world-view.

The geo-strategic vision that underpins Trump's pursuit of peace in Ukraine is not without its logical fallacies. While most Russians still see themselves as European, Russian foreign policy is firmly enmeshed with the collective non-West. This makes diluting Russia's partnership with China and courting the US a difficult proposition. The perception that Trump is willing to reward Russian aggression in Ukraine could embolden China, even if US containment efforts towards Beijing intensify after a peace deal. Trump's combination of economic threats and diplomatic engagement with Russia align with his time-tested playbook. They could be the stepping stone for a new China-centric era in US foreign policy.

Epstein victims are a growing political threat to Trump

Stephen Collinson

THE women whom Jeffrey Epstein abused demand to be heard. And their voices - long suppressed, but now emerging powerfully and with courage - could further fuel the maelstrom around President Donald Trump and aides who dig the scandal deeper each time they try to end it. These are women who've been let down for years, at multiple levels, by a government that was supposed to keep them safe. Their families are victims, too, since abuse sows trauma through generations.

And it's happening again as the Trump administration refuses to release files about Epstein's life, which several of its members had promised to make public. CNN has reported that Attorney General Pam Bondi briefed Trump in May that his name was mentioned in the files, among those of other high-profile figures. Trump has never been investigated or charged over anything to do with Epstein, whom he knew in the 1990s and early 2000s. The White House says Trump threw Epstein out of Mar-a-Lago because he was "a creep." But hardly anyone at the White House ever mentions the young women whom Epstein used and abused.

"What they really need is for it to go away," Sky Roberts, the brother of one of Epstein's most prominent victims, Virginia Giuffre, told CNN's Erin Burnett on Thursday. "There's a lack of transparency here and what we are not hearing is ... we are not hearing the survivors' voices coming through," Roberts said. "This is a human issue, and I think we need to bring that back because we are dehumanizing survivors by not bringing justice forward." Giuffre took her own life in Australia, where she lived, earlier this year. In a sign of the administration's political priorities, there were no Epstein survivors represented at a Wednesday night White House meeting that addressed the crisis, CNN reported. Those in attendance included Vice President

JD Vance, Attorney General Pam Bondi and FBI Director Kash Patel. The meeting was moved from the vice president's residence amid a media storm. The focus at those White House talks appears to have been about ending a political problem rather than alleviating any further agony for people whose lives were blighted by Epstein and Maxwell. One Epstein accuser, Annie Farmer, told CNN's Kaitlan Collins on Thursday that she had reached out to Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche - who spent two days interviewing Epstein's jailed accomplice Maxwell last month - but had not heard back. Some victims and their families view the meeting as a political maneuver to find a way to refocus attention away from Trump.

"I hate that it has been politicized the way it is because I think we lose sight of the bigger picture in that," Farmer said on "The Source." "I think this is really about people using their power to harm others, and that is not a political issue," Farmer said, referring to Epstein's past conduct. "I think people on both sides care about the safety of children and I really hope that Trump understands that a message is being sent beyond just the individuals involved in this case to the wider community about the seriousness of these types of crimes." The question now is whether survivors and their families can coalesce as a political force as they seek to influence the administration's decision-making - even if they are seldom mentioned by MAGA media. Can they secure the recognition of which they were so often deprived by the justice system? Will their influence further complicate a controversy that the White House has downplayed and dismissed but that keeps growing? And could they add a new dimension of political exposure for a White House so far mostly concerned with extinguishing a scandal that is uniquely dangerous for

Trump - because it opened a rift between him and his base? Could that increased attention even make it more difficult for Trump to pardon Maxwell, if that is his intention?

It's nothing new that the powerful are ignoring the victims. It's been running on repeat for years. As young girls, these women were victimized by Epstein, a disgraced financier, in a sordid web of soliciting, abuse and underage sexual exploitation. They were also victimized by Maxwell, his onetime paramour, who was sent to prison for 20 years for grooming Epstein's young female victims - and abusing some herself. They were victimized by a lenient Florida plea deal in 2008 that allowed Epstein, an accused sex trafficker, to escape federal charges and a possible long prison term. He used the time he got back to perpetrate more horrendous crimes.

The opposite is true. Trump, increasingly agitated as the Epstein fallout drowns out his presidency, keeps blasting the entire Epstein drama as a "hoax" in remarks that only makes the anguish worse. He even called it B.S. on Wednesday. "It's not a hoax," Roberts told Burnett on Thursday, his voice breaking. "I think it's pretty clear that these survivors are not a hoax. These are people. It hurts. They are still healing. They had something taken from them that they can never get back."

The White House has tried other ruses to make the scandal go away. It has asked a judge to release grand jury testimony about the Epstein case, apparently hoping to slake demands for transparency by MAGA influencers. But the material is only a fraction of what the Justice Department controls. Then Blanche, Trump's former personal lawyer, interviewed Maxwell. Then, mysteriously, Maxwell was moved to a much more comfortable prison in a highly unusual show of lenien-

cy for a sex offender. This fueled warnings of a cover-up, since Maxwell has an incentive to help Trump politically: He has the power to pardon her or improve her conditions.

The contempt for the victims is "outrageous," Jennifer Freeman, a lawyer for some of those abused by Maxwell, told CNN's Collins on Wednesday. "When the voices are so strong from everyone else except for them. They're not given any attention whatsoever." Freeman lamented that those caught up in the Epstein political saga have been "ignoring the survivors over and over (in) one of the largest law enforcement failures in US history." The disrespect keeps on coming. In an interview with Newsmax last week, Trump was asked why Blanche met with Maxwell. "We'd like to release everything, but we don't want people to get hurt that shouldn't be hurt, and I would assume that was why he was there," Trump told Newsmax a week ago. His remark was ambiguous. But it seemed to prioritize people who came into contact with Epstein, including himself, rather than those who have already been hurt - the victims. CNN reported this week that audio tapes were made of the Maxwell interview and that officials are considering releasing a transcript. There is no indication of wrongdoing by Trump in his dealings with Epstein, Maxwell or in any other area of the case. He has never been charged or investigated. But there is growing scrutiny over how often he's mentioned in the Epstein files held by the Justice Department. Some victims want all of the Epstein files publicly released so any men who associated with the accused sex offender must account for what they knew about his activities. But they fear what will happen with Maxwell and the pardon that Trump keeps saying he has the constitutional authority to grant. Such an outcome would be another betrayal of those who have suffered so terribly already.

MUCH has changed in both the European Union and China, politically and economically, in the 50 years since they established diplomatic relations. Although neither the Chinese nor the EU economy is the largest in the world in terms of GDP, they are the biggest players in global commerce.

In global goods trade, the leadership position belongs to China, worth more than \$6 trillion, followed by the 27-member EU. Many people confuse the United States' economic leadership with its assumed leadership in global trade, but that is not true.

This is also important because, in the tariff war it has launched against the rest of the world, the US has, in principle, everything to lose if the EU and China were to form a strategic partnership or even a major free trade zone, which could later be joined by the rest of the US-targeted economies. It is important to understand that, unlike the tariff wars of the 1930s during the Great Depression, this is not a conflict of all against all, but rather of one country, the US, against the rest of the world. Therefore, the rational response should be coordinated action by the rest of the world against the US, following coordination between the two largest trading partners, the EU and China.

Yet despite being the world's two leading trading powers, trade between the EU and China is not balanced. From being virtually nonexistent in 1975, Sino-EU trade grew significantly after the turn of the century. But since the EU has always imported more from China than it has exported, its trade deficit with the Asian giant has been widening. To reduce its trade deficit, the EU could divert some of its potentially US-destined exports to China, and ensure the diversion is greater than any diversion of China's potentially US-destined exports to the EU. Such "asymmetric diversion" requires goodwill efforts from both sides. Regarding the trade channels that should be strengthened, we have two options - the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative and the EU's Global Gateway strategy - which can complement each other. Since more than 150 countries have signed cooperation agreements with China, includ-

Miguel Sebastián

ing Portugal and Greece, the EU should not view the BRI with suspicion. As for the Global Gateway, it is the EU's strategy to mobilize infrastructure investments worldwide, in order to promote smart, clean and secure connections in the digital, energy and transport industries, while strengthening the health, education and research sectors.

Although the Global Gateway strategy seeks to compete with the BRI, offering an alternative of public and private investment that is expected to mobilize up to 300 billion (\$351.56 billion) between 2021 and 2027, it should be considered a complementary channel. As a matter of fact, the creation of a joint EU-China working group to enhance the complementarity of the two initiatives could be a highlight of the China-EU Summit that began on Thursday. Beyond trade, the two sides have multiple areas of cooperation in investment. The EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment, though currently frozen, has the potential to boost economic ties between the two sides. And there are at least three regions where Sino-EU cooperation could be particularly productive: East Asia and Australia, where China holds a clear leadership role; Latin America, where China is filling the void left by the US and where European countries such as Spain have a significant presence in the services sector; and Africa, which despite its geographical and historical ties to Europe, is witnessing Chinese presence in critical infrastructure.

In particular, since Africa is the continent of the future, the EU and China should work together with African countries to help build a promising future for the continent, especially because a quarter of BRI investments are focused on Africa, and the inaugural milestone of the Global Gateway was the "Africa-Europe Investment Package". As for green development, Europe aims to become the first climate-neutral continent by 2050, while China seeks to peak its carbon emissions before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060. These goals demand shared innovation in clean energy, electric vehicles (EVs), and sustainable agriculture. China leads in solar panel

and EV battery production, whereas the EU excels in green hydrogen and sustainable architecture. Together, they can accelerate the global energy transition, and create millions of green jobs. Examples of such collaboration already exist in Envision's investments in wind energy in Spain and battery plants in Germany, with potential for more projects in Spain.

Moreover, China boasts a highly dynamic fintech ecosystem and is a global leader in AI and e-commerce, while the EU contributes robust data protection frameworks, industrial automation, and scientific research, which is suitable for the two sides to collaborate in smart manufacturing and Industry 4.0; artificial intelligence and ethical tech development; digital infrastructure in underserved regions; chip design, precision machinery and automation; and e-commerce, mobile payments, cloud computing, and research and development of AI. China and the EU should also work together to strengthen logistics networks, including ports, railways, industrial parks and 5G infrastructure, while securing strategic supplies in semiconductors, pharmaceuticals and critical raw materials. Such a partnership is equally vital in the auto sector, covering batteries, charging infrastructure, autonomous driving, sensors, and related technologies.

Apart from pharmaceuticals, diagnostics, medical devices and biotech startups, significant opportunities also exist in agricultural technology, food processing and food supply chain logistics, as shown by Chinese investments in dairy and meat processing facilities across Central and Eastern Europe. Despite their geopolitical differences, the EU and China, in the 50th year of the establishment of their diplomatic relations, have a unique opportunity to redefine their economic and trade partnership by jointly responding to challenges such as US tariffs and protectionist policies, and work together to build a new framework for governing regional and global trade and investment relations. May the China-EU Summit lay the groundwork for a new era of cooperation - one that is as transformative as the partnership that began half a century ago.

Kamala Harris stumbles right out of the gate

Keith Naughton

IT might be the only thing Team Biden got right politically - the slow-motion train-wreck that is Kamala Harris and her political operation. The Harris disaster is history in the making. Never before has a putative presidential campaign failed so badly in getting anything right.

Harris should be dominant in the Democratic Party. She entered the post-Biden world with strong approval among Democrats, sky-high name recognition and the benefit of 95 percent of Democrats having voted for her in 2024. Plus, she had a built-in excuse for losing - the colossal unpopularity of Joe Biden was clearly a drag for her and rocket fuel for President Trump. But Harris and her team have squandered these advantages in record time. They have demonstrated no coherent plan and no political sense. They don't appear to have any allies in the media or the punditry.

Her brief flirtation with running for governor of California is emblematic of her incoherence. Running for major office is not like buying a used car. You either want it or you don't. If Harris truly wanted to plant herself in California and be governor, her pause to "consider" running would have been a delaying tactic to plan her announcement and her campaign. Instead, it appears that dropping out of sight was her way of preparing to announce basically nothing. She isn't going to run for governor

and she is going to release a book about her campaign - not now, but later. On top of that, her "media tour" has consisted of going on the soon-to-be-out-of-work Stephen Colbert, where she was at her word salad worst. Not only did she have no message, but she whiffed on a series of softball questions so badly that it can only encourage every other Democratic hopeful. The very fact that Colbert had to ask her who is leading the Democrats was insulting - as the immediate previous nominee, it's supposed to be her. But her non-answer made things worse. Any decent politician would have found a way to maneuver Colbert to declare Harris the leader. Compounding matters, she expressed her disappointment that there has not been enough opposition to Trump. Does Harris realize she just called herself out for being weak and absent? Trump's disapproval rating among Democrats is 93 percent. Yet Harris just declared herself AWOL.

The big problem for Harris is the same problem Joe Biden faced after his disastrous debate in June 2024: It's not so much the current moment that is the problem - it's the future. With Biden, there was no chance he could have made it through the campaign - debates, public appearances, speeches. With Harris it is the same thing. She has shown no improvement despite ample experience. She remains

unprepared, terrible off-the-cuff, and utterly without original ideas. What could possibly change? And clearly, the people who saw Harris up close when she was Vice President figured this out. In my view, one of the great unreported stories from the Biden Administration is the tryout Team Biden gave Pete Buttigieg during the 2022 midterms to replace Kamala Harris - not necessarily as Vice President, but as the heir-apparent to lead the Democratic Party. Never before had a Secretary of Transportation been so visible and a vice president so invisible during the midterms. Too bad for Buttigieg that he mostly flopped or at least failed to catch fire. But what really showed that Harris is not ready for prime time was her presidential campaign. With the nomination dropped in her lap, she completely choked on the two most critical decisions.

First, she chose as her running mate perhaps the only Democratic politician more inept than herself. Tim Walz brought nothing to the ticket - not even Minnesota, which was closer in 2024 than it had been in 2020. Harris could have picked Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro, a much better vote-getter than Walz, but the howls from the most leftist parts of the party were too loud. Second, she failed to break with Biden. All the polling in the summer was terrible for the president. His favorables were way

underwater and his rating on inflation (the top issue) was disastrous. In an environment very hostile to the incumbent, Harris needed to make a break and present herself as something new.

But again, she choked. And this is what will sink any chance she ever had of becoming the nominee for a second time. Harris is just not a risk-taker. She is petrified of angering any part of the squabbling Democratic Party, even the much-discredited Biden and his hangers-on. She crumbles in the face of any loud faction and tries to please everyone while saying nothing.

Harris has missed the moment. By not breaking with Biden, she threw away her chance to win in 2024. As she stumbles around trying to figure out what to do, other Democrats are charging forward, making their own plans. Nobody is intimidated by her. Even the Biden inner circle - who should be cast out of Democratic politics permanently - have threatened to sink her if she dares criticize them.

The nerve of Team Biden is pretty incredible. Even after an avalanche of books ripping Biden's White House staff to shreds, they have no qualms about threatening Harris. And, of course, Harris dutifully defended Biden in her Colbert interview. Pathetic. The true test for any politician is to work without a net. Kamala Harris has proven not only that she cannot work without a net, but also that she can barely crawl forward.

Trump is exposing just how weak Keir Starmer really is

KING Charles will host President Trump at Windsor Castle for an unprecedented second state visit in September, a recognition of the importance of the US-UK Special Relationship. This is a huge honour for the president, and a great moment for Trump's second term. The Sept 17-19 dates of the visit, however, fall when the House of Commons will not be sitting, thereby denying the president the opportunity to address Parliament, an honour accorded recently to French President Emmanuel Macron and previously to Barack Obama. The House of Lords will be sitting for at least part of the visit.

Strikingly, the Commons rises on Sept 16, the day before the state visit begins. The timing may well have been dictated by Downing Street officials nervous over opposition to Trump within the Labour Party, including on its own backbenches and likely within the Cabinet itself. This is both an insult and a strategically stupid move at a time when the United States and the United Kingdom must collaborate on a range of issues, from strengthening Nato and advancing trade to ending Iran's nuclear programme. An address by President Trump to Parliament would help cement the most powerful bilateral partnership of modern times, while reinforcing the huge importance of the transatlantic alliance to both nations.

I suspect that Sir Keir Starmer is terrified that some members of his own party would treat the Leader of the Free World disrespectfully at any address to Parliament. Labour MPs can be exceptionally rude and ill-mannered in the Commons, and any boorish behaviour would

Nile Gardiner

be greatly embarrassing to the Prime Minister, who appears to be rapidly losing control. Disruptive scenes during Trump's state visit could be highly damaging to Starmer's own position as Labour leader, and might well raise serious questions over his ability to continue as PM. If Sir Keir cannot trust his own MPs to treat the US president with dignity and respect, it would be a damning indictment of his party and his own leadership.

There is also the issue of deep-seated, nasty anti-Trump sentiment within Starmer's own Cabinet. You can imagine the howls of protest from the upper echelons of the Labour administration when the idea of a Trump speech to Parliament was discussed. This is the most Left-wing government in modern British history, and many within it are no doubt horrified by the prospect of an American president defending the idea of secure borders, national sovereignty, the deportation of illegal migrants, and the protection of freedom of speech at the very heart of Westminster. Senior members of the British Government have been highly critical of Trump, including Foreign Secretary David Lammy and Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner. Lammy labelled Trump a "racist KKK and Nazi sympathiser" in 2017. In 2020, Rayner attacked Trump's "voter suppression". Energy Secretary Ed Miliband called Trump a racist misogynist in 2016. Health Secretary Wes Streeting attacked Trump in 2017 as "an odious, sad, little man. Imagine being proud to have that as your president".

Brexit looms large in the background, too, with the Labour Government inching back into the orbit of

Brussels, undermining the democratic will of 17.4 million Britons who voted to leave the European Union in 2016. Trump, meanwhile, is the biggest backer of Brexit on the world stage. His admirable Euroscepticism plays poorly with the increasingly Eurofederalist direction in which the Labour Party is moving. Trump is the most pro-British American president of the modern era. He adores the monarchy and the British people. He chose Brexit Britain for the first trade deal of his second term, and is giving the UK preferential treatment over the EU in avoiding heavier US tariffs. The denial of an address to Parliament will appear to many in Washington as both an act of pettiness and of rampant anti-Americanism within the ruling Labour Party today.

Unlike Starmer, Trump is also a real leader, with a clear vision not only for advancing the security and prosperity of his own nation, but that of the entire free world. The contrast between the strength and seriousness of the Trump White House and the clownish amateurism of Starmer's Downing Street could not be greater. Perhaps that is also at the heart of the decision not to invite Trump to speak to Parliament. Starmer might fear being outclassed on his home turf by an American leader who is everything he is not, a president who projects resolve and determination, and who, refreshingly, actually stands up for his own people. Sir Keir should do the right thing and ensure that President Trump is issued an invitation to address Parliament, with the House of Commons recalled for the occasion. Trump's message is one that the British people deserve to hear, from a president who cherishes Britain's great history, culture and traditions.

A Quixotic quest to reindustrialize US

Einar Tangen

TO its faithful supporters, the US administration's 2025 tariff policy - a sweeping 15-35 percent duty on all imports with additional tariffs on steel, aluminum and copper - is a bold economic maneuver aimed at reviving US manufacturing. In reality, it's less policy and more pagantry. A theatrical drama steeped in nostalgia for a bygone industrial age. The Quixotic US administration is jousting at windmills, mistaking them as economic demons - growing trade deficits, other countries' manufacturing efficiency, and the erosion of the "American dream".

Like Miguel de Cervantes' misguided hero, the US administration is tilting at illusions, clinging to the belief that tariffs can resurrect factories, restore jobs and bring back the "golden era" of US manufacturing. But this quest, weighed down by sentiment and devoid of strategy, will ruin, not revive, the US economy.

Tariffs are often used as a defense, an economic shield. For developing countries desperate to protect nascent industries, they can help boost their economies, as China has demonstrated. But for developed countries reliant on global supply chains, tariffs are a blunt instrument, a regressive tax that eviscerates household budgets and disrupts trade. When the US unilaterally imposes 15-50 percent tariffs on imports, other countries don't foot the bill; US consumers do. According to the Yale Budget Lab, the US' 2025 tariffs will inflate consumer prices by 2.3 percent, hitting families with an average income of \$3,800 in added

costs per year, a crushing burden amid record defaults on credit cards, student loans, and mortgages.

For low-income US nationals, the consequences could be catastrophic. Apparel prices have already surged by 17 percent (only 2 percent of US clothing is made domestically), food prices by 2.8 percent, squeezing decimated grocery budgets, and new car prices by 8.4 percent, adding \$2,000-\$15,000 to sticker prices, while those for imported repair parts rose by 10-35 percent.

These aren't symbolic sacrifices; they're debilitating attacks on the US administration's voter base: rural voters, Rust Belt communities, and blue-collar workers who believed in its promises to control prices and build a "new golden age". The White House claims tariffs will "bring jobs back" but the math doesn't add up. US manufacturing isn't a faucet you can turn on whenever - it's a neglected ecosystem that would require almost \$3 trillion and 20+ years to revive.

For example, 41 percent tariffs might revive the textile sector, but US labor cost is five times that in China and almost 29 times that in Bangladesh. And consumers will have to pay 17 percent more for clothing with no net job gain. More importantly, reviving the industry would require millions of low-wage workers, which the US lacks. As for the US steel and aluminum sectors: 50 percent tariffs on imported steel and aluminum would protect 1,800 jobs but cost consumers \$815,000 per job.

Incidentally, the last aluminum plant was built in the US 40 years ago. Also, 25 percent tariffs on Mexican-made cars could boost automobile assembly in the US but raise input costs, crippling export competitiveness, while in the agriculture sector, subsidies could delay farm bankruptcies but shrink export markets, and the dearth of labor, as immigrants are hounded out of the US, will raise consumer prices. In electronics, reshoring \$140 billion in computer imports would require at least \$500 billion investment in semiconductor plants, which at best is a decade-long endeavor.

On the other hand, the US' CHIPS and Science Act would spur fabrication plant construction, but delay the implementation and completion of projects. The US administration's claims remind us of reverse economic alchemy - turning gold into lead, with short-term gains (jobs, production) obscuring long-term losses from higher prices, inefficiency and retaliation. As the American Tax Foundation, an independent non-aligned tax policy institute, said, tariffs reallocate resources to less productive sectors, dragging down wages and GDP.

The claim of factories being reborn collides with logistical realities. For instance, factory wages in the US are five times that in China, 6.6 times that in Russia, 19.2 times that in India and 68.7 times that in Bangladesh. And competing with other leading countries in automation would require the US to develop and install robots, a race China is



SCCI, PBCS inks MoU to work for strengthening trade, business cooperation

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) and Pakistan Business Council Sharjah (PBCS) have joined hands to strengthen bilateral trade, investment and business cooperation.

In this connection, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed at the chamber house on Saturday, wherein SCCI president Fazal Moqem Khan and PBCS Vice Chairman Aamir Hassan formally signed on documents of the agreement.

Senior vice president of the chamber Abdul Jalil Jan, PBCS Secretary General Salman Wisal, Muhammad Ijaz, Umar Aamir Hassan Advocate,

Zahoor Khan Pajagi, SCCI Secretary General Muqtasid Ahsan, officials and others were present during the ceremony.

As per the agreement, both sides would initiate joint efforts to improve the current mutual trade volume.

Similarly, both parties will collaborate to enhance investment, promote bilateral trade, and strengthen institutional cooperation.

They will also develop a joint framework to increase trade volume and organize capacity-building training sessions for members in the field of investment, the agreement said.

Besides, the SCCI and PBCS will exchange information on investment policies, regulations, proce-

dures, incentives, and opportunities.

The agreement also includes the exchange of business delegations, promotion of research activities, identification of potential investment opportunities and joint projects, as well as the exchange of technical experts.

In addition, both parties will share regular updates on economic, trade, and investment developments.

Speaking on the occasion, Fazal Moqem described the agreement as a milestone in strengthening mutual cooperation in trade and economic sectors.

He noted the immense potential for further collaboration between the two countries.

Moqem emphasized

that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa offers vast opportunities for investment in sectors such as oil and gas, hydropower generation, mining, minerals, gemstones, and other key industries.

He also extended an invitation to foreign companies to invest in these sectors to help boost mutual economic and trade ties.

PBCS Vice Chairman also commented on the occasion, citing that collaboration will boost the bilateral economic and trade relations besides it would also become instrumental for exchange of expertise, research and highlight the potentials of the both countries.

Later, officials from both sides exchanged documents of the agreement.



PESHAWAR: President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Fazal Moqem Khan and Vice Chairman Pakistan Business Council Sharjah Aamir Hassan signing on documents of the agreement.

Gold prices dip by Rs300 to Rs362,400 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The price of 24 karat per tola gold witnessed a decrease of Rs300 on Saturday and was sold at Rs362,400 against its sale at Rs362,700 on the previous trading day, All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported.

The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also decreased by Rs 257 to Rs.310,699 from Rs 310,956 whereas the price of 10 grams of 22 Karat went down by 236 to Rs 284,817 from Rs 285,053.

The rates of per tola and ten gram silver decreased by Rs09 and Rs12 to Rs07 and was traded at Rs.4,064 and Rs 3,484 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$3 to \$3,397 from \$3,400 whereas silver decreased \$0.09 to \$38.31 against \$38.40, according to the Association report.

FCA system boosts Karachi ports revenue

ISLAMABAD (APP): The implementation of the Facelless Customs Assessment (FCA) system has yielded remarkable results as the total revenue collection at Karachi ports surged by 50% year-on-year, reaching Rs342.5 billion in July 2025, up from Rs227.9 billion in the same month last year.

According to documents, customs duty collections alone rose by 47%, from Rs63.6 billion in July 2024 to Rs93.8 billion in July 2025, signalling improved compliance, reduced under-invoicing, and greater transparency in the clearance process.

A senior Customs official told Wealth Pakistan that this sharp rise in revenue is due to key structural reforms introduced under FCA, which include extended operational hours, centralised assessments, virtual reviews, digitised examination protocols, and tighter oversight on lab referrals.

“The results speak for themselves. This is not just

a digital shift, it is a fiscal success story,” said Customs Chief Collector Jamil Nasir Khan, who has been spearheading the appraisal and FCA reforms since late 2024.

He said that the Central Appraisal Unit (CAU) as part of FCA regime in Karachi is now operational from 8:00 a.m. to midnight, enabling the daily clearance of 1,500 to 2,000 goods declarations (GDs). “Over 95% of GDs are assessed on the same day,” said Jamil Nasir Khan.

The 50% growth in total revenue highlights not only increased efficiency and transparency but also a strong case for scaling up FCA nationwide. The dramatic rise contradicts early criticisms that the system could cause delays or revenue losses.

Further facilitation is expected with upcoming initiatives such as direct port delivery and decoupling of payment from GD filing, which aim to reduce

port congestion and ease liquidity constraints for importers.

It is worth mentioning that the launch of the FCA regime as part of the government’s Tax Transformation Plan is a significant reform that makes use of technology to maintain anonymity in the customs process to determine taxes on import shipments. The initiative was launched in December 2024 at the Karachi Port, which handles the bulk of imports before their transportation to the rest of the country.

The project involves relocating customs appraisal functions outside the customs collectorates. Under the initiative, a goods declaration or bill of entry submitted by an importer or their agent is randomly assigned to an assessing officer, who is physically located at a customs station, which is not the port of import in the automated system, for appraisal of duties and taxes.

Tougher solar panels set to power Pakistan in heat and storms

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan’s solar market is rapidly evolving as industrial zones, textile clusters, and large-scale developers face mounting pressure to meet rising electricity demand while keeping costs in check. But the country’s energy transition is challenged by frequent hailstorms, scorching summer temperatures, heavy dust, and unpredictable monsoon flooding.

With extreme weather conditions intensifying, technology providers are making key adaptations to withstand these harsh environments. Environmentalists say the growing use of mist-spray fans to cool

people working in open spaces is a telling example of how innovation is being used to counter the heat. A similar shift is under way in the solar sector, where equipment is being redesigned to be more resilient against weather extremes.

In this effort, Trinasolar, a global leader in solar energy and storage solutions, is bringing its latest Vertex N series modules to Pakistan. These panels use the company’s i-TOPCon Ultra technology, designed to produce more power while lasting longer in harsh climates. The new technology will be available for both rooftop and large utility-scale projects.

The launch comes as

more factories, farms, and businesses turn to solar to escape rising electricity prices and reduce environmental impact. Its Vertex N Ultra modules offer up to 40 watts more power, around 1% higher efficiency, and stronger resistance to heat, dust, and storms compared to many existing panels. Two models will be introduced: one for commercial and industrial use producing up to 670 watts, and another for utility-scale projects producing up to 760 watts.

These upgrades are important for Pakistan, where recent hailstorms, heavy rain, and strong winds in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa damaged many

conventional solar panels. Trinasolar says its panels have been tested to handle extreme heat above 45°C, strong winds, sand abrasion, salt mist, and high humidity. They also passed special tests that simulate large hail impacts followed by extreme temperature changes.

The company says these panels can work reliably for 25–30 years, which reduces repair costs and increases long-term savings. The design uses advanced features like double-sided passivation, ultra-thin wiring, and low light-reflecting layers. This allows more sunlight to be converted into energy, meaning fewer panels are needed for the same output.

Low policy rate a must for industrial growth, says FRIA

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Ferozepur Road Industrial Association (FRIA) Chairman and PIAF leader Shahbaz Aslam has said that a significant cut in the key policy rate is essential to revive economic activity, reduce the cost of doing business, and put the country on the path to sustainable industrial growth.

Shahbaz Aslam observed that while inflationary pressures have shown signs of easing and global commodity prices remain relatively stable, the present high interest rate continues to discourage investment and

expansion in the industrial sector. He said that the business community was expecting the State Bank of Pakistan to adopt a more growth-oriented approach in its latest monetary policy, as a lower policy rate would help unlock the potential of both large industries and small and medium enterprises.

He explained that industrialists are already burdened by unprecedented electricity and gas tariffs, fluctuating exchange rates, and weak consumer demand. In such a situation, expensive credit makes it nearly impossible for manufacturers to upgrade tech-

nology, increase capacity, or compete in export markets. He stressed that SMEs, which generate the bulk of employment, have been particularly affected by the lack of affordable financing.

The FRIA Chairman said that an immediate reduction in the policy rate would send a positive signal to investors and traders, restoring confidence in the economy. He added that a lower cost of borrowing would encourage businesses to expand production, which in turn would create jobs, enhance exports, and broaden the tax base.

Shahbaz Aslam urged

the central bank and economic managers to consider the challenges faced by industry and trade in their policymaking, rather than relying solely on tight monetary controls. He emphasized that a balanced approach—combining inflation management with measures to stimulate growth—is vital for Pakistan’s economic recovery.

He reiterated that the business community is ready to contribute to national development, provided the policy environment supports competitiveness, lowers input costs, and facilitates investment in value-added sectors.

Saudi non-oil revenues rise to \$40b

RIYADH (Arab News): Saudi Arabia’s non-oil revenues rose by 6.6 percent in the second quarter of 2025 compared to the same period of last year, reaching SR149.86 billion (\$39.96 billion). According to data from the Ministry of Finance’s quarterly budget performance report, this marks a key fiscal milestone, with non-oil revenues now accounting for 49.7 percent of total government income, up from less than 40% a year ago.

Oil income fell by 28.76 percent during this period, totaling SR151.73 billion compared to SR213 billion a year earlier. This pulled total government revenues down by 15 percent annually to SR301.6 billion.

The shift reflects two main drivers: the Kingdom’s economic diversification push under Vision 2030, and the voluntary oil production cuts implemented under OPEC+ agreements in late 2023 to stabilize global prices.

These cuts, initially amounting to 1 million barrels per day, have been unwound in gradual phases throughout 2025, with output increases of 138,000 bpd in April, followed by 411,000 bpd increments in May and June.

Production is on track to return to pre-cut levels by September, earlier than initially planned, as the nation seeks to balance market sta-

bility with reclaiming market share.

For the first half of 2025, the Kingdom’s revenues stood at 47.74 percent of the year’s budgeted target, signaling alignment with fiscal planning.

What drove non-oil revenue growth?

The largest contributor to non-oil income was taxes on goods and services, which accounted for 50 percent of the total, or SR 74.95 billion.

“Other revenues” followed with a 19.26 percent share or SR28.9 billion, encompassing earnings from government entities, including the Saudi Central Bank, administrative fees, and port service charges, as well as advertising income, and fines.

Other taxes, primarily corporate zakat, totaled SR26 billion, while income, profit, and capital gains taxes generated SR13.73 billion. Taxes on international trade and transactions added SR6.32 billion.

Much of this growth is linked to robust activity in non-hydrocarbon sectors. Saudi Arabia’s General Authority of Statistics had reported that the Kingdom’s gross domestic product grew by 3.4 percent year on year in the first quarter, driven primarily by a 4.9 percent expansion in non-oil transactions while oil activities contracted by 0.5 percent.

The strongest gains came from wholesale and retail trade, restaurants and hotel sector, which grew by 8.4 percent, transport and communications by 6 percent, and finance and business services by 5.5%.

This robust non-oil sector performance, reinforced by tourism, entertainment, technology, and manufacturing growth under Vision 2030, has translated into higher consumption taxes, service fees, and other government income streams, helping to further lift non-oil revenues in the second quarter budget performance report, even as oil revenues declined year on year.

Expenditure trends and fiscal priorities

Government expenditures in the second quarter fell 8.9 percent year on year to SR336.13 billion. The largest outlay was compensation to employees, which rose 0.4 percent to SR140.40 billion, representing 41.77 percent of total spending.

Expenditure on goods and services came second, at SR73.58 billion, with a 22 percent share.

Non-financial assets or capital expenditure reached SR39.9 billion but fell sharply, nearly 39% year on year. Social benefits totaled SR39.2 billion, down 0.1 percent year on year, while “other expenditures” declined 5 percent to SR23 billion.

According to the Ministry data, total expenditure for the first half of 2025 reached 51.24 percent of the annual budget forecast, in line with fiscal planning.

Deficit financing and debt profile

The second quarter closed with a budget deficit of SR34.53 billion, which, while 41 percent lower than the first quarter deficit, is 125.11 percent higher than the same quarter last year.

This increase was expected, as government spending is accelerating in the mid-cycle of Vision 2030 initiatives, particularly in infrastructure and mega-project execution phases.

For the first half of 2025, the deficit totaled SR93.23 billion, fully funded through borrowings, according to the ministry.

End-of-period public debt reached SR1.39 trillion, up 14.1 percent annually, with 62.84 percent classified as domestic and 37.16 percent external.

With non-oil revenues approaching parity with oil income, Saudi Arabia’s fiscal structure is becoming increasingly resilient to energy price volatility.

Strong tax-based revenues, stable expenditure management, and the phased restoration of oil production position the Kingdom to maintain momentum in funding its Vision 2030 transformation agenda.

Leaderless and lawless: The crisis consuming Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Barrister Usman Ali

Pakistan today finds itself navigating a paradox. On the global stage, the country is showing signs of diplomatic recovery and economic stabilization. Its international footprint appears more confident, and there is cautious optimism in some economic circles. Yet, within its borders, particularly in the conflict-prone provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, the situation is anything but stable. Violence, lawlessness, and a palpable erosion of state authority have become disturbingly routine. This alarming internal decay comes at a time when Pakistan’s need for internal cohesion has never been more critical.

Balochistan’s issues are deeply rooted in its histori-

cal, ethnic, and regional complexities. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), however, faces a crisis of a different magnitude, one that is layered, accelerating, and far more dangerous in its implications. This is not merely about the resurgence of cross-border terrorism or the geopolitical fallout of a post-US Afghanistan. The core of KP’s crisis lies in systemic rot: a collapse of governance, absence of visionary leadership, and the staggering ineffectiveness of the provincial administration. The surge in extortion, targeted killings, and coordinated attacks on state institutions is not just troubling, it is evidence that the machinery of the state has all but ground to a halt. The enemy is active, while the state seems missing in action.

The current provincial government has come to represent the worst of political immaturity, factionalism, and administrative paralysis. The chief minister and most members of his cabinet lack both the experience and the temperament to govern. Bereft of political wisdom or a roadmap for public service, they operate more from ego and stubbornness than reason and responsibility. Coordination within the cabinet is fractured, and dialogue with the opposition is virtually nonexistent. In such an environment, policymaking is impossible and institutional integrity deteriorates further.

Debating the legality or political intent behind Imran Khan’s arrest is another matter. What remains clear, however, is

that no democratic party, no matter how aggrieved, can afford to place loyalty to a leader above the well-being of its constituents and the responsibilities of governance. Protest is a right, and legal recourse is part of the democratic toolkit. But freezing the wheels of government, paralyzing administrative systems, and abandoning the public to the jaws of terrorism and inflation is not just irresponsible, it is inexcusable. Tragically, this is the precise path the PTI-led provincial government has chosen.

Among all these challenges, perhaps the most dangerous long-term trend is the ideological drift among KP’s youth. Over the past few years, we’ve witnessed a noticeable shift, from substance to spectacle. Instead of engaging with policy, reform, or

serious political discourse, many young people are seduced by loud slogans, viral clips, and hero worship. Performance metrics have been replaced with rhetoric, and argument has been drowned by emotion. In such a climate, leadership is no longer chosen for competence, vision, or service, but for charisma and follower counts. This erosion of seriousness has paved the way for the kind of ineffectual leadership now presiding over a province in disarray.

To reverse this decay, we must institutionalize political literacy and civic education. Youth must be taught that leadership is not about trending hashtags or stadium crowds; it is about legislation, collaboration with state institutions, responsible budgeting, and the ability to handle matters of

peace and security with maturity. Their grooming must begin in universities, civil society platforms, and educational policy frameworks. The goal should be to produce not just voters, but active, informed citizens.

The time for symbolic all-party conferences and rhetorical jirgas has passed. What is needed now is a national agenda for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’s recovery, one that brings together serious political actors across party lines. Among those capable of leading such a conversation is Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao, a seasoned and respected statesman who has served both as KP’s chief minister and the federal interior minister. His clarity, resolve, and firm stance against militancy make him an essential voice in this moment of

crisis.

Likewise, despite his current health challenges, Asfandiyar Wali Khan’s political wisdom and legacy still carry weight. Maulana Fazlur Rehman remains a commanding presence with both religious and political influence in the region. Others such as Barrister Masood Kausar and Humayun Khan of the PPP, Sirajul Haq of Jamaat-e-Islami, and leaders like Mohsin Dawar and Perviz Khattak can also contribute meaningfully. Though PTI and PMLN currently lack clear provincial leadership, their participation in such an initiative is essential to building consensus.

At the federal level, the government must re-activate the National Action Plan in both letter and spirit. It must move beyond lip

service, ensure meaningful implementation, and rebuild trust by being transparent with the public about the depth of the crisis. Our youth must be pulled out of the performative world of social media and reconnected with the real struggles of the nation. Similarly, media institutions need to abandon sensationalism in favor of policy-focused journalism and constructive political engagement.

If KP’s credible and cross-partisan leadership sits down at the same table, it could mark not just the beginning of a solution, but a transformation. Time is running out. The stakes are growing. The enemy is watching. But with clear intent, united purpose, and a vision rooted in reality, today’s chaos can become the foundation for tomorrow’s stability.



In brief

Rodri will not make Manchester City return

LONDON (Agencies): Manchester City midfielder Rodri will not be at full fitness until after September's international break, Pep Guardiola has revealed. The 2024 Ballon d'Or winner missed most of last season due to ligament damage and without him City failed to mount a strong defense of their Premier League crown. The 29-year-old Spanish international fought his way back to fitness but suffered a groin injury in City's defeat to Saudi club Al-Hilal at the Club World Cup in the United States last month. "Rodri's getting better but he had a big injury in the last game against Al-Hilal and for the last five or six weeks," Guardiola said in comments released on Saturday. "He's training right now and in the last two or three days is better. Hopefully maybe the international break is when he will be really, really fit. "Hopefully, in the games (prior to that) he can play some minutes but the important thing is to not have pain because we don't want him to be come back and injured, come back and injured. "We will try desperately to avoid that but he's training the last two or three days with us and that's good." The City staff are also nursing Phil Foden and Mateo Kovacic back to fitness and both players joined Rodri in being left out of a pre-season game in Sicily this week. City face Wolves in their first Premier League game of the season next weekend and then play Tottenham and Brighton before the September internationals.

Littler beats De Decker

WOLLONGONG (Agencies): Teenager Luke Littler beat Belgium's Mike de Decker 8-4 in Saturday's final to win the Australian Darts Masters in Wollongong. The world champion saw off Australia's Damon Heta 6-3 and world number five Stephen Bunting 7-4 on his way to the title match. De Decker was making his debut in the world series and overcame world number one Luke Humphries - who was suffering from illness - 6-0 in the quarter-finals before a 7-4 win over Chris Dobey secured his place in the final. World Grand Prix champion De Decker recovered from two legs down early on to level at 2-2 before Littler won six of the next eight legs to take the title. "It felt very good," Littler, 18, told ITV Sport. "I knew if I won the first game [against Damon Heta] it would be a long night and I am very happy." Littler lost in the final of this event 12 months ago, with Welshman Gerwyn Price beating him 8-1, so his latest victory was particularly sweet. It also came in a campaign where until this moment he had struggled to make his mark in the 2025 world series. The English youngster said: "It's not gone to plan so far this year in the world series, but there's plenty of opportunities to win and I'm glad I've got it done tonight." Travelling to Australia off the back of winning the World Matchplay in Blackpool, Littler avoided a major upset on the opening night as he won a final-leg decider 6-5 against Haupai Puha. The players will now travel to Auckland next weekend for the another world series event, the New Zealand Darts Masters.

New Zealand complete crushing innings win over Zimbabwe

BULAWAYO (AFP): New Zealand completed a crushing win by an innings and 359 runs on the third day of the second Test against Zimbabwe at Queens Sports Club on Saturday. Zak Foulkes, playing in his first Test match, took five for 37 as Zimbabwe were bowled out for 117 in their second innings. Nic Welch, batting at number three, made an unbeaten 47 and stood virtually alone against the New Zealand pace attack. It was the third-biggest win by an innings in Test history. England beat Australia by an innings

and 579 runs at The Oval in London in 1938. Australia defeated South Africa by an innings and 360 runs in Johannesburg in 2001/02. "We bowled well in the first innings after losing the toss," said Mitch Santner, who captained New Zealand in both Tests in the absence of the injured Tom Latham. "And the batsmen got through some tough periods with their partnerships and then cashed in." New Zealand's previous biggest win — and Zimbabwe's previous heaviest defeat — was by

an innings and 301 runs when the two teams met in Napier in 2011/12. Zimbabwe suffered their sixth successive defeat — four of them by an innings — since beating Bangladesh in Sylhet in April. New Zealand declared their first innings closed on their overnight total of 601 for three. It took only three balls for Matt Henry to start the home team's collapse when he bowled Brian Bennett for his second duck of the match. Henry had Brendan Taylor caught at second slip and Jacob Duffy

caught Sean Williams off his own bowling before Matthew Fisher had Zimbabwe captain Craig Ervine held at third slip. Foulkes, who briefly returned to New Zealand after a triangular Twenty20 series but was recalled after Nathan Smith was injured in the first Test, took the next five wickets. Foulkes had match figures of nine for 77. Devon Conway, who scored 153 for New Zealand, was player of the match while Henry, who took 16 wickets across the two matches, was player of the series.



The New Zealand players walk off after registering a thumping 2-0 win.

Australia settle on Marsh and Head as T20 openers

DARWIN (AFP): Australian white-ball skipper Mitchell Marsh says he will open the T20 batting with Travis Head for the foreseeable future as the team looks for stability at the top leading into next year's World Cup. Australia have had a series of different openers in the game's shortest format since David Warner retired last year, including Matt Short, Glenn Maxwell and Jake Fraser-McGurk. Marsh will partner Head for the first time in three T20s against South Africa starting on Sunday in Darwin, and said it will stay that way heading into the February World Cup in India and Sri Lanka. "It'll be myself and Heady up the top for the foreseeable future," Marsh said. "Obviously we've played a lot together, got a great relation-

ship, so (we'll) start there." Australia are coming off a dominant 5-0 T20 series sweep against the West Indies last month with Maxwell, Josh Inglis, Cameron Green and Tim David all excelling when they had time at the crease. The explosive David plundered an Australian record 37-ball century in the third T20, strengthening the case for him to bat higher up the order. "We've spoken about it ... we saw that in the Caribbean, that he came in earlier than he would normally," Marsh said of David, who usually comes down the order as a power-packed finisher. "The more balls he faces, hopefully the more games he wins us." The clash on Sunday marks the return of international cricket to Australia's tropical north for

the first time in 17 years and it is a sell-out. South Africa has a relatively young T20 squad with Aiden Markram back as skipper after being rested from their recent series in Zimbabwe. Kagiso Rabada leads the attack in a squad that includes four spinners in Prenelan Subrayan, George Linde, Senuran Muthusamy, and Nqaba Peter. "Every series from here on plays a part in shaping our squads for next year's T20 World Cup and the 50-over World Cup at home in 2027," said Proteas head coach Shukri Conrad. "Touring Australia is never easy. We know their conditions and intensity will test us in every department, and that's exactly the kind of challenge we're after." Following the T20 series, the teams play three ODIs in Cairns and Mackay.

Ireland beaten by Dutch in EuroHockey opener

MONCHENGLADBACH (Agencies): Ireland lost their opening game of the EuroHockey Championships 2-0 to reigning Olympic, world and European champions the Netherlands in Monchengladbach. Goals from Joosje Burg and Yibbi Jansen were enough for the Dutch as temperatures in north-western Germany edged towards 30C on a brutally hot day. Ireland coach Gareth Grundie will take plenty of positives from a strong defensive performance that bodes well for the rest of the tournament. "I think that's probably the closest we've come to them in competition in a long time," Grundie told BBC Sport NI after the defeat. "[I'm] obviously not [happy] the result but happy with the performance, happy in terms of goal difference going into

the rest of the group so it actually sets us up quite nicely depending on a couple of other results." The only goal in the first half came with a little luck after nine minutes against the run of play when Ireland were settling in the game. Ireland goalkeeper Lizzie Murphy made an outstanding save, only to see the ball ricochet off the chest of Sarah McAuley and into the path of Burg who had a simple tap-in. Roisin Upton and Hannah McLoughlin brilliantly marshalled the Ireland defence as they frustrated the Dutch in the second quarter as the heat began to take its toll on both sides. A harsh penalty corner call on Upton was punished by the Netherlands in the third quarter when Jansen's shot beat Murphy. Ireland were not deterred, however, and

came close through Katie Mullan after great work from Mikayla Power. Mullan was denied by Dutch keeper Josine Kosing, who was on hand again to save from the McLoughlin's shot at a penalty corner as Ireland pushed forward and refused to sit back. "The idea was always to make sure that we were really disciplined," Grundie added. "They're an outstanding side, so the longer that we could stay in the game we knew we might get an opportunity, and if one had gone in then we might have been able to push towards the end. "I think we actually have to keep that same discipline, take that same approach against France [on Monday], but we have to have a little bit more confidence in ourselves on the ball and go and play our own game a little bit more."



Pakistan's mixed fortunes on day 2 of World Games Chengdu 2025

CHENGDU (APP): Pakistan's squash campaign at the World Games 2025 saw contrasting results on day two, with Noor Zaman bowling out in a thrilling five-game battle, while Nasir Iqbal kept hopes alive in the Plate Event. Noor Zaman, put up a fierce fight against World No. 21 Miguel Rodriguez of Colombia but narrowly lost 2-3 in a gripping encounter. After a stunning 11-2 first-game win, Zaman struggled to maintain momentum as Rodriguez fought back to take the next two games. Noor showed tremendous resilience in the fourth, clinching it 13-11, but the experienced Colombian sealed the decider 11-6. "Noor played with heart, but Rodriguez's experience made the difference in crucial moments," said national coach Fahim Gul. "This is a learning curve for him and he'll come back stronger." Meanwhile, Nasir Iqbal bounced back strongly in the Plate Event, defeating Austria's Daniel Lutz in straight games (11-7, 11-4, 11-8).



Hasan Nawaz and Hussain Talat put up an unbroken century stand.

Nawaz sparks Pakistan to five-wicket ODI win over West Indies

TAROUBA (AFP): Hasan Nawaz made a triumphant one-day international debut, going 63 not out on Friday to power Pakistan over West Indies by five wickets in their ODI series opener. Nawaz and Hussain Talat formed a sixth-wicket partnership of 104 not out to rally the visitors in the day-night affair, with game two on Sunday and the conclusion on Tuesday. West Indies went 280 all out with Evin Lewis leading the way on 60 from 62 balls with three sixes and five fours while Shai Hope added 55 and Roston Chase contributed 53. Needing 281 to win, Pakistan got 53 runs from Mohammad Rizwan before he was bowled lbw by Shamar Joseph in the 38th

over with the visitors still 101 runs shy of victory, setting the stage for heroics by Nawaz and Talat. Nawaz struck for six on the second ball of the 49th over and blasted the winning shot to the boundary off the final delivery by Joseph, giving Pakistan the victory with seven balls to spare. In all, Nawaz reached 63 on 54 balls with three sixes and five fours while Talat finished on 41 from 37 balls with one six and four fours. Pakistan won the toss and sent the hosts in to bat first, a choice that paid quick dividends when Brandon King was taken for four on the fifth ball of the opening over, bowled by Shaheen Shah Afridi --

his first of four wickets -- and caught by Babar Azam off stump. Lewis exited on the last ball of the 19th over, bowled by Saim Ayub and caught by Afridi. West Indies captain Hope was bowled by Afridi and caught by Rizwan on the second ball of the 41st over, leaving the hosts on 200 for five. Romario Shepherd, was sent off on four on the last ball of the 43rd over. Chase made the third half-century for the West Indies with a boundary but went out on the next ball, caught by Azam and bowled by Naseem Shah, who also bowled out Gudakesh Motie and Jediah Blades on the last two Pakistan deliveries.

Southampton edge Wrexham in thrilling finish



SOUTHAMPTON (Agencies): Ninety minutes before kick-off, a couple of digivans poking fun at Wrexham completed another lap of St Mary's, whizzing past with an LED billboard that read: "Who needs Hollywood?" with the letters of Southampton studied in the Californian hills. On this evidence the Welsh club -- back at this level for the first time since 1982 after an extraordinary rise from non-league -- are sure to be a fun addition to the Championship, but how they were given a galling reminder of the step up, Saints scoring twice in the final nine minutes to earn a comeback win and a first under Will Still. For Southampton, there was finally that winning feeling, with a first home league victory since November. Phil Parkinson was encouraged, despite the sour ending for the visitors. "I took a moment when the lads ran out for the warm-up and just reflected because where we've come from to be playing on a stage like this today was very special," he said. "The new lads came in and did really well and so did the existing players -- that gives us great heart for the season. It was a very proud day for the club, play-

ing at this level and there were a lot of positives." Two years ago, Southampton were operating four divisions higher than their opponents, ending 2022-23 against Liverpool while Wrexham signed off from the National League at Torquay. It is only four years since the journey to this point under the ownership of Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney began; they started 2021-22 at Solihull Moors in front of a crowd of 2,196, while Saints were beginning a 10th straight season in the top flight. Here they were as equals, duking it out on a pristine glossy surface a world away from Damson Park. Max Cleworth and Ryan Barnett -- both on the pitch that day, the latter for Solihull -- also started here. There were no A-listers present but the Saints owner, Dragan Solak, and the former Saints vice-chair Les Reed who is now a Wrexham adviser, were in attendance. Until the final minute of regular time it appeared Wrexham would start the season with a victory courtesy of a first-half penalty, awarded after Ronnie Edwards barged Kieffer Moore and converted by Josh Windass, one of seven Wrexham debutants, six of whom were in the starting

lineup. Parkinson was adamant Edwards should have been sent off given he made no attempt to play the ball but the referee, James Bell, informed the Wrexham manager he felt there was a covering defender. Edwards somehow escaped without a booking. "It is a gamechanging moment if they go down to 10 men," Parkinson said. Saints came close to levelling in first-half stoppage time, the busy 18-year-old Jay Robinson striking a post before Conor Coady prevented Adam Armstrong from firing in the rebound. Still, at 32 the youngest manager in the English Football League, rested hands on head trying to make sense of it all. Wrexham were accomplished, Windass striking the bar before opening the scoring, but gradually lost their grip on an entertaining game. The arrival of Mateus Fernandes, who has numerous top-flight admirers, on the hour helped the hosts. Moore's departure with an ankle injury early in the second half also hampered Wrexham. Southampton dialled up the pressure. Wrexham missed chances to double their lead; Lewis O'Brien, their £3m record signing, was ushered off the ball when

through on goal and the substitute Ryan Hardie, another new face, forced Gavin Bazunu into an instinctive left-handed save on 87 minutes. In between those episodes Parkinson enjoyed an amusing back and forth with the home fans after Sam Smith's tug on Joshua Quarshie in the box went unpunished. Cleworth, on a booking, was fortunate to avoid being penalised for handling a Shea Charles shot within two minutes of the restart. Those chances whirled in Parkinson's mind when the substitute Ryan Manning levelled, leathering a superb free-kick into the top corner from 25 yards. Manning was instrumental in the winner, too. He chested Charles's raking diagonal pass, teeing up Damion Downs. The US forward -- also a summer signing -- fluffed his lines from a couple of yards out but the Southampton captain, Jack Stephens, was alive at the back post to apply the finish, the ball cannoning in off the underside of the bar. For Stephens, it was a cathartic moment, an outpouring of emotion and a timely retort to his critics. At a fans' forum in the week, on the eve of a new era, the Southampton technical director, Johannes Spors, was forced to defend the decision to hand Stephens a fresh three-year contract. At the final whistle, Stephens kissed the captain's armband and seemingly did some soul-searching, staring deep into the stands. Still said: "We know Stevo gets a fair bit of criticism -- he's made mistakes and he probably knows that better than anyone -- but he's a really good human being and deserves his goal." Parkinson, meanwhile, stood deflated, hands on hips; his opposite number perhaps put it best. "Welcome to the Championship." Still said. "It's just crazy, isn't it?"



In brief

Minister emphasizes quality healthcare at PKLI

RAWALPINDI (APP): Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique on Saturday visited the Pakistan Kidney and Liver Institute (PKLI), Rawalpindi to evaluate ongoing development projects. Minister visited various departments of the institute, reviewing the progress of ongoing work. He instructed officials from the Communication and Works Department to expedite project completion. Accompanying him were Dean Professor Faisal Saud Dar provided a comprehensive briefing on the current developments. The minister said that PKLI is set to deliver world-class medical facilities. "In alignment with Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif's vision, we are dedicated to providing top-tier healthcare services to the public," he said. Salman Rafique emphasized that PKLI Rawalpindi would cater not only to local residents but also to patients from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan, Northern areas and Kashmir ensuring access to exceptional medical care. The minister observed that the hospital's Outpatient Department (OPD) is fully operational, serving patients effectively. "PKLI Rawalpindi, a remarkable initiative by Chief Minister will be a transformative gift for the people of this region," he added. He further announced that liver and kidney transplant services would commence at the hospital by the end of this year, with strict adherence to Joint Commission International (JCI) standards to ensure quality care.

14 outlaws nabbed

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested 14 outlaws and recovered liquor, arms and ammunition from their possession during operation here on Saturday. According to police spokesman, Rawalpindi Police conducted operations and detained 14 suspects and recovered 15 liters of liquor and arms and ammunition. The operations against the detained persons were carried out in the areas of Police Station City, Ratta Amral, Waris Khan, Naseerabad, Race Course, Taxila, Gujjar Khan, Rawat, Kahuta, Morgah. Police have registered separate cases against all of them and further investigation was in progress. Police teams have been commended for their efforts. Divisional Superintendents of Police (SPs) said the arrested accused will be presented in court with solid evidence and stated that drive against illegal liquor and weapons will continue with without any favoritism.

13 gamblers held

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested 13 gamblers and recovered amount of Rs 24,600, 09 mobile phones from their possession during crack down here on Saturday. According to police spokesman, Waris Khan Police took 09 people into custody, amount at stake Rs 15,500, 8 mobile phones and playing cards were recovered from the detained persons. Similarly, Saddar Wah Police took 04 people into custody, amount at stake Rs 9,100, 01 mobile phone and playing cards were confiscated from them. Police have registered separate cases against all of them and further investigation was in progress. Division SPPs said that gambling is the root of other social evils, strict action will be continued against gamblers without any discrimination.

NA Speaker emphasizes role of constitution, parliament in Pakistan's progress

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has emphasized that the supremacy of Parliament, adherence to the Constitution, rule of law, and the continuity of the democratic process are essential for Pakistan's integrity, development, and prosperity. In his message on the 78th anniversary of Pakistan's Constituent Assembly, National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq stated that the 1st session of the Constituent Assembly, held on August 10, 1947, in Karachi, was a reflection of the democratic vision of the founding fathers of Pakistan. He also stated that the historical significance of this day serves as a landmark in acquainting the

new generation with democratic values.

Speaker emphasised that Parliament is not only the representative body of 250 million people but also holds the primary responsibility for ensuring public welfare. He underscored the importance of effective legislation as essential to addressing the country's pressing challenges.

Highlighting recent developments, he noted the increasing inclusion of youth in the National Assembly and the introduction of modern technology within the Secretariat. These advancements, he said, aim to enhance public access to parliamentary information, build institutional capacity, and promote greater efficiency and

cost-effectiveness.

The Speaker asserted that national progress is unattainable without the continuity of the parliamentary system and the supremacy of institutions.

Reaffirming his commitment, he stated that the current Parliament will continue to steer the nation forward in accordance with the Constitution, the rule of law, and democratic values.

Deputy Speaker National Assembly, Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah also added that Parliament is a symbol of national unity and reflects the collective wisdom of 250 million Pakistanis. He stated that through effective legislation and resolution of public issues, Pakistan can be set on the path of development.



ISLAMABAD: President National Party Doctor Abdul Maalik Baloch calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. —APP Photo

SSP orders crackdown against wanted criminals

RAWALPINDI (APP): Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Investigation Raza Tanveer has directed police officers to intensify the crackdown on wanted criminals and ensure merit-based investigations in all heinous cases.

Chairing an online meeting with divisional Superintendents of Police (SPs), Sub-Divisional Police Officers (SDPOs) and Station House Officers (SHOs), the SSP reviewed the performance of the investigation teams and issued clear instructions to speed up progress on pending cases.

He emphasized that suspects involved in murder cases, as well as crimes against women and children, must be traced and arrested without delay.

He further ordered that investigations in such cases should be completed promptly, with challans submitted to courts within the stipulated time frame.

"The timely submission of challans is essential for delivering justice, and any negligence in this regard will not be tolerated," SSP Raza Tanveer warned, adding that officers failing to meet the set targets would face departmental action.

He instructed SPs and SDPOs to personally monitor investigations in all serious and important cases to ensure transparency, professionalism, and the highest standard of service delivery. "Merit must be the foundation of every investigation," he stressed, calling on officers to work with dedication and integrity to maintain public trust in the police. The SSP reiterated that effective supervision and a results-oriented approach were vital in combating crime.

Housing dept suspends two officers

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Punjab housing department suspended SDO Toba Tek Singh Qamar Niazi for incompetence and negligence, and SDO Koh-e-Suleman Development Authority Mir Shafqat for negligence and corruption. According to the department's spokesperson, cases against the officers will be referred to the Internal Accountability Board.

Politics of anarchy not to be tolerated: Shumaila

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Member of the National Assembly (MNA) Shumaila Rana on Saturday urged Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to relinquish ego-centric politics and adopt a more statesmanlike approach by engaging in meaningful dialogue to resolve political differences.

While speaking in a fresh interview with a local news channel, PML-N leader suggested that PTI should choose dialogue over deadlock for the resolution of political disputes because politics of anarchy and disruption will no longer be tolerated. She stressed that democratic systems demand negotiation and political maturity, not rigid stances based on ego or confrontation.

Shumaila Rana high-

lighted that the PML-N, despite facing numerous legal challenges in the past, never turned its back on the legal process.

"Our leadership from top to bottom has appeared before the courts, respecting every stage of the judicial system," she said.

She added that true justice is sought and served through the country's judicial institutions, not by seeking support or validation from foreign powers.

The MNA criticized attempts to internationalize domestic political issues, saying such actions damage Pakistan's sovereignty and democratic credibility.

She reiterated that political disagreements should be addressed through constructive engagement, mutual respect and commitment to constitutional pathways

rather than street agitation or external lobbying.

Responding a query, She also criticized PTI for its past attacks on state institutions, saying such actions undermined national stability and democratic norms.

Referring to the party's previous confrontational tactics, she said, "No democratic party resorts to violence against its own state. Such behavior only weakens institutions and divides the nation."

Shumaila Rana strongly condemned PTI's protest call for August 14, terming it an irresponsible and politically motivated move aimed at creating chaos on a day meant for unity and patriotism.

"Indifference Day should be a symbol of national solidarity, not a tool for political disruption," she added.

Bari Imam Urs continues in Islamabad with tight security

ISLAMABAD (APP): The ongoing Urs of Hazrat Shah Abdul Latif Kazmi, popularly known as Hazrat Bari Imam, is drawing thousands of visitors from different parts of the country.

The Islamabad district administration has stationed the Assistant Commissioner (AC) Secretariat at the shrine site around the clock to monitor proceedings. Meanwhile, AC Nilore and AC City are also overseeing arrangements in their respective domains to ensure all activities run according to plan.

According to the administration's spokesperson, special parking areas have been designated for devotees to facilitate orderly access to the shrine. The preparation and distribution

of langar (free food) are being closely monitored from start to finish.

Security protocols remain strict, with visitors allowed entry to the shrine only after thorough checks. Police have been deployed in additional numbers both inside and outside the shrine premises to maintain order and manage the crowd.

The spokesperson added that cleanliness measures are being carried out continuously within the shrine complex and surrounding areas. Teams are working to keep the premises clear of waste throughout the Urs.

In this regard, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad and the Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) General have made several

visits to the shrine at different times to review arrangements. The ADC East has specifically inspected the langar preparations being managed by the Auqaf Department.

Similarly, the Islamabad Food Authority has also deployed its inspection teams on-site to ensure food quality and hygiene standards are maintained for the large number of devotees being served daily.

The DC Islamabad has directed all departments involved to maintain strict monitoring and coordination until the Urs concludes. These measures aim to ensure that visitors can participate in the annual religious gathering in an organized and safe environment.

DERC launches aggressive plan to fight dengue outbreak

RAWALPINDI (APP): District Emergency Response Committee (DERC) Murree has devised an aggressive action plan to combat dengue outbreak. All relevant department resolved to put all our efforts in protecting public health.

A meeting of DERC was held at the DC office in Murree which was attended by heads of various departments and elected representatives to devise strategies for the prevention of dengue virus and to review preventive measures.

MNA Murree, Raja Osama Ashfaq Sarwar, participated as a special guest, who stressed all institutions must take effective and immediate actions in collaboration to prevent dengue. He said that the government prioritizes public safety and will provide all possible resources to achieve this goal.

The meeting was chaired by Additional Deputy Commissioner General ADC(G) Kamran Sagheer. Addressing the participants,

he said that the district administration has prepared a comprehensive action plan against dengue, which all departments will strictly implement. He directed the health department and sanitation staff to intensify surveillance and spray campaigns in affected and sensitive areas immediately.

In-charge 1122 Kamran, SDO Highway Syed Hasib, Medical Superintendent THQ Hospital Murree Owais Alam, Deputy District Health Officer Murree Nauman, and heads of all departments of the district administration were also present in the meeting.

Each department presented briefings on ongoing activities and future plans for dengue control. It was decided that public awareness campaigns would be made more effective, with messages about dengue prevention disseminated through educational institutions, mosques, and community centers. Additionally, immediate cleaning of all stagnant water sites was mandated.

IRSA releases 306,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Saturday released 306,800 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 318,200 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1546.00 feet which was 144.00 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 205,300 cusecs and 204,900 cusecs, respectively.

The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1205.25 feet, which was 155.25 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 18,900 cusecs and 7,300 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 273,100, 167,300, 160,500 and 102,800 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 30,400 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 33,600 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.



ISLAMABAD: Musicians are performing at an enchanting evening of music and dance "Sham-e-Music" to celebrate Pakistan's Independence Day at PNCA. —APP Photo

6 of a family killed in accident

LASHKARGAH (Pajhwok): Six members of a family have been killed in a traffic accident on the Kandahar-Herat highway in southern Helmand province. Gul Ahmad, an eyewitness and driver, told Pajhwok Afghan News that the accident occurred in the Shorab area of Washir district late on Friday. He said the collision involved a car and a truck, resulting in the deaths of six family members, including a man, two women, and three children.

Rain, flash floods predicated

KABUL (Pajhwok): Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation (MoTCA) has predicated heavy rains and flash floods in 12 provinces of the country. In a statement, MoTCA said heavy rainfall and flash floods, thunder and lightning will likely lash Nuristan, Kunar, Nangarhar, Laghman, Kapisa, Panjsher, Parwan, Kabul, Maidan Wardak, Logar, Khost and Paktia provinces. The amount of rainfall in different places is expected to be between 10 and 30 millimeters, MoTCA added.

MoE honors mathematically gifted student Samiullah

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Ministry of Education honored Samiullah, a talented Afghan child who has earned the nickname “Calculating Machine” for his extraordinary abilities in performing mathematical calculations.

The seven-year-old child has attracted a lot of attention for his amazing ability in mental calculation in the country.

He can perform complex addition and subtraction in his mind, like a calculator, and answer simultaneously.

This talent has attracted the support of some high-ranking officials of the Islamic Emirate and the attention of experts in the field of education.

A ceremony to honor this child was held by MoE at Amani High School in Kabul on Saturday.

Mufti Abdul Wali Sadat, head of talent assessment at the Islamic Education Deputy Office, said in the program that the ministry was proud of such talents and cadres and happy with



their existence.

He emphasized the MoE had made every effort to recognize talents. Students should use their abilities to grow and develop their talents to build the future of Afghanistan, he explained.

Maulvi Sibghatullah Wasil, deputy finance and administration minister for MoE, explained it was the ministry’s responsibility to encourage and develop all

children and youth whom God has given extraordinary talent.

According to him, the program was held to motivate other students so that they too would be encouraged, work hard, and develop their talents.

For MoE, schools and colleges have the same status, and the gap that existed between the two institutions has now disappeared.

Meanwhile, Abdul Qayum, Samiullah’s father, said he was happy that his son was encouraged by the IEA. He asked the IEA to provide educational opportunities for Samiullah, as he has a special talent in addition, multiplication, and division.

At the end of the program, Samiullah received 50,000 afghanis in cash and a laptop from the ministry.

Cameras installed at six offices

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Ministry of Finance (MoF) says 215 security cameras have been installed at six customs offices across the country to help prevent violations.

The cameras were installed by the General Directorate of Customs at the Torkham, Dand-i-Patan, Khost, Ghulam Khan and Nimroz customs offices as well as at the laboratory section of the General Directorate of Customs, MoF said.

A statement from the ministry said these cameras would not only help improve security, but also prevent tax evasions and other incidents.

The ministry added the cameras have been placed in various parts of these customs offices and would soon be connected with Kabul.

Earlier, similar cameras had been activated at the Islam Qala and Torghundi customs offices.

Flour price down, gold up

KABUL (Pajhwok): The price of Kazakh flour declined while that of gold increased during the outgoing week in Kabul, market sources said on Saturday.

Food items
Zmarai Safi, head of the Food Traders’ Association, said the price of a 49-kilogram sack of Kazakh flour fell from 1,450afis to 1,400afis.

However, he added the prices of other essential food items remained unchanged compared to the last week.

The price of a 49-kilogram bag of Indian sugar cost 2,450afis, a 24-kg bag of Pakistani rice stayed stable at 2,600afis, a 16-litre bottle of Malaysian cooking oil remained unchanged at 1,600afis, one kilogram of 400afis Indonesian green tea at 350afis and the rate of a kilogram of African black tea at 380afis.

Hamid Sufizada, a retailer at Dahna-i-Bagh market, put the retail price of a 49-kg bag of Kazakh flour at 1,450 afis, a 24-kg bag of Pakistani rice at 2,650afis and a 49-kg sack of Indian sugar at 2,500afis.

A 16-litre bottle of cooking oil accounted for 1,650afis, one kilogram of black tea for 430afis and the same quantity of green tea for 400afis, he added.

Fuel prices
A worker at the Ahmadyar pump station told Pajhwok the price of one litre of petrol cost 67afis and diesel 65afis. Mohammad Jan Amin, a liquefied gas seller in Dahai-Bagh locality, said the rate of one kilogram of the commodity sold for 50afis.

Gold prices up
Mohammad Fawad, a jeweller in Timor Shahi area, said the price of one gram of Arabian gold went up from 5,950afis to 6,000afis and the same amount of the Russian variety from 4,700afis to 4,750afis.

IEA slams Israel’s Gaza City takeover plan

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has condemned Israel’s decision to take full control of Gaza city, urging influential parties to fulfill their legal and moral responsibilities to prevent the humanitarian crisis from further worsening amid escalating conflict.

Israel’s political-security cabinet approved a plan on Friday to take full control of Gaza City, and Netanyahu’s office stated in a press release that the Israeli

military is preparing to take control of Gaza City.

Abdul Qahar Balkhi, spokesman for Afghanistan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, wrote on his X account: “The Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly condemns the decision of the occupying Israeli regime to take control of the entire Gaza area, describing it as a dangerous and concerning decision that will lead to the prolongation and escalation of the war and will fur-

ther exacerbate the humanitarian crisis of the Palestinian people.”

The MoFA called on international influential parties, especially the region’s key countries, to fulfill their legal and moral responsibilities and prevent the humanitarian crisis in Gaza from expanding and becoming bloodier.

Balkhi also added that efforts should be made to quickly establish a ceasefire and allow humanitarian aid to enter Gaza.

Mines to be managed under new framework

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum says it has adopted specific programs to manage Afghanistan’s mines in a standardized manner and prevent illegal extraction.

Officials from the ministry emphasize that the goals of these programs are to create job opportunities, attract investment, boost industry, and move toward economic self-sufficiency.

According to the ministry, in addition to preventing the smuggling of mineral resources, efforts are underway to ensure that raw materials are not exported out of the country and that processing takes place inside Afghanistan.

Homayoun Afghan, spokesperson for the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum, said: “The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum is committed to managing these mines properly to create job opportunities, attract

investments, drive economic growth, strengthen Afghanistan’s industry as a whole, and lead the country toward self-reliance. In this regard, we are determined not to allow anyone to extract mines illegally, and we will curb smuggling so that all mining operations are carried out legally and exploration is conducted according to proper standards.”

Afghan added that the bidding process for mining contracts is progressing with the necessary facilitation and accuracy, and that only companies with proven technical capacity, sufficient financial resources, and practical commitment will be awarded contracts for extraction.

He stressed that all applications are carefully reviewed and no contract will be finalized without ensuring a company’s technical and financial capabilities.

The ministry’s spokesperson further said: “We

aim to sign contracts only with companies that have the necessary technical capacity, adequate financial means, and a strong commitment so that Afghanistan’s mines can be extracted according to proper standards and utilized effectively.”

Shams Rahman Ahmadzai, an economic affairs expert, said: “Whether it is Uzbekistan, China, Russia, or any other country investing here, they must also directly invest in the processing sector so that job opportunities are created for young people who currently suffer from unemployment and face many challenges. This will also help us move closer to economic self-reliance.”

Officials from the Ministry of Mines add that while some of the country’s major mines are still in the exploration phase, those that have entered production have directly benefited the public and generated revenue.

Beauticians say Taliban shut down dozens of home salons in Kabul

KABUL (Amu TV): Several female beauticians in Kabul say Taliban morality police have shut down dozens of home-based salons in recent days, part of a growing crackdown on women’s work and personal freedoms.

The women told Amu TV that Taliban agents raided their homes, confiscated their salon equipment, and forced family members to sign written pledges barring them from continuing their work. Some of the women also reported that the agents inspected their mobile phones during the raids.

The home salons had been operating covertly

after the Taliban ordered the closure of all formal beauty salons last year. Now, these informal businesses are also being targeted.

“Some of our colleagues warned us that Taliban officers were going door to door,” one beautician said. “They took our tools and told us we would be arrested and taken to court if we resumed working. I’ve moved my equipment elsewhere, but I’m still afraid.”

Beauticians said the agents demanded written guarantees from their families and issued threats of prosecution. Several women also said their

phones were searched without explanation.

Another beautician described the encounter: “They came to my home and wouldn’t even let me open the room I used as a salon. They made me take down my sign and said my male relatives must report to the district office.”

Taliban officials from the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice have previously detained women beauticians, releasing them hours later. The latest wave of closures has drawn criticism from rights activists.

“Around the world, peo-

ple have the right to study, work and support their families. We are no different,” one human rights activist said. “But the Taliban once again are punishing women who were just trying to survive.”

Some beauticians in Kabul had previously said Taliban officials demanded bribes in exchange for allowing them to operate quietly, only to be arrested later by the morality police. Others have reported threatening or inappropriate behavior from Taliban agents. The Taliban ministry did not respond to requests for comment.

Orchard owners face challenges

KABUL (TOLONews): The harvest season for fresh fruits has started in various provinces of the country, but some orchard owners who bring their products to Kabul markets for sale are complaining about the lack of a proper market and the low prices of their products.

They say that although the production of agricultural products has increased, the prices of these products have decreased, and their sales are also low.

One orchard owner, Nisar Ahmad, says: “In the past and previous years, when we brought apples, they were sold for up to 250 Afghanis, but now they reach only 120 Afghanis, it has decreased significantly. I came here to rent, and for every mann that I bought for 110 to 120 Afghanis, I incur a loss of 20 to 30 Afghanis.”

Another orchard owner, Syed Jamal, says: “We are trying to have cold storage

facilities so that we can store the apples there and sell them at a better price later.”

They call on the Islamic Emirate to give serious attention to providing opportunities for markets, building standard cold storage facilities, and exporting fresh fruits abroad.

Another orchard owner, Nazir, says: “We sell one mann of grapes for 100 Afghanis, but in this, 80 Afghanis are spent to pack them into bags, and we also buy water. If we go to Pakistan and the tariff is reduced, we will make a profit, but now there is no profit.”

Shah Mahmood, another orchard owner, also says: “One mann of grapes costs 100 Afghanis, and even that 100 Afghanis is not enough. In one grape vine, 4,000 Afghanis are spent, and a laborer takes 400 to 500 Afghanis, where does it all go? Some orchard own-

ers and farmers have lost heart from farming.”

On the other hand, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock emphasizes the high quality of Afghanistan’s fruits and agricultural products and calls for the establishment of markets, cold storage, processing factories, and the use of domestic products in government institutions.

The Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Livestock, Mirwais Haji Zada, says: “Afghanistan has several times more production than its consumption. In the first step, our export relations should increase, and secondly, efforts should be made in processing, packaging, agricultural complexes, and standard cold storage facilities. The government should transfer land to the private sector so that the private sector can invest.”

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation,

and Livestock says that it has started efforts, in cooperation with investors, to promote the export of fresh fruits and the establishment of domestic markets.

The Ministry also urges people to support farmers by using domestic products.

The spokesperson for the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock, Ghulam Mohammad Kazem Shahamat, expresses his views as follows: “The Ministry of Agriculture is trying to cooperate with domestic investors to increase the export of these products so that farmers can generate more income from selling their products.”

The lack of a specific marketing strategy, the absence of processing centers, and the lack of packaging and export facilities are seen as major factors that have led to price reductions and the losses suffered by farmers.

Seasonal winds in Nimroz seriously disturb daily life

ZARANJ (Pajhwok): In northwestern Nimroz province where rainfall has declined due to climate change and most of the land is arid and sandy, some residents in Zaranj, the provincial capital, say seasonal 120-day wind has a destructive impact on their lives.

The moisture-laden winds typically blow from late May to late September, with an average speed of 80 to 120 kilometres per hour.

A health expert recommended increased use of face masks during this period. He said food should always be covered and drinking water must be boiled.

Environmental experts, meanwhile, emphasise the planting of drought-resistant trees and promoting drip irrigation systems.

Residents: 120-day storms cause serious problems
Imran Naroei, a shopkeeper in Zaranj city, told Pajhwok Afghan News: “Due to drought, all green lands have dried up and vegetation is now very scarce. In recent years, these dust storms have

become a torment. All the dust enters our homes and brings germs along with it.”

He added: “These storms and the rising dust contaminate fruits and vegetables. Many of us suffer from respiratory problems like asthma, which is very distressing.”

Another local, Hafizullah, who runs a shop, said he has to clean his goods at least ten times a day, yet dust continues to settle on them. Sometimes, due to the intensity of the storm, markets are deserted for at least three days a week, making it difficult for people to go shopping.

He said: “Nimroz used to be green and was known as Asia’s grain warehouse, but now it has become a city of dust and storms. If green spaces were developed, the amount of dust would reduce.” He urged the caretaker government to take steps to reduce drought and develop green spaces in northern Zaranj.

Meanwhile, Parvin, a 30-year-old woman who works as a cleaner in people’s homes to earn a living,

said: “Zaranj now has neither water nor greenery. I sweep houses every day, but the dust never ends. I breathe in the dust, and now I have shortness of breath.”

She explained that cleaning the dust from walls and carpets takes hours and leaves her body aching.

“Some days, the storm and air pollution are so severe that if the windows are open, sand falls on our heads, but if we close them, we suffocate from the heat,” she added.

Hashim Basri, another resident of Nimroz, said that in addition to other problems, the storm also causes power outages and disruptions to telecommunications networks.

Haji Mohammad Yousuf, a 50-year-old resident, said: “This year’s storms are so intense that people can’t even see each other’s faces, and drivers have to turn on their headlights during the day. As shopkeepers, we clean our shops several times a day. These storms have ruined our farmlands.”

He added: “The winds of

Nimroz have existed for over a century, and these sand dunes have always been here. But when the area was lush and full of water, the sand didn’t reach the city. Due to consecutive droughts, Nimroz has turned into a barren, dusty region.”

Health expert: Dust storms cause diseases

Farhad Hamdard, an internal medicine specialist in the province, said the storms could carry microbes and spread microbial and respiratory illnesses as well as allergies.

According to him, all city residents, particularly children, were at high risk of diseases.

He noted that in recent months, most of his patients were children suffering from diarrhoea and intestinal infections – illnesses caused by breathing polluted air and consuming food contaminated with dust.

He stressed that wearing masks during storms is essential, as the wind easily carries germs that can quickly enter food and water.

He advised parents to boil water before drinking

to prevent children from contracting infectious diseases.

Environmental experts: Harmful effects of winds must be curbed

Mohammad Faisal Wahedi, an environmental expert in Nimroz, said the 120-day winds, once merely a seasonal phenomenon, have now – due to climate change and repeated droughts – turned into persistent, powerful storms.

He explained that the loss of forest cover has allowed these storms to cause serious damage to agriculture, livestock, and people’s livelihoods, thereby increasing economic and social pressures.

He suggested several measures to mitigate the harmful effects of the winds: protecting the remaining trees, restoring forests, expanding green spaces, and linking the Kamal Khan dam’s irrigation channels to various parts of the province to supply water and support plant growth.

Meanwhile, Eng. Enayatullah Sarwari, another expert in the province, said



that to combat this issue, underground water sources should be properly managed, drought-resistant trees planted, and farmers trained in drip irrigation techniques.

Negative impact of the 120-day winds on agriculture & plant cultivation

Asadullah, an official at the Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock Department, said the winds have extremely negative effects on farming and plant cultivation in the province.

He explained: “The start

of these winds coincides with the planting and harvesting seasons of agricultural products. They cause soil erosion and deplete the land of its minerals. When the soil is impoverished, plants cannot absorb nutrients and grow – they eventually become dry.”

According to the department, due to wind erosion and recent droughts, much of the land has become unsuitable for farming.

Public Works Deptt
Jan Mohammad Badri, Head of the Nimroz Public

Works Department, said the seasonal 120-day winds cause the movement and accumulation of drifting sands, severely damaging roads and often blocking them.

He added that the department was responsible for maintaining inter-provincial roads, national highways, and regional routes. To combat the sand buildup in vulnerable areas, daily and ongoing clearing is carried out with bulldozers according to a fixed schedule, to prevent road closures to traffic.

Vance and Lammy host Ukraine talks ahead of US-Russia summit

LONDON: US Vice-President JD Vance and UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy are hosting a meeting of senior security officials near London to discuss the war in Ukraine.

Earlier on Saturday, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer had a call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, and said they agreed it would be a "vital forum" to discuss progress towards peace. Zelenskyy has stressed he will make no territorial concessions to Russia ahead of a summit between US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin next week to discuss the future of the war.

Trump earlier signalled Ukraine may have to cede territory to end the war, which began with Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022. Saturday's meeting is understood to be taking place at Chevening, Lammy's official country residence in Kent, where Vance and his family are currently staying, and to have been called at the request of the US.

Senior security officials from the US, Ukraine and Europe will take part. Trump and Putin are set to meet in Alaska on 15 August to discuss the future of the war in Ukraine.

Speaking on a potential deal to end the war, Trump said on Friday that there "will be some swapping of territories, to the betterment of both". "You're looking at territory that's been fought over for three and a half years, a lot of Russians have died. A lot of Ukrainians have died," the US president said. Russia has consistently insisted on Ukraine recognising Russian sovereignty over several Ukrainian regions, agreeing to demilitarisation and abandoning its Nato aspirations.

Trump's position has also consistently involved Ukraine sacrificing land for peace. While Zelenskyy has been careful not to criticise Trump, his post on social media makes clear that he will not accept it. In a Telegram post on Saturday, he said "Ukrainians will not give their land to the occupier", and reiterated that Ukraine must be involved in any solution for peace. "We are ready, together with President Trump, together with all partners, to work for a real, and most importantly, lasting peace - a peace that will not collapse because of Moscow's wishes." This is what Ukraine, and many European allies, were always worried about - Trump and Putin trying to do a deal without Ukraine present.

In a post on X on Saturday, French President Emmanuel Macron said

Kyiv rules out 'gifting land to occupier'

KYIV: President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has ruled out Ukraine ceding land to Russia and demanded his country take part in negotiations in comments made before planned talks between the leaders of Russia and the United States. In a video shared on social media on Saturday, Zelenskyy said Ukraine was ready for "real decisions" that could bring a "dignified peace" but stressed there could be no violation of the constitution on territorial issues. "Ukrainians will not gift their land to the occupier," he said, warning that "decisions without Ukraine" would not bring peace.

"They will not achieve anything. These are stillborn decisions. They are unworkable decisions. And we all need real and genuine peace. Peace that people will respect," added Zelenskyy, whose country has been fighting off a full-scale Russian invasion since February 2022. His comments came hours after US President Donald Trump said a peace deal would involve "some swapping of territories" as he announced a meeting on Friday with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, in the US state of Alaska to discuss the war in Ukraine. Tens of thousands of people have been killed since Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine, which also forced millions of people to flee their homes. Three rounds of negotiations between Russia and Ukraine this year have failed to bear fruit, and it remains unclear whether a summit would bring peace any closer. On Thursday, Putin said he considers a meeting with Zelenskyy possible but the conditions for such negotiations must be right and the prerequisites for this are still far from being met. The Russian president did not outline his conditions, but previously, the Kremlin has insisted that Ukraine give up the territories Russia occupies, Western nations stop supplying Ukraine with weapons and they exclude Ukraine from membership in the NATO military alliance. "There has been a lot of speculation over what a ceasefire agreement could look like in which the lines of contact between Russia and Ukraine could be frozen for a number of years," Al Jazeera's Osama Bin Javard, reporting from Moscow, said. "It is also not clear whether the Russian demand that NATO's ambitions in Ukraine should be forever quashed is actually going to be met."

Separately on Saturday, Zelenskyy spoke with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and urged Ukraine's allies to take "clear steps" towards achieving a sustainable peace. Zelenskyy said he also shared the same view with Starmer on the danger of Russia's plan "to reduce everything to discussing the impossible". The Ukrainian president also spoke with his French counterpart, Emmanuel Macron. "I am grateful for the support. We exchanged views on the diplomatic situation," Zelenskyy said on social media, "it is truly important that the Russians do not succeed in deceiving anyone again". For his part, Macron said he had also spoken to Starmer and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and express the European countries' determination to support Ukraine. "Ukraine's future cannot be decided without the Ukrainians, who have been fighting for their freedom and security for over three years now," he said. "Europeans will also necessarily be part of the solution, as their own security is at stake." Meanwhile, national security advisers from Ukrainian allies - including the US, European Union nations and the UK - were gathering in Britain on Saturday to align their views ahead of the Putin-Trump summit. — Aljazeera

Ukraine's future could not "be decided without the Ukrainians" and warned that "Europeans will also necessarily be part of the solution, as their own security is at stake". Trump's words on Russia may have hardened in recent months, but for Ukraine they have yet to be followed by tangible actions. On Friday, a deadline set by the US president for Russia to agree to a ceasefire or face more sanctions passed without any apparent consequences.

The BBC's US partner CBS News, citing a senior White House official, reported that it remains possible

Zelensky could end up being involved in the meeting between Putin and Trump in some way, as planning for the Friday meeting is still fluid. On the ground there is a resignation that any initial peace talks may not include Ukraine.

Soldiers and civilians the BBC spoke to expressed a strong desire for peace. There is exhaustion from the constant fighting and Russian drone and missile attacks. But there is little evidence that Ukraine is willing to accept a peace at any price - much less one that will be forced on it without its voice being heard. — BBC



RAWALPINDI: A beautiful illuminated view of lighting in connection with 78th Independence Day of Pakistan.

Kazakhstan's president to visit Pakistan in November

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Kazakhstan's Ambassador to Pakistan H.E. Yerzhan Kistafin on Saturday expressed his country's readiness to provide full investment for the construction of new trade corridors through China to Central Asian States.

The initiative aims to replace the existing challenging land routes with improved connectivity, thereby boosting bilateral and regional trade. During his meeting with Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan, Ambassador Yerzhan Kistafin shared that the President of Kazakhstan will undertake a two-day official visit to Pakistan in the first week of November, said a press release.

The visit is expected to bring about major breakthroughs in bilateral relations between both countries. Prior to the visit, Joint Working Groups between Pakistan and Kazakhstan will be established in the fields of Commerce and Transport. He further emphasized his country's strong interest in expanding bilateral trade with Pakistan and discussed the existing corridor from Kashgar to Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan while he also proposed improvements to the trade route from Karachi to Chaman to Kandahar, presently available for trade.

Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan assured the Yerzhan Kistafin his full cooperation, reiterating that Pakistan is committed to take concrete measures for establishing trade corridors to Central Asian States through China, Afghanistan, and Iran. Referring to recent international conferences held in Belarus and Iran, he stated that regional countries play a pivotal role in promoting cross-border trade through land routes.

Abdul Aleem Khan added that Pakistan aspires to develop an inter-country road network similar to the Karakoram Highway. In the meeting, matters pending with NLC regarding trade agreements were also discussed. Federal Secretary for Communications Ali Sher Mehsud was also present in the meeting.

Rain lashes Lahore

E.P. Report

LAHORE: Heavy rain of the sixth spell of monsoon hit Lahore today, bringing with it a powerful one-hour downpour that submerged several low-lying areas and severely disrupted the city's power infrastructure.

From 1:35 PM to 2:35 PM, 65mm of rain was recorded in Pani Wala Talab, 58mm in Lakshmi Chowk and Gulberg, and varying intensities were reported across other neighborhoods: 39mm in Chowk Nakhuda, 26mm in Farrukhabad, 12mm in Iqbal Town, 10mm in Gulshan Ravi, and smaller amounts elsewhere.

The rainfall caused significant water accumulation on key roads including Lakshmi Chowk, Davis Road, Empress Road, Mall Road, Jail Road, and areas around Shimla Pahari and Haji Camp, bringing traffic to a crawl and creating hazardous conditions for commuters.

NAB recovery surges to Rs456.3b

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The recovery by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) surged to Rs 456.3 billion during the second quarter of 2025, reflecting a significant increase of Rs 365.29 billion compared to Rs 91.01 billion recovered in the first quarter of the same year.

According to a NAB spokesperson, out of the total recoveries amounting to Rs 547.31 billion during the first two quarters of 2025, movable and immovable properties worth Rs 532.33 billion have been disbursed or handed over to various ministries and departments of the federal and provincial governments, as well as financial institutions.

In addition, 12,611 affectees of different "cheating public at large" cases have also been compensated. In just the past two years, NAB has recovered an unprecedented Rs. 5,854.73 billion (Rs. 5.854 trillion)—a figure that is over 700% higher than the Rs. 839.08 billion recovered since the Bureau's inception.

This extraordinary milestone reflects the unwavering dedication and tireless efforts of NAB officers across the country, who have successfully reclaimed billions from corrupt and unscrupulous elements. According to the NAB spokesperson, key recoveries in the second quarter of 2025 include the retrieval of 51 Kanal of prime state land worth Rs. 29 billion in Sector E-11, Islamabad, by NAB Rawalpindi. The recovered land has been formally handed over to the Capital Development Authority (CDA).

In a major case involving cheating the public at large (B4U), NAB secured Rs. 3 billion, which will be disbursed among 17,214 affectees. An additional tranche of

Rs. 4 billion is expected to be recovered during the current quarter. In another major case involving Banker's City, NAB has secured the transfer of 640 Kanal and 11 Marla of high-value land. The proceeds from this recovery will be distributed among the affected individuals.

Separately, NAB Sukkur successfully recovered land worth Rs. 25.079 billion belonging to the National Highway Authority (NHA), marking a significant achievement in reclaiming public assets. The Bureau has also recovered 127 Kanal & 15 Marla of land valued at Rs. 895.160 million, belonging to the Education and Literacy Department, Government of Sindh.

From an impressive recovery portfolio, Rs. 384.270 billion worth of forest land was recovered in the quarter ending June 2025, contributing to a total forest land recovery value of Rs. 1,487.77 billion. NAB Lahore disbursed a tranche of Rs. 3.2 billion, recovered in the Eden case, to 11,880 affectees of the Society.

In Pak Arab case, eight properties valued at Rs. 3.9 billion were surrendered by the accused and are in the process of transfer to NAB. Proceeds from these assets will be disbursed to 2,500 affectees of the case. A plea bargain amounting to Rs. 2.181 billion is underway with owners of Elite Town Housing Society, with recovered funds intended for disbursement among 1,789 affectees.

The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has reaffirmed its commitment to recovering ill-gotten wealth and unlawfully held state assets. In coordination with Revenue Departments across all provinces, NAB is actively pursuing the retrieval of encroached properties.

ANP workers hold protest against PTI KP MPA

Aneest Takar

MARDAN: The Awami National Party (ANP) activists held protest demonstration on Saturday against the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) MPA Tariq Aaryani over his alleged hooliganism towards a Khuda-i-Khidmatgar worker of ANP.

The ANP workers while holding protest blocked Par Hoti Road, where strong slogans were raised against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf MNA Muhammad Atif Khan and MPA Tariq Aaryani. The protestors demanded not only for immediate registration of FIR against the MPA but also providing justice to the affected ANP Khuda-i-Khidmatgar named Faiq-ur-Rehman.

The protesting activists were led by City Mayor Himayatullah Mayar, ANP District President Imran Mandori, District General Secretary Binyamin Khaji

Sabz Ali Khan, Sohail Bacha, Yousaf Khan Bilandkhel, Khaji Abdul Aziz, Niaz Ali Khan, and dozens of the party village council chairmen.

While addressing the protesting rally held in front of residence of Faiq-ur-Rehman, the speakers warned MNA Atif to rein in his alleged hooligan MPA Tariq Aaryani, who continuously was insulting respectable citizens. They said Faiq-ur-Rehman is not only an ANP worker and a soldier in Bacha Khan Baba's caravan but also had a good reputation in the relevant area.

They accused that the MNA of being the ring-leader of a gang akin to "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" and said he lacks honor and dignity. The ANP in Mardan declared that they would not refrain from taking up arms to defend the honor and respect of their workers. They made it clear that after this hooliganism by

the PTI MPA, the ANP would not sit idle.

They demanded of the DIG Mardan Region and DPO Mardan to register an FIR against MPA Tariq Aaryani, MNA Mohammad Atif's private secretary Ismail, and ten unidentified gunmen armed with Kalashnikovs. Otherwise, an important ANP Mardan district meeting had been called on Sunday, which would be attended by former Chief Minister Amir Haider Khan Hoti and other senior central and provincial party leaders.

They warned that in the said meeting, the future course of action would be decided — which included staging an armed and stick-wielding sit-in protest outside the homes of MNA Mohammad Atif and MPA Tariq Aaryani. They said this would be done to show them what the consequences were of harassing ANP workers. Later, the protestors dispersed peacefully.

Syria backs out of Paris talks with Kurdish-led fighters

DAMASCUS: Syria's new government will not take part in planned meetings with the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in Paris, Syria's state news agency has reported, as tensions mount between the two sides.

SANA's report on Saturday cast doubt over an integration deal signed this year by the armed group and Syria's interim government, which took over after the overthrow of longtime President Bashar al-Assad in December. Quoting an unnamed government source, the news agency said the government wants future negotiations to be held in the Syrian capital, Damascus, "as it is the legitimate and national address for dialogue among

Syrians".

The SDF was the main force allied with the United States in Syria during fighting that defeated ISIL (ISIS) in 2019. In March, the SDF signed a deal with the new government to join Syria's state institutions. The deal aims to stitch back together a country fractured by 14 years of war, paving the way for Kurdish-led forces that hold a quarter of Syria and regional Kurdish governing bodies to integrate with Damascus.

However, the agreement did not specify how the SDF will be merged with Syria's armed forces. The group has previously said its forces must join as a bloc while the government wants them to join as indi-

viduals. Saturday's report comes a day after the Kurdish administration held a conference involving several Syrian minority communities, the first such event since al-Assad's removal from power.

The conference's final statement called for "a democratic constitution that ... establishes a decentralised state" and guarantees the participation of all components of Syrian society. Damascus has previously rejected calls for decentralisation. In its report on Saturday, SANA said the government "stresses that the SDF conference dealt a blow to the ongoing negotiation efforts" towards implementing the March agreement. — Aljazeera

Nagasaki marks 80th anniversary of US atomic bomb attack

TOKYO (AFP): Twin cathedral bells will ring in unison in Nagasaki for the first time in 80 years, as the Japanese city commemorates the moment the United States decimated it with an atomic bomb eight decades ago.

Crowds are set to gather at Nagasaki's Immaculate Conception Cathedral on Saturday morning, as the church's two bells will ring together for the first time since 1945. The US dropped an atomic bomb on the southwestern port city of Nagasaki on August 9, 1945, at 11:02am local time, three days after it dropped a nuclear weapon on Hiroshima.

About 74,000 people were killed in Nagasaki, while 140,000 were killed in Hiroshima. On August 15, 1945, Japan surrendered, marking the end of World War II. The church in Nagasaki, widely known as Urakami Cathedral, was rebuilt in 1959 after it was almost completely destroyed in the monstrous atomic explosion, the hypocentre of which was just a few hundred metres from the religious building. Only one of two church bells was recovered from the rubble. But, funded by Catholics in the US, a new second bell has been constructed and restored to the tower. It will chime on Saturday for the first time in 80 years at the exact moment the bomb was dropped.

Nearly 100 countries are set to attend this year's commemorations in Nagasaki. Among the participants will be a representative from Russia, which has not been invited since its 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Israel, whose ambassador to Japan was not invited to the memorial last year over the country's war on Gaza, is also expected to attend.

"We wanted participants to come and witness directly the reality of the catastrophe that a nuclear weapon can cause," a Nagasaki official said last week.

Blast at Hezbollah site in Lebanon kills 6 soldiers

BEIRUT (AFP): Lebanon's army said a blast at a weapons depot near the Israeli border on Saturday killed six soldiers as a military source said troops were removing munitions from a Hezbollah facility.

Under a truce that ended a recent war between Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah, the army has been deploying in south Lebanon and dismantling the militant group's infrastructure there. The deaths come as Lebanon tackles the thorny issue of disarming Hezbollah, with the cabinet this week tasking the army with developing a plan to do so by year end and the Iran-backed group pushing back.

Iran said Saturday it opposed the Lebanese government's decision. An army statement gave a preliminary toll of six soldiers killed and others wounded "while an army unit was inspecting a weapons depot and dismantling its contents in Wadi Zibqin," in the Tyre district near the Israeli border.

Investigations were underway to determine the cause of the blast, it added. A military source, requesting anonymity as they were not authorized to brief the media, told AFP the blast

took place "inside a Hezbollah military facility." Troops were "removing munitions and unexploded ordnance left over from the recent war" between Israel and Hezbollah when the blast occurred, the source added.

President Joseph Aoun said he was informed by army commander Rodolphe Haykal of the "painful incident" that led to troop casualties. Prime Minister Nawaf Salam paid tribute on X to the troops who were killed "while performing their national duty," calling the army the protector of Lebanon's "unity and its legitimate institutions."

The blast came days after Andrea Tenenti, spokesperson for UN peacekeepers in Lebanon, said that troops had "discovered a vast network of fortified tunnels" in the same area. Under the November ceasefire which sought to end more than a year of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, weapons in Lebanon should be restricted to state institutions. The government has tasked the army with presenting a plan for restricting weapons to government forces by the end of August.

Lebanon's cabinet met twice this week on the issue, while Hezbollah has rejected the government's decision to take away its weapons. A senior adviser to supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei said Saturday that Iran "is certainly opposed to the disarmament of Hezbollah... Iran has always supported the people and the resistance of Lebanon and continues to do so."

Lebanon's cabinet on Thursday discussed a US proposal that includes a timetable for Hezbollah's disarmament, with Washington pressing Beirut to take action. The government endorsed the introduction of the US text without discussing specific timelines, and called for the deployment of Lebanese troops in border areas. It also called for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from five south Lebanon areas they have occupied since the recent war. In April, Lebanon's military said three troops were killed in a munitions blast in the south, just days after a soldier was killed and three others wounded in another explosion as authorities said they had been dismantling mines in a tunnel.

Thai soldiers injured by landmine near Cambodia

BANGKOK: Three Thai soldiers have been injured by a landmine while patrolling the border with Cambodia, according to the army, days after the two neighbours agreed to a detailed ceasefire following a violent five-day conflict last month.

One soldier lost a foot and two others were injured after one of them stepped on a landmine as they patrolled an area between Thailand's Sisaket and Cambodia's Preah Vihear provinces on Saturday morning, the Royal Thai Armed Forces said. One soldier suffered a severe leg injury, another was wounded in the back and arm, and the third had extreme pressure damage to the ear, the military said.

Cambodia's defence ministry said that it "has yet to

receive clear confirmation from Cambodian frontline forces concerning the explosion," adding that its army has been strictly respecting the spirit of the ceasefire. Thailand said the incident took place within its territory in an area recently cleared of landmines. It would lodge a complaint against Cambodia for violating a treaty that bans the use of landmines and for infringing Thai sovereignty, the Thai foreign ministry said in a statement.

Both Thailand and Cambodia are signatories to the Ottawa Convention against landmines. It is the third incident in a few weeks in which Thai soldiers have been injured by mines while patrolling along the border. Two previous similar inci-

dents led to the downgrading of diplomatic relations and triggered five days of fighting.

The Southeast Asian neighbours were engaged in deadly border clashes from July 24-28, in the worst fighting between the two in more than a decade. The exchanges of artillery fire, infantry battles and jet fighter sorties killed at least 43 people. The clashes halted with a ceasefire on July 28 after United States President Donald Trump warned both sides that he would not conclude trade deals with them if fighting continued. A meeting of defence officials in Kuala Lumpur ended on Thursday with a deal to extend the ceasefire, and the two sides also agreed to allow observers. — Aljazeera