

**PTI moves LHC**  
**E.P. Report**

LAHORE: PTI has taken legal action to secure permission for its Workers' Convention scheduled for August 14 at a stadium in Shahdara. PTI leader Akmal Khan moved the Lahore High Court after district authorities failed to decide on the party's request to hold the gathering. Justice Khalid Ishaq, hearing the matter, overruled Registrar Office objections and directed that petition be fixed for hearing.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

## Security forces foil attack on Pak-Afghan border

### 33 Khwarij killed, weapons recovered

**E.P. Report**

RAWALPINDI: Security Forces killed 33 Khwarij belonging to Indian proxy Fitna al Khwaraj while foiling an infiltration attempt through the Pak-Afghanistan border in general area Sambazan Zhob District (Balochistan). "Own troops effectively engaged and thwarted their attempt to infiltrate. As a result of precise, bold and skillful engagement, thirty three Indian sponsored Khwarij were sent to hell. A large cache of weapons, ammunition & explosives was also recovered," said a news release issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR). The Security Forces of Pakistan remain resolute and unwavering in their commitment to defend the nation's frontiers and to eradicate the menace of Indian sponsored terrorism from the country.

Meanwhile, President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif have extended tribute to the security forces for successfully thwarting and taking action against terrorists of Fitna al-Khawarij who attempted to infiltrate Pakistan from the Pak-Afghan border in the Zhob district. In their separate statements on Friday, they commended the security forces for killing 33 Khawarij terrorists during the operation.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif paid tribute to the security forces for successfully thwarting an infiltration attempt by Khawarij terrorists from the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in the Zhob district.

The prime minister praised the operation in which 33 militants were eliminated, calling it a remarkable success in the nation's ongoing fight against terrorism, a Prime Minister's Office news release said. "Our brave soldiers risked their lives to foil this infiltration attempt and crushed the nefarious designs of the terrorists," the prime minister said.

PM Shehbaz reaffirmed the nation's unity and unwavering support for its armed forces in the battle against extremism, stating, "The entire nation stands shoulder to shoulder with our security forces in this fight." He further

reiterated his government's firm commitment to eradicating terrorism in all its forms from the country. "We are determined to eliminate every trace of terrorism from our soil," the Prime Minister declared.

Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi Friday lauded the Pakistan security forces for successfully thwarting an infiltration attempt by militants from across the Pakistan-Afghanistan border into the Zhob district of Balochistan.

According to the Interior Minister, the militants, described as members of the group "Fitna-e-Hindustan," attempted to cross into Pakistani territory with the aim of carrying out terrorist activities. Timely intelligence and swift action by the country's security forces prevented the infiltration and led to the elimination of all 33 militants involved.

"Pakistan's brave security forces, through timely and decisive action, sent 33 terrorists of Fitna-e-Hindustan to hell," Naqvi said, commending the troops' professionalism and courage. He described the operation as a "major success" in the fight against terrorism, adding that the "end of the terrorists of Fitna-e-Hindustan is a humiliating death." Naqvi vowed that Pakistan would not spare any terrorist or their facilitators, stressing that the state's resolve against terrorism remains unshakable.

"We salute the security forces for crushing the nefarious designs of these terrorists," he added. Naqvi further praised the operational skills, professionalism, and bravery displayed by the troops during the operation. He said the entire nation stands united behind its security forces and views their actions with deep admiration. "The nation is proud of the security forces' professional expertise and valor. We stand shoulder to shoulder with them in this fight," he remarked. Security analysts say the incident underscores the ongoing challenges along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, where militant groups continue to attempt cross-border attacks despite heightened vigilance.

## PTI leaders removed from NA after ECP disqualification

**E.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf's Omar Ayub has been removed from his post as Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly, according to an official notification issued by the National Assembly Secretariat.

The Secretariat has declared the position of Opposition Leader vacant and reclaimed the Opposition Leader's chamber from the PTI leader. A new notification for the appointment of a replacement is expected soon from the Speaker.

In a major move, the Secretariat announced the

removal of three key parliamentary roles held by PTI members. Alongside Omar Ayub's dismissal, Zartaj Gul has lost her position as Parliamentary Leader, and Ahmad Chattha has been stripped of his role as Deputy Parliamentary Leader. Furthermore, the notification confirmed that Omar Ayub has also been delisted from the Public Accounts Committee and the Finance Committee. Seven disqualified PTI members have lost their memberships from various standing committees.

The notification further revealed that these seven PTI lawmakers have been

removed from 15 standing committees. Among them, Sahibzada Hamid Raza has been removed as Chairman of the Human Rights Committee, Zartaj Gul is no longer a member of that committee, and Rai Hassan Nawaz has been stripped of his Chairmanship of the Railways Committee. These developments follow a recent ruling by the Anti-Terrorism Court, which handed down convictions to several PTI leaders, including Omar Ayub and Shibli Faraz. Subsequently, the Election Commission of Pakistan disqualified them from holding public office.

## Soldier martyred, in attack on FC checkpost

**E.P. Report**

BANNU: A quadcopter drone attack targeted a Frontier Corps (FC) checkpost in the Takhti Khel Bakakhel area of Bannu, resulting in the martyrdom of one FC soldier and injuring three others. The injured personnel were swiftly transported to a nearby hospital.

In response, the FC and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police launched a coordinated search operation, while imposing an indefinite curfew in the neighboring Havid area under orders from DPO Saleem Abbas Kulachi. Residents were instructed to remain at home from 5 a.m. onwards. Officials warned that anyone found aiding or sheltering militants would face strict legal consequences.

This incident underscores a rising trend in militant use of drone technology in southern KP. These attacks frequently utilize commercially available quadcopters carrying improvised explosive devices. According to Reuters, militants have launched at least eight such drone attacks in the past 2.5 months in Bannu and its surroundings, posing a serious security threat.

Meanwhile, authorities imposed an indefinite curfew in Bannu's Havid area as security forces launch a large-scale operation against terrorists. According to DPO Saleem Abbas Kulachi, the operation was initiated following intelligence confirming the presence of armed militants. Residents have been ordered to stay indoors from 5am until further notice. The DPO also warned that anyone found aiding or harboring terrorists will face severe legal action.

## Marwat criticises PTI

**E.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) senior leader Sher Afzal Marwat has strongly criticised his party, calling the current leadership incompetent.

Sher Afzal Marwat reveals that internal failures, poor decisions, and a lack of political direction are key reasons behind PTI's rapid decline. Marwat said he has been highlighting the party's incompetence and negligence, but no action has been taken.

# CM KP directs DCs to enhance public service delivery

**E.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur on Friday chaired the Deputy Commissioners (DCs) Conference here Thursday and reviewed progress on provincial government Good Governance Roadmap.

The meeting was attended by relevant provincial cabinet members, chief secretary, additional chief secretary, administrative secretaries, divisional commissioners and all deputy commissioners from across the province. The conference reviewed progress on the provincial government's Good Governance Roadmap, focusing on nine key sectors including health, education, agriculture,

livestock, tourism, social welfare, local government, administration, and security. Specific targets were set for deputy commissioners in seven priority areas, with a completion deadline of December 2025.

In the health sector, the goal is to ensure 100% availability of medicines, equipment and medical staff at all primary health centres. Education targets include ensuring 100% attendance of teachers and students, as well as providing all missing facilities in government schools. In agriculture, the government aims to guarantee full availability of fertilizers, seeds, machinery, and pesticides at all farm service centres while in livestock, veterinary hospitals must be fully equipped with the necessary staff, medicines and

tools. Tourism-related targets include making all facilitation desks and restrooms in tourist areas fully operational with complete amenities. The social welfare sector will focus on improving management of all government-run Dar-ul-Amans, Panahgahs, and Zamung Kor centres. Local government targets involve ensuring cleanliness and improved service delivery in public places such as bus stands, parks, fruit and vegetable markets, and slaughterhouses, as well as proper waste disposal, sewerage systems and sanitation staff deployment in all village councils. Administrative targets include strict price control and the availability of quality food items, while the security agenda



calls for profiling of suspected terrorists.

The conference also reviewed the implementation of a 99-point agenda designed to improve public service delivery. It was decided that implementation of the agenda will be monitored independently through third-party evaluation. Addressing the meeting, KP CM emphasized the key role of

deputy commissioners in executing the government's vision at the ground level. He stressed that all district departments report to deputy commissioners, who are responsible for ensuring results.

He assured that along with responsibilities, DCs would be granted full authority, and in cases of negligence, accountability would begin with them.

He underlined that government's ultimate objective is to align public service delivery with citizens' expectations ensuring basic facilities are provided at their doorsteps. He directed DCs to improve implementation of the public agenda, hold regular "Khuli Kacharies" with elected representatives to strengthen public engagement and utilize social media effec-

tively to gather citizen feedback.

CM further instructed deputy commissioners to give equal priority to development projects alongside routine administrative work maintaining high quality standards without compromise and avoiding unnecessary delays. All development projects across departments should be regularly reviewed at the district level, he directed. The chief minister also announced that provincial government would soon launch a rural sanitation program under which sanitation staff would be hired at the village council level. He urged DCs to pay special attention to implementation of program and actively engage local communities to ensure its success.

# The Frontier Post

## China warns Philippines

BEIJING: China has sharply criticised Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr after he suggested his country would be drawn into a potential conflict between China and the United States over Taiwan. During a state visit to India this week, Marcos said the Philippines' geographic proximity and the large Filipino community in Taiwan meant the country would be forced to get involved in the event of war. — Aljazeera

# Pakistan condemns Israeli plan to take control of Gaza city

PM for action plan to achieve \$30b IT exports target

**E.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday strongly condemned the Israeli cabinet's recent approval of a plan to assume control of Gaza City, calling it illegal and illegitimate and warning that the move represents a dangerous escalation in the ongoing conflict in Palestine.

In a statement posted on his official X account, PM Sharif said the latest development would only deepen the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and derail all prospects for peace in the region. "We strongly condemn the Israeli cabinet's approval of a plan to take illegal and illegitimate control of Gaza City. This tantamounts to a dangerous escalation in an already catastrophic war against the people of Palestine," the prime minister said.

He emphasized that the root cause of the ongoing tragedy is Israel's "prolonged, illegal occupation of Palestinian territory," which he said continues to block any meaningful path to lasting peace. "As long as this occupation endures, peace will remain elusive," PM Sharif warned. The Prime Minister reiterated Pakistan's unwavering support for the Palestinian people, reaffirming their right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, in accordance with United Nations and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) resolutions. Calling on the international community, PM Sharif urged urgent intervention to stop what he described as Israel's "unwarranted aggression," to protect innocent civilians, and to ensure the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza.

## Bilawal condoles with Shehbaz

**E.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday to offer condolences on the passing of the Prime Minister's cousin, Mian Shahid Shafi. Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari expressed heartfelt condolences to the prime minister, prayed for the departed soul's elevation in ranks, and for patience and strength for the bereaved family, a Prime Minister's Office news release said. Senator Sherry Rehman and Member of the National Assembly Asifa Bhutto-Zardari accompanied Chairman Bilawal during the meeting. In a separate gesture, Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari also contacted the elder brother of the deceased, Javed Shafi, via telephone to extend his condolences. The meeting was also attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, Federal Minister for Public Affairs Unit Rana Mubashir Iqbal, Advisor to the Prime Minister on Political Affairs Rana Sanaulah, Minister of State for National Food Security & Research Malik Rasheed Ahmad Siddiqui, Minister of State for Power Division Abdur Rehman Kanju, MNA Saira Afzal Tarar, Speaker Punjab Assembly Malik Ahmad Khan, and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Talha Burki.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif appreciating the achievement of the previous year's IT export target of \$3.8 billion by the Ministry of Information Technology, directed the formulation of a comprehensive action plan for annual targets and measures to surpass the \$30 billion target in the coming years.

The prime minister, chairing a meeting to review the initiatives of National Information Technology Board (NITB) and the Ministry of Information Technology, said that the government was taking measures to advance its economy through digitization, aligning it with modern requirements.

Highlighting the introduction of complete digital ecosystem to achieve IT exports target of \$30 billion, he directed the restructuring of NITB and the recruitment of the best talent from the market. He

appreciated the establishment of centers to make youth, especially women, self-reliant in the IT sector for employment opportunities, as thousands of youth were securing respectable employment through the Digital Youth Hub and gaining the capability to compete internationally.

He observed that the implementation of e-Office had led to paperless governance in government offices, resulting in savings of both time and resources. During the briefing on the progress of NITB's restructuring and the initiatives of the Ministry of Information Technology, it was informed that in the financial year 2025, Pakistan's IT sector exports achieved a 19% growth, surpassing the \$3.8 billion target, while the number of freelancers in the country increased by 91%.

(Continued on Back Page)

## FO lauds Iranian nation's unity during 12-day war

**Saqib Mushtaq**

he mentioned.

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office Spokesperson, Ambassador, Shafqat Ali Khan on Friday said Pakistan and Iran have reaffirmed their commitment to deepening bilateral relations, promoting regional peace, and standing in solidarity with the Palestinian and Kashmiri people.

The foreign office spokesperson addressed the weekly press briefing at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs here. Welcoming President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian's state visit to Pakistan on August 2-3, Ambassador Khan noted that the visit came at a pivotal time for the region. The Iranian President was accompanied by a high-level delegation, including Foreign Minister Seyyed Abbas Araghchi and senior ministers, he added.

During the visit, he said President Pezeshkian held meetings with President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar. President Zardari, in his meeting, underscored the fraternal ties between the two nations grounded in shared religion, culture, and mutual respect. He strongly condemned the "unprovoked Israeli aggression" against Iran and lauded the Iranian nation's unity and bravery during the recent 12-day war. He expressed hope that the visit would further cement bilateral ties, Ambassador Khan said.

President Pezeshkian, in turn, thanked Pakistan for its consistent support during the war, praising its diplomatic advocacy for de-escalation and peaceful conflict resolution, he added. In talks with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Ambassador Khan said both leaders emphasized solidarity and discussed expanding the bilateral trade volume from the current \$3 billion to \$10 billion. Key initiatives included enhancing barter trade, increasing export quotas for rice, fruits, and meat, and operationalizing border markets,

The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar also called on President Pezeshkian and separately met with his Iranian counterpart Seyyed Abbas Araghchi to hold preliminary discussions on bilateral and regional issues, he said. Ambassador Shafqat Ali Khan highlighted Pakistan's continued humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza. On August 3, Senator Ishaq Dar oversaw the dispatch of Pakistan's 17th aid consignment to Gaza, 100 tons of food, powdered milk, and medical equipment.

A day later, Senator Dar officiated the send-off ceremony for the 18th humanitarian aid consignment, consisting of dry rations, meals, and medicines. This brings Pakistan's total humanitarian assistance to Gaza to 18 shipments totaling 1,815 tons, reaffirming Islamabad's steadfast support for the Palestinian cause. On that occasion, he said Senator Dar reiterated Pakistan's call for an immediate ceasefire, protection of civilians, and a political solution based on the pre-1967 borders in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions.

Ambassador Khan categorically rejected what he called "baseless and unfounded allegations" regarding the involvement of Pakistani nationals in the Ukraine conflict. "No verifiable evidence has been presented, nor has Pakistan been formally approached by Ukrainian authorities," he said, adding that the matter would be taken up with Kyiv to seek clarification. The spokesperson condemned in the strongest terms the storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque by thousands of Israeli settlers, including senior officials and Knesset members. "These provocations, accompanied by offensive declarations, are deliberate attempts to inflame religious sentiments and destabilize the region," he warned, urging the UN and international community to act urgently to safeguard the sanctity of Al-Aqsa and uphold Palestinian rights.

## Govt cannot stop Imran's sons: Aleema

**E.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: PTI founder Imran Khan's sister, Aleema Khan, has stated that the government cannot stop Imran Khan's sons from coming to Pakistan.

Speaking to the media outside the court, Aleema said, "There are several cases against us, and we won't be granted bail here. Arrest warrants have been issued against me in a murder case. If they want to arrest me, they will. These are all baseless cases. My crime is delivering Imran Khan's message to the people. Is it a crime to share Imran Khan's message?"

She added, "We will even tell the judge that he is under pressure. Even police officers admit they are under pressure. Throw out these fake cases and become heroes the nation will stand by you. We're constantly traveling between Rawalpindi and Lahore for cases. If we're guilty, punish us. If not, give us justice."

Aleema stated that poor people travel 8 to 9 hours to attend hearings and also help others. "Call everyone at once and either prove their crimes or let them go. Confidence in the judicial system has eroded. Judges must restore it." She said a political demonstration will also be held on August 14. "Muslims sacrificed for independence on August 14.





LAHORE: Labourers sitting in the pocket of a loader crane while heading to a worksite on Walton Road. —APP Photo

## Norwegian police delegation meets IGP

LAHORE (APP): A delegation from the Norwegian police paid an official visit to the Central Police Office (CPO) on Friday, where they engaged in productive discussions with Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar.

The meeting focused on strengthening security cooperation and addressing common law enforcement challenges. Additional IG Sultan Ahmad Chaudhry, AIG Admin Dr. Asad Ijaz Malhi, AIG Inspection Shaista Nadeem, SSP Investigation Rawalpindi Saba Sattar, and other senior officers were present while the Norwegian delegation comprised Deputy Chief of Norwegian Police Ketil Haukass, Norwegian Chief Superintendent Torkjeld Jevne, newly appointed Nordic Liaison Officer Borge Enoksen, outgoing Nordic Liaison Officer Per Martin Bjartan, and Advisor to the Nordic Liaison Officer at the Norwegian Embassy, Sagheer Afzal.

During the meeting, the IGP highlighted ongoing initiatives to safeguard foreign nationals, including Norwegians, in the province. He emphasised the Special Protection Unit's vital role in ensuring their security and spoke about Punjab Police's adoption of IT-based policing for enhanced crime control. The officials discussed continued cooperation to combat terrorism, extremism, narcotics, organized crime, human trafficking and money laundering. Training exchanges focusing on cyber-crime and digital fraud were also proposed to tackle emerging threats.

The IGP presented the delegation head with a special book, Thanay Punjab De, showcasing police station upgrades across Punjab. In return, the delegation gifted a souvenir to AIG Inspection Shaista Nadeem as a token of goodwill.

**IGP orders resolving issues of cops:** Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar met with police employees and their families and listened to their problems and issued orders for immediate relief.

## Sharjeel announces vibrant Independence Day festivities

**F.P. Report**

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the entire nation should celebrate the historic defeat inflicted on the enemy by the Pakistani armed forces in a grand manner, as only the older generations had witnessed the wars of the past, while the current younger generation has, for the first time, seen its Air Force, Army, Navy, and the entire nation united in a spectacular victory.

Speaking in the Provincial Assembly, Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit Sharjeel Inam Memon said that, in this spirit, special events are being organized at the district level across Sindh, including sports competitions, women's walks, musical performances, fireworks, and other colorful programs. A special Independence Day ceremony was held at the Quaid-e-Azam's mausoleum with the participation of the

Sindh Chief Minister, cabinet members, and special children, while August 11 was observed as a dedicated day for minorities.

Sharjeel Inam Memon said that a spectacular musical evening is scheduled to be held in Hyderabad today with the support of the Sindh government and Arif Habib. On August 10, a vibrant music program will take place in Sukkur, while on August 13, Pakistan's largest grand show will be held at the National Stadium in Karachi, featuring the country's leading artists and celebrities. In addition, unique events such as donkey races and boat races at Sea View will also be organized.

He said that the Chief Minister of Sindh has invited the business community, opposition leaders, all parliamentary leaders, religious organizations, and prominent individuals from various walks of life to participate in these events, so that the celebration becomes a collective cele-

bration of the entire nation, rather than that of any single group.

He appealed to the public to actively participate in the grand shows being held in Sukkur, Karachi, and other cities, emphasizing that living nations celebrate their national festivals with great enthusiasm. He stated that, during this conflict, the entire Pakistani nation stood shoulder to shoulder with its armed forces, sending a strong message to the world that unity is the key to victory. He added that Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari also presented Pakistan's stance on the global stage alongside a parliamentary delegation, where all political parties displayed national unity.

Sharjeel Inam Memon once again invited the public—through the assembly floor and the media—to make Independence Day truly memorable by joining the celebrations in Sukkur on August 10, at Karachi's National Stadium on August 13, and in other cities across the country.

## Minister meets Int'l delegation to review HPV campaign

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Minister for Health & Population Welfare Dr. Azra Fazal Pechuho chaired a high-level meeting with an international delegation and donor partners to review preparedness for the upcoming Human Papilloma-virus (HPV) vaccination campaign in the province.

The meeting was attended by EPI Project Director Dr. Raj Kumar, Additional Director EPI Dr. Sohail Raza Shaikh and a Gavi mission comprising Craig Beyerinck, Senior Program Manager and Emily Kobayashi, HPV Lead, also present were Sylvester Maleghemi, Technical Officer Immunization WHO, Dr. Khurram Akram, Director Federal Directorate of Immunization, Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, and others.

Dr. Azra Pechuho emphasized that the HPV vaccination campaign is a vital public health initiative to protect girls from cervical cancer, a deadly disease caused by the Human Papilloma virus. She stressed the importance of strong campaign implementation, multi-stakeholder engagement, and community awareness, noting that these are essential for the campaign's success. She also expressed appreciation for the unwavering support and commitment of Gavi and other donor partners.

Providing an update, Dr. Raj Kumar informed the forum that Sindh has completed micro-planning and recently convened its 5th Technical Working Group meeting, which saw active participation from diverse stakeholders including the Society of Obstetricians &

Gynecologists Pakistan (SOGP), Pakistan Pediatric Association (PPA), civil society organizations, Girl Guides, Education Department, RMNCH program, PPHI, and all partner agencies—reflecting strong collective commitment.

Craig Beyerinck acknowledged the visible progress in Sindh's preparations and urged that the remaining time be utilized effectively to engage all relevant stakeholders who can play a key role in ensuring the campaign's success.

Dr. Khurram Akram reaffirmed the Federal Directorate of Immunization's full support to Sindh, ensuring the timely supply of vaccines and logistics, and maintaining regular coordination with Technical Working Groups at both provincial and federal levels.

## Azma alleges record breaking corruption in KPK

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Minister for Information and Culture, Azma Bokhari, on Friday expressed serious concern over what she termed a surge in corruption cases in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), claiming that new scandals are emerging almost daily.

In a statement, she said a massive Rs. 40 billion scam in the development sector was recently followed by a Rs. 16 billion corruption case in the Education department. She further alleged that a fresh scandal in the Mineral department has surfaced, involving the awarding of gold mining contracts in five KP districts to favoured individuals at throwaway prices.

"These so-called honest leaders have a track record of corruption that starts in the billions. Their entire legacy revolves around personal gain and plunder," she remarked, accusing PTI loyalists of treating the KP treasury as personal property.

Azma Bokhari claimed that not a single new development project has been launched in KP over the past one and a half years, while corruption "continues to break records."

In contrast, she praised Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, saying the province has completed a century of development projects under her leadership without a single corruption allegation. "Punjab's projects are being executed to international standards," she asserted, adding that corruption, nepotism, and incompetence do not exist in Maryam Nawaz's dictionary.

## Mushaal expresses concern over Yasin's health

KARACHI (APP): Mushaal Malik, wife of jailed Kashmiri Hurriyat leader Yasin Malik, visited the Karachi Press Club along with her daughter Razia Sultana here the other day. The guests were welcomed by Karachi Press Club Secretary Muhammad Sohail Afzal Khan. Speaking on the occasion, Mushaal Malik said it was her first visit to the club and that being there was indeed an honour for her.

She said India was "burning in the fire of revenge" and that even imprisoning peaceful Hurriyat leaders had failed to bring it peace. She revealed that her husband, Yasin Malik, was gravely ill, suffering from kidney disease, and deprived of medical treatment. "It has been over six years since we last saw him, and the authorities do not even allow family visits. No law in the world prohibits a father from meeting his children, yet the Modi government has thrown all the legal principles into the fire of vengeance," she added.

Mushaal Malik further said that in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, the Modi administration had adopted Israeli-style policies. Renowned social figure Ahmed Chinoy also accompanied with the visiting guests.

## Bushra, Resham visit Sundas Foundation

LAHORE (APP): Senator Bushra Anjum Butt and renowned actress and social activist Resham paid a special visit to Sundas Foundation here on Friday, where they met children suffering from thalassemia, hemophilia, and other blood disorders, and participated in Independence Day celebrations with them.

Upon arrival at the Foundation, the distinguished guests were warmly welcomed by Director Khalid Abbas Dar. Medical Director Dr. Adnan Gilani gave them a detailed tour of various departments of the Foundation and briefed them about the modern medical facilities provided for the treatment of thalassemia, hemophilia, and other blood-related diseases.

The visit began with a round of the children's wards, where the guests interacted with the young patients in a compassionate manner, appreciated their courage, and posed for photographs with them. During the visit, gifts were distributed among the children.

## CM hosts Independence Day festivities with differently-abled kids



**F.P. Report**

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah celebrated the 78th Independence Day with differently-abled children in two heartwarming events held at the Quaid-e-Azam House Museum and the mausoleum of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and both events, marked under the theme "Markaz-e-Haq", highlighted inclusivity, unity, and national pride.

The day began at the Quaid-e-Azam House Museum, where the Department of Culture hosted a vibrant programme. Over 100 children from institutions such as Scanosa, C-Arts, Dar Al-Sukoon, and Umeed-No participated in the celebration, which featured a flag-hoisting ceremony, national songs, and cultural performances in Sindhi, Punjabi, Balochi, and Pashto.

Chief Minister Shah, accompanied by Culture Minister Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah, Secretary DEPDTauha Farooqi, and prominent artists like Javed Sheikh and Ayub Khoso, engaged warmly with the children. He sang national songs, joined children on stage, and cut a cake to mark the occasion. He

praised the courage and talent of the children, stating, "These special children are the heart of this celebration. They bring joy, energy, and hope."

Mr Shah emphasised his government's unwavering commitment to inclusivity, equality, and support for the differently-abled. "Every citizen deserves respect, dignity, and opportunity regardless of physical or mental ability," he said. He announced plans to expand special education and rehabilitation centres in every district and strengthen vocational and artistic training programmes for special children.

Mazar-e-Quaid: Later in the day, Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah visited Mazar-e-Quaid, accompanied by his cabinet members and differently-abled children. The DEPDT had organised a special programme at the mausoleum, which began with a soulful rendition of the national anthem by the children. Mr Shah laid a floral wreath, offered prayers for peace and prosperity, and paid rich tribute to the Father of the Nation.

In an emotional gesture, the CM lifted a special girl onto the podium to stand beside him during his speech. "Today, we celebrate our freedom with

gratitude and renew our commitment to serve our people with sincerity," he said. Referring to a recent conflict, he added, "In May, India launched an attack, and our armed forces gave a strong and befitting response. Pakistan achieved a great victory."

Murad Shah called upon the nation to remain united in times of difficulty and lauded the bravery of the armed forces. "Unity, strength, and justice come from our collective will," he remarked, pledging continued support for the rehabilitation and development of people with disabilities.

Mr Shah also announced a grand Independence Day celebration on the night of August 13 at the National Stadium, Karachi, with special arrangements for differently-abled children to participate comfortably and joyfully. The events concluded with cheers, applause, and national songs echoing through the air. Minister of Culture Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah lauded the spirit and performances of the special children, calling them "a true reflection of love for the country."

Through these meaningful celebrations, Sindh reaffirmed its vision of a more inclusive, compassionate, and united Pakistan.

## Minority students to make nation proud: Arora

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister for Human Rights & Minorities Affairs Ramesh Singh Arora emphasised the need to empower minority youth through education and national service, stating, "Minority students will soon pass high-level exams and bring pride to the country and nation."

He was addressing a special seminar held at the University of Management and Technology (UMT) in Lahore on Friday to express solidarity with minority communities and the Pakistan Armed Forces, which was part of the Punjab government's "Minorities Week" initiative.

The minister highlighted the importance of inter-faith harmony and said that 15 minority students have been selected for training at the Civil Services Academy to prepare for upcoming competitive exams. He also praised UMT for offering scholarships to minority students, thanking

President Ibrahim Hasan Murad reiterated UMT's commitment to equal opportunity in education, stating, "We believe in enabling every student to succeed, regardless of background. Through public policy reforms and intercultural leadership, we can close societal gaps and empower minority communities."

Rector Dr. Asif Raza highlighted that UMT disburses billions of rupees in scholarships annually to ensure that no talented student is left behind due to financial constraints. The seminar also featured a panel discussion on minority youth empowerment, with insightful contributions from Dr. Ayra Indrias Patras, Dr. Mimpal Singh and Dr. Samiullah.

The ceremony concluded with Rector Dr. Asif Raza presenting souvenirs to Minister Ramesh Singh Arora and other distinguished guests in appreciation of their participation and support.

## Punjab authorities target two journalists

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistani authorities in Punjab have registered legal cases against two journalists for their reporting, less than one week after Pakistan's senate passed legislation prohibiting the obstruction of media workers.

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and its affiliate, the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), condemn the persecution of journalists in Pakistan and urge the authorities to immediately withdraw the cases.

Gujrat police registered a First Information Report (FIR) against Samaa TV journalist Zulfiqar Haider on July 26 after the city's Chief Executive Health Officer alleged he obstructed public-health officials while attempting to report on health facility conditions and corruption amongst the officials. The FIR references sections of the Pakistan Penal Code regarding obstructing or assaulting a public servant, criminal intimidation, and unlawful assembly.

Three days later, on July 29, police in Vehari filed an FIR against journalist Muhammad Aslam under the

Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA), invoking its cyber-defamation and cyber-stalking provisions. The case followed a video report by Aslam alleging the use of substandard materials in a publicly funded road project. The PFUJ said the allegations against both journalists were unsubstantiated, with the investigations an effort by the Punjab authorities to suppress independent journalism.

The two cases were registered less than one week after Pakistan's Senate unanimously passed a comprehensive series of amendments to the country's Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals Act on July 21, with a number of changes implemented to better safeguard the security, welfare, and working conditions of media workers.

Sections 20A and 20C of the amended Act prohibit abusive, violent, or intolerant behaviour towards a journalist performing their duty. The Act carries a penalty of up to seven years imprisonment or a fine of PKR 300,000 (approx. USD 1,060), or both, with obstruction of a journalist's work carrying a maximum of five years imprisonment or a PKR

100,000 (approx. USD 350) fine.

The PFUJ said: "We call for the immediate withdrawal of the cases against the journalists. Such action is necessary to end the growing unrest among media workers. If the cases are not withdrawn, we will launch a nationwide protest campaign against these illegal and fake cases."

The IFJ said: "This legal harassment and intimidation is another transparent attempt to tighten control over independent and critical journalism in Pakistan. This is particularly concerning considering the recent passage of the Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals Act, which is designed to prevent retaliation for journalists working in the public interest. IFJ calls on the Punjab authorities to withdraw the cases and ensure a safe and free environment for all media workers."

Meanwhile, Tariq Usmani, President of the Rawalpindi-Islamabad Union of Journalists, has thanked the leadership of the International Federation of Journalists for raising their voice for Pakistani journalists.

## Murree to get state-of-the-art medical facilities: Minister

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique has said that Syed Muhammad Hussain Samli Hospital and Nawaz Sharif Cardiology Centre will serve as excellent treatment facilities for Murree and its surrounding areas.

He stated this while presiding over a meeting on Friday at the Specialised Healthcare and Medical Education Department to review the progress of both institutions. Health Secretary Azmat Mahmood Khan also attended the session.

Khawaja Salman Rafique said that in line with the vision of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, modern cardiac facilities are being introduced in Murree for the first time in history. The Punjab government is

purchasing advanced medical machinery worth crores of rupees, while HR and equipment for the hospital's catheter lab are being arranged on an emergency basis.

Health Secretary Azmat Mahmood Khan assured that HR issues are being addressed promptly and that linking the hospital and cardiology center with the Rawalpindi Institute of Cardiology will yield the desired results. He directed the relevant officers to ensure timely execution of assigned responsibilities.

The meeting also instructed the C&W Department to expedite construction and finishing works. Superintendent Engineer Buildings Department Rawalpindi Imran Ali Satti, the MS, and other officials briefed participants on current

progress, medical equipment procurement, and staffing requirements for the hospital's upgrade.

Among the attendees were Chairman Punjab CM Advisory Committee for Cardiology Dr. Farqad Alamgir, Dr. Adnan Khan, Special Secretary Operations Tariq Mahmood Rahmani, Special Secretary Development Zeeshan Shabbir Rana, Chief Planning Officer Abdul Haq Bhatti, Additional Secretaries Ameer Muhammad and Anwar Bariar, along with other senior officers.

MS Syed Muhammad Hussain Samli Hospital and Nawaz Sharif Cardiology Center Dr. Qaiser Mahmood Abbasi and other participants joined the meeting via video link.



# Health Advisor expresses displeasure over delays in KICH construction

PESHAWAR (APP): Advisor to the Chief Minister on Health, Ihtisham Ali, along with Health Secretary Shahidullah and officials from the Planning and Communication & Works (C&W) departments, paid an inspection visit to the under-construction Khyber Institute of Child Health (KICH).

The visiting delegation was briefed on the progress of the eight-levels, 290-bed specialised health facility - the first of its kind in the province. While officials shared updates on ongoing civil works, Advisor Health expressed strong dissatisfaction over the pace of construction, noting that despite timely release of funds, the project remains incomplete. “Only Rs200 million remain out of the total project cost, and these funds are already available. Yet, the building is incomplete. I release funds on time, yet work remains stalled. This hospital - being built from taxpayers’ money - has become a football between the C&W department and the contractor. There seems to be no sense of accountability,” said the Health Advisor.

He warned that partial or symbolic inaugurations would not be accepted. “We will not inaugurate a half-built facility. The so-called inauguration during the caretaker setup was done merely to get a plaque under someone’s name,” he said.

Officials informed the

## All set for Paramedical, Allied Health Sciences Diploma Examinations

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Chief Executive Officer of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Paramedical Faculty, Dr. Rahman Afridi, has announced that all arrangements have been finalized for the Diploma Course Examinations – August 2025, to be conducted across Paramedical & Allied Health Sciences Institutes in the province. More than 37,000 students have been issued roll number slips, which can be collected from their respective institutes.

He added that the roll number slips have also been uploaded on the FPAHS web portal, and all institutes have been instructed to ensure their timely distribution to students.

## PTI’s August 5 agitation flops in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

PESHAWAR (APP): The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf’s (PTI) August 5 agitation call fell flat in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), with public turnout remaining dismal and political analysts calling it a failure.

Speaking to APP, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Nowshera President Hamza Khan said the protest of PTI was a “miserable failure,” highlighting that people distanced themselves from aimless rallies led by Chief Minister KP.

“The failed agitation has unnerved the PTI leadership, who are now trying to pacify workers with hollow slogans,” Hamza Khan remarked.

He criticized the PTI for prioritizing political theatrics over pressing issues like terrorism, which continues to claim the lives of innocent civilians in the province.

Hamza Khan further said the protest, held on August 5—a date symbolic of resistance against India’s illegal occupation of Jammu and Kashmir—sent a politically insensitive message. “PTI should have used the occasion to show unity, not division,” he added.

Leader of the Opposition in the KP Assembly, Dr. Ebad Khan, echoed similar sentiments, calling the protest a “complete flop.” He said the KP

## Kundi lauds Forces for killing 33 terrorists in Zhob

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Friday praised the security forces for killing 33 militants belonging to the outlawed group “Khawarij” who attempted a major infiltration from the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in Zhob district of Balochistan.

Commending the effective operation, the Governor hailed the bravery and professional skills of the armed forces, saying that Pakistan’s military remains fully vigilant in safeguarding the country’s frontiers.

He said the unwavering resolve of the security forces to eliminate terrorism in all its forms is commendable.

Governor Kundi reaffirmed that the nation’s commitment to eradicating terrorist elements and defending the homeland will remain steadfast.

## Dr Iqbal’s Allahabad address: The vision that carved a nation

PESHAWAR (APP): Seventeen years before Pakistan emerged on the world map as new independent state, a poetic voice from the Indian subcontinent echoed a revolutionary idea that later altered the course of South Asian history.

It was on December 29, 1930, at the historic 25th session of the All-India Muslim League in Allahabad, where Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal, the revered philosopher-poet, first articulated the vision of a separate homeland for Muslims in north-west India.

Historians and scholars agree that Dr Iqbal’s Allahabad Address was not merely a speech but it was the ideological blueprint that laid the intellectual foundation for the creation of Pakistan.

“The Allahabad address was turning point in the political consciousness of Muslims in British India,” said Professor Dr. Muhammad Yunus Khan, Chairman of the Pakistan Studies Department at Islamia College Peshawar, in an interview with APP. “Dr Iqbal declared that Muslims were not just a religious community, but a distinct nation deserving independence.”

At a time when Muslims in the subcontinent were still reeling from the after-

math of the failed 1857 War of Independence and facing increasing marginalization under British colonial rule and Hindu-dominated politics, Dr Iqbal’s message was both bold and visionary. The great poet philosopher proposed the establishment of an independent Muslim state in the north-western regions i.e Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, and the North-West Frontier Province (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa). He warned that without autonomy, Muslims would be politically subjugated, culturally diluted, and religiously suppressed under a Hindu-majority setup.

“Dr Iqbal wasn’t just speaking politically,” Dr. Yunus emphasized. “He was arguing for the preservation of Islamic civilization, values, and identity in South Asia.”

The seeds sown at Allahabad in 1930 began to take political shape throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Though Iqbal passed away in 1938, his vision was carried forward by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who transformed the All-India Muslim League into a dynamic political force.

In 1940, a decade after Iqbal’s speech, the Muslim League passed the historic Pakistan Resolution at Iqbal Park at Lahore clearly demanding independent

states for Muslims in regions where they were in majority. The resolution echoed Iqbal’s earlier call and solidified the League’s stance.

“From that point onward, the demand for Pakistan was not just an idea but it was a political movement,” said Dr. Yunus. The term “Pakistan” itself had been coined earlier in 1933 by Chaudhry Rehmat Ali in Cambridge, giving a name to Iqbal’s ideological vision.

The Muslim League, under the great Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah’s resolute leadership, expanded its reach, gaining mass support across the subcontinent including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The critical moment came during the 1945–46 elections, when the League overwhelmingly won all Muslim seats in the central legislature including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, confirming its mandate as the sole representative of Indian Muslims.

On August 14, 1947, the vision that Dr Allama Iqbal had presented in Allahabad became reality and Pakistan was born—a homeland for Muslims, led by Quaid-e-Azam as its first Governor General. Though Dr Muhammad Iqbal did not live to see independence, his words had already

etched the idea of Pakistan into the collective consciousness of Indian Muslims.

“Dr Iqbal’s address was not a conventional political demand, but a prophetic declaration,” Dr. Yunus remarked. “It gave direction and purpose to a fragmented community and provided the ideological foundation for a new nation.”

Today, Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal is celebrated as the spiritual father of Pakistan, and his Allahabad Address remains a cornerstone in the country’s political and historical narrative.

The address continues to be studied in academic circles and commemorated in national discourse not merely as a historical event, but as the moment when a nation’s destiny was imagined with clarity and courage.

As Pakistan marks another year of independence, Dr Iqbal’s words from 1930 still resonate: “I would like to see the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sindh and Balochistan amalgamated into a single state... The formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim state appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims.” That destiny was fulfilled. And it all began in Allahabad.



PESHAWAR: An old man selecting a huge National Flag from a vendor as preparation of the upcoming 78th Independence Day of Pakistan.

## Forest Dept takes steps to promote afforestation in Urban Areas

**Tree plantation begins at waste dumping site**

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Following the directives of the Special Assistant to the Chief Minister on Forests, Environment, Wildlife, and Climate Change, Pir Musavir Khan, a large-scale afforestation campaign is underway across the province.

In this regard, the Forest Department in collaboration with the District Administration Peshawar, has started tree planting along the Ring Road by cleaning up a waste dumping site.

The plantation drive was inaugurated by the Deputy Commissioner Peshawar, Sarmad Saleem Akram, who planted a tree at the event.

The ceremony was attended by Assistant Commissioner Shah Alam Ayesha Tahir, Divisional Forest Officer Peshawar Muhammad Shakeel, as well as other officers and staff from the Forest Department and District Administration.

During the event, officers also planted trees under the “Jashn-e-Azadi” and “Mareka-e-Haq” special plantation campaigns. A total of 450 plants of different species were planted at the site.

Speaking at the occasion, Deputy Commissioner Sarmad Saleem Akram emphasized that large-scale afforestation is essential for eliminating pollution in urban areas and for environmental protection.

He stated that district administration is taking practical steps in collaboration with relevant departments to achieve this goal.

He urged the public, particularly youth and students, to actively participate in the ongoing afforestation drive in Peshawar, as the provincial government believes

## Directorate General Sports stun Sports Writers in cricket match

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: As part of the Independence Day celebrations, a thrilling exhibition cricket match was held at Qayyum Sports Complex Peshawar under the auspices of the Directorate General of Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Regional Sports Office Peshawar, and the district administration.

In the friendly match, the Directorate General of Sports KP team emerged victorious by 40 runs against the Sports Writers Association (SWA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, clinching the winner’s trophy. Yousaf Afridi, Administrator of Peshawar Sports Complex, was declared Player of the Match for his outstanding performance.

The Provincial Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs, Syed Fakhar Jahan, graced the event as chief guest and distributed prizes among the winning players. He was accompanied by Director General Sports Tashfeen Haider, Regional Sports Officer Kashif Farhan, Assistant Director Accounts Shah Faisal, General Secretary of

## To boost health education, research for Palestinian students KMU and PalMed Academy sign MoU

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: Khyber Medical University (KMU), Peshawar, and the Palestine Medical Academy (PalMed Academy), Bolton, United Kingdom, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at fostering scientific and technical cooperation in various educational and research fields of health at KMU for Palestinian students.

Under the agreement, KMU will provide academic facilities to healthcare professionals from Palestine, including undergraduate and postgraduate medical students, paramedics, nurses, and other allied health professionals. The MoU was signed by KMU Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Haq on behalf of the university, and by Prof. Dr. Mahmoud Laubani on behalf of PalMed Academy. The signing ceremony was also attended by, among others, the Provincial Minister for Higher Education, Meena Khan Afridi.

It was agreed that both institutions would work together to exchange knowledge, skills, and academic expertise in areas of mutual interest. The partnership will also include joint healthcare training programs, conferences, seminars, symposiums, workshops, and invited lectures on national and international health issues.

Furthermore, the agreement covers joint research projects and the supervision of research students in selected fields.

Both parties affirmed that all collaborative activities will be carried out in accordance with national and international ethical standards and regulatory frameworks. The MoU will remain valid for five years from the effective date, unless terminated earlier by either party with six months’ written notice.

Meanwhile, addressing the online signing ceremony as chief guest, Provincial Minister for Higher Education Meena Khan Afridi described the partnership as a significant step toward enhancing global cooperation in

healthcare education, training, and research. He said it would contribute to the advancement of medical science and the improvement of healthcare delivery systems.

He stated, “Our hearts beat with the people of Palestine, especially the oppressed and helpless Muslims of Gaza. In this time of hardship, supporting the people of Gaza in every possible way is both a humanitarian duty and a requirement of our faith.”

Meena Khan Afridi appreciated KMU’s commitment and practical measures to provide Palestinian students with opportunities for education and research in various fields of health. He assured that the provincial government would extend full cooperation in this regard. He further stated that under the leadership of Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, the provincial government stands shoulder to shoulder with its Palestinian brothers and sisters. He emphasized that the government not only strongly condemns the Israeli oppression and brutality in Gaza in the strongest terms but is also determined to provide all possible facilities to Palestinian students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.







## In brief

### Illegal private hospital sealed F.P. Report

**TOBA TEK SINGH:** An illegal private hospital established at Adda Kalera was sealed by health department and a challan was sent to the Healthcare Commission. The operation was carried out on the instructions of CEO Health Toba Tek Singh Dr. Kashif Nadeem and Assistant Commissioner Kamalia Iqra Nasir, on Friday. A joint team of DDHO Dr. Asim Ijaz and Deputy Drug Controller Arif Shahzad inspected the hospital. Where serious shortcomings like absence of qualified doctors, poor sanitation, overdue medicines and use of animal medicines were revealed, the hospital was immediately sealed. Dr. Asim Ijaz said that attayat is tantamount to playing with human lives, indiscriminate action will continue against such elements. He appealed to citizens to immediately report any Attai doctors or illegal clinics to the Health Department to ensure the safety of human lives.

### Holiday announced F.P. Report

**HYDERABAD:** Sindh government has declared a public holiday across the province on Saturday, August 9, in connection with the annual Urs of Sufi saint Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai. According to the official notification, all government offices and educational institutions in Sindh will remain closed on the day to observe the occasion. All courts across Sindh will remain closed on Saturday, August 9, in connection with the Urs of Sufi saint Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai. A notification has been issued declaring the holiday. According to the notification, the Sindh High Court, including its benches in Karachi, Sukkur, Larkana, and Hyderabad, along with all subordinate courts, will remain closed for the day. The 282nd annual Urs of renowned Sufi saint Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai will commence on Saturday, August 9, in Bhit Shah. Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori and Provincial Culture Minister Syed Zulfiqar Shah will inaugurate the three-day celebrations. Preparations for the Urs have been completed, and the Sindh government has declared a public holiday across the province to mark the occasion. To ensure security during the celebrations, the Hyderabad Commissioner has imposed Section 144, banning the display of weapons. A formal notification has been issued in this regard. The three-day Urs will feature traditional events including horse races, a cultural fair, wrestling competitions (Malakhra), a literary conference, and an agricultural exhibition, celebrating the spiritual and cultural heritage of Sindh.

### 3 dacoits killed in encounters F.P. Report

**ARIFWALA:** Three dacoits were shot dead, and two of their companions fled during two police encounters in Arifwala and Pattoki. The first encounter occurred within the jurisdiction of Ahmad Yar Police Station in Arifwala in which one dacoit was shot dead during heavy exchange of fire. The CTD team said that the dead dacoit was involved in dozens of criminal incidents, including murder and snatching. After the police encounter, local residents chanted slogans in favour of Counter Terrorism Department personnel. In the second police encounter which occurred Karniwalla located in the jurisdiction of Saddar Police Station of Pattoki two dacoits were shot dead and one policeman received injuries.



**HYDERABAD:** Residents of New Sabzi Mandi holding protest demonstration against high handedness of police.

## Future of Pakistan

**Nadeem Iqbal**

**PAKISTAN, with its youthful workforce and strategic location, is poised to excel globally. Digitalization and e-commerce are shaping its future by driving economic growth, creating jobs, and connecting to global markets. Technologies like artificial intelligence and blockchain are transforming business practices, positioning Pakistan to capitalize on the digital revolution.**

Pakistan's economy relies on agriculture, industry, and services but faces challenges like unemployment and energy shortages. Remittances are a cornerstone, bolstering foreign exchange reserves. In 2024, remittances reached nearly \$30 billion, supporting economic stability. Internal resources, including minerals and tourism, contribute significantly, but their potential hinges on a skilled workforce and robust digital infrastructure.

Online businesses are revolutionizing Pakistan's economy. E-commerce platforms like Daraz and HBX enable small businesses to reach global consumers, boosting revenues and offering convenience. These platforms create jobs, particularly for youth and women, who gain financial independence through home-based work, fueling economic progress.

Online businesses and services are key to earning dollars. Freelancing platforms like Upwork and Fiverr allow Pakistani professionals to offer web development, digital marketing, and graphic design services. In 2024, IT exports and freelancing earnings exceeded \$3.5 billion, reflecting global demand for Pakistani talent. These earnings strengthen foreign exchange reserves and enhance livelihoods.

Digital infrastructure is vital for e-commerce growth. High-speed internet, mobile banking, and digital payment systems like Easypaisa and JazzCash have spurred online businesses. Government initiatives, such as the Digital Pakistan Vision and expanded fiber optic networks, have improved digital access in rural areas, connecting small businesses and freelancers to global markets and fostering economic diversity.

Digital skills training is creating job opportunities for Pakistani youth. Online courses teach programming, digital marketing, and data analytics, essential for freelancing and e-commerce success. These skills enable youth to earn dollars from home, reducing unemployment and integrating Pakistan into the global digital economy.

The BS Fintech and E-Commerce program at the National Skills University

(NSU) Islamabad blends business and technology, making it an ideal choice. This four-year program equips students with skills in online banking, blockchain, and digital marketing. Practical training and internships prepare students for the job market. NSU's industry partners, like Habib Microfinance Bank, provide hands-on experience in digital finance, ensuring graduates are job-ready.

NSU's program aligns with global digital trends, teaching skills in cloud computing, machine learning, and e-commerce platforms. Graduates can secure roles in startups, banks, and tech firms, strengthening Pakistan's digital economy. The program promotes earning while learning, as students can start freelancing or e-commerce projects during their studies, achieving financial independence and contributing to economic growth.

Pakistan's future is intertwined with digitalization and e-commerce. Online businesses, freelancing, and digital services are making Pakistan globally competitive. NSU's BS Fintech and E-Commerce program empowers youth to seize these opportunities, combining learning with earning to drive economic progress and national prosperity.

*The author is Professor National Skills University Islamabad.*

### KPRA team visits business entities in Mardan F.P. Report

**MARDAN:** On the directives of KPRA Additional Collector Mardan & Malakand, Ms. Qurat-ul-Ain Wazir, a team of KPRA under the supervision of Assistant Collector-II, Asad Khan paid visits to various business entities including hotels, restaurants, and wedding halls in District Mardan on Friday.

The purpose of the visits was to ensure compliance with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sales Tax on Services Act, 2022 (amended in 2025). During the visits, taxpayers were guided on the mandatory implementation and integration of the RIMS. Enrollment Notices were served to newly established businesses. Additionally, illicit invoices were collected for the initiation of penal action. The team also checked that Sales Tax on Services (STS) payments were aligned with the actual economic activity of the businesses.

### Police arrests proclaimed offender F.P. Report

**MARDAN:** Police arrested proclaimed offender Imtiaz Hussain resident of Para Chinar, now Rawalpindi in injured due to cross firing who is wanted by various police stations in serious cases, is currently in the Tambulak area of Bypass Road.

Upon receiving the information, a police team of City Police Station immediately conducted a raid. During the raid, the accused opened fire on the police party. In the police retaliatory action, the accused was arrested in an injured condition.

A pistol was recovered from the possession of the accused. He was immediately shifted to the hospital for medical assistance. During the initial investigation, it was found that an FIR was recently registered at the City Police Station in which it was stated that the accused Imtiaz Hussain had stolen Rs. 1.4 million in cash, 453 prize bonds worth Rs. 200, 13 prize bonds worth Rs. 750, and 2 prize bonds worth Rs. 100 (total value Rs. 100,550) from a shop.

Several cases have been registered against the arrested suspect in Mardan and Charsadda districts. According to the police, further investigation is underway against the arrested suspect and it is expected that his arrest will solve several important cases.

### Admn seals poultry feed factory Syed Waliullah Shah

**NEWSHERA:** Additional Assistant Commissioner (AAC) conducted a surprise inspection of a poultry feed factory in the Raisalpur Industrial Estate, on Friday.

During the inspection, the factory was found to have unsatisfactory cleanliness conditions, with a foul odor and litter scattered throughout the premises. Additionally, the factory's documents were incomplete, raising concerns about the quality and safety of the products being manufactured.

## Violence against transgender Police arrests 107 suspects in Mardan

**Fazal Haq**

**MARDAN:** Some quarters are giving the impression that transgender persons are not safe in Mardan and that the police are not taking effective action, which is completely false and misleading propaganda.

This was claimed by the police administration in a press statement issued by the relevant police officials on Thursday. According to the Mardan Police, only in the year 2025, four cases were registered based on complaints from transgender individuals, in which 10 people were nominated and 9 have already been arrested, while efforts are ongoing to apprehend the remaining suspects.

Over the past five years, a total of 37 cases have been registered, in which 106 individuals were nominated and 105 have been arrested and subjected to legal proceedings. DPO Mardan, Zahoor Babar Afridi, stated that Mardan Police take prompt action on every complaint and there is no question of discriminatory behavior against any citizen. The public should not be misled by baseless statements circulating on social media. Mardan Police is committed to the principle of providing equal protection to all segments of society.

**Women varsity to set up AI center:** Vice Chancellor of Women University Mardan, Professor Dr. Razia Sultana, said that the university was planning to set up a skill-center focused on artificial intelligence (AI) and digital technologies for girl students.

"Our goal is to connect female students with market opportunities, so they

can become entrepreneurs and, in turn, create employment for other women," she expressed these views while talking to journalists in a meeting held on the premises of Women University Mardan. Those who were present in the meeting included Registrar Mr. Adnan Ahmad, Deputy Director ORIC Miss Haleema, representatives of different media organizations and other officials concerned.

The Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Razia Sultana told journalists that the university was seeking collaborations with institutions like NUST and the KP IT Board to further enhance its academic and technical offerings for its female students.

Calling it a "significant achievement," the Vice Chancellor announced that the university's new state-of-the-art main campus is expected to be completed and operational by 2026. "Modern laboratories and a well-equipped library are being established, especially to cater to the needs of science students," she claimed.

On the occasion, she also briefed the media-persons about the university's other ongoing progress, current challenges, and future plans, highlighting its growing role in advancing female education in the region. The university, she said, has 18 affiliated colleges offering 36 programs in diverse disciplines. Admissions are currently in progress, with the institution offering a secure and enabling environment for women belonging to Mardan and other adjacent areas.

Dr. Sultana underscored the university's commit-

ment to supporting underprivileged students through various means, including 11 different types of scholarship schemes and the Higher Education Commission's laptop scheme.

"These laptops are a lifeline for students, particularly for those involved in research and income-generating activities from platforms like Amazon have become essential tools for academic success," she said, adding that a total 500 laptops will be distributed across 18 departments under the ongoing scheme in coming few months. Currently the University is offering admissions in 13 MPhil and Two PhD programs besides 18 BS disciplines.

Emphasizing the transformative power of education, Dr. Sultana said, "Educated women are the most effective agents of change in society. Fields like Data Science and Information Technology not only empowers women but also enable them to contribute economically to their households."

However, she also pointed out the financial challenges the institution is facing. "The work on the university's new campus is 58 percent complete, but we need an additional Rs 300 million to finish the construction. So far, Rs100 million has been pledged. We urge the government to support us in completing this vital project."

The Vice Chancellor concluded with a strong appeal for societal support, saying, "Our society must provide space and trust to women. Girls' education is not just a right — it is a necessity for a progressive and inclusive society."

## Medical facilities at hospital inspected

**F.P. Report**

**LANDI KOTAL:** Deputy Commissioner (DC), Khyber Capt (Retd) Bilal Shahid Rao inspected medical facilities being provided to the locals of Bazaar Zakha Khel area of tehsil Landi Kotal during his visit to the type (D) hospital of the bordering area on Friday.

Flanked by District Police Officer (DPO) Khyber Rai Mazhar Iqbal, Additional DC Gul Nawaz Afridi, Additional DC (Relief) Irshad Ali and officials of line departments, the district administrative

officer examined Emergency, Outdoor Patient Department (OPD), Lab, various wards of the health center.

He checked the attendance of the health staff, medicine list provided to the patients, sanitary condition and other facilities. Medical Superintendent of the Bazaar Zakha Khel hospital Dr Nasir Ali thoroughly briefed the visiting guests of the services being delivered in the hospital. DC, Khyber met with the patients and their attendance in the hospital and enquired them of their problems.

The residents' complaint of short of electricity that affected efficiency of the health center and demanded of the district hiphup to install solar system to ensure uninterrupted power supply to the hospital. He directed the Additional DC (Relief) on the spot to coordinate with the concerned department to establish a solar system in the hospital to remove the sense of deprivation of the residents. The district administrator urged the health officials to leave no stone unturned to provide better health facilities to the tribesmen on their door steps.



**SUKKUR:** Members of Hindu Community holding Jashan-e-Azadi rally on the eve of 78th Independence Day of Pakistan.

## SZCH child ward becomes death zone

**F.P. Report**

**LARKANA:** The emergency ward of Sheikh Zayed Children's Hospital (SZCH) in Larkana district of northern Sindh has become a "hospital for innocent children like Guln. Due to the lack of a ventilator in the hospital, the bodies of innocent children have started coming out on a daily basis instead of receiving treatment. Due to the lack of a ventilator and the negligence of doctors and staff, the newborn baby of Larkana senior journalist and Press Club General Secretary Abdul Qadir Jagirani, died in agony.

Against this incident,

the affected journalist and the boy's father Aleem Qadir carried the deceased baby in a sling and protested against the negligence and carelessness of the doctors and staff at the main gate of Sheikh Zayed Children's Hospital. On this occasion, they shouted in front of the media and said that the newborn baby was admitted to the emergency ward of Sheikh Zayed Children's Hospital two days ago due to breathing difficulties, on which the doctors had written a summary.

The protesters asked to put the child on a ventilator, after which we pleaded with the ventilator in-

charge Dr. Saeed Nazir and other doctors and staff at the Children's Hospital for two consecutive days, but they did not listen to any of our pleas, due to which the child died in agony. The responsibility for the death lies with Dr. Saeed Nazir, in-charge of the Children's Care Life Ward of Sheikh Zayed Children's, and his staff. They demanded that a case be filed against the doctors and staff of the Emergency Ward Child Care Ward of Sheikh Zayed Children's Hospital and justice be done to them, otherwise we will knock on the door of the court to get immediate justice for the boy's death.

## Independence celebrations kicks off at RIO Kohat

**F.P. Report**

**KOHAT:** As part of the "Independence Day –Moraka e Haq" celebrations, a simple but impressive ceremony was held at the Regional Information Office Kohat, presided over by the Regional Officer Information and Public Relations Kohat, Irshad Afridi on Friday.

The event was aimed to raise awareness among the new generation about the significance of the Independence Day, highlight the sacrifices of the nation's forefathers for the creation of Pakistan and promote the spirit of patriotism. Present on the occasion were President of Kohat Press Club Noor Muhammad Bangash, Hum News correspondent Allah Dad Bangash, Office Assistant Ansar Saeed Qureshi, along with the other staff of the office.

The Regional Officer pinned Independence Day badges on the participants and reaffirmed the commitment that the "Independence Day–Moraka e Haq" celebrations would be marked with full zeal and enthusiasm on Thursday evening.

District Sports Officer Orakzai formally inaugurated the Azadi Football Cup and Azadi Volleyball Cup. These tournaments will run from August 7 to August 14, 2025, featuring participation from local teams across the district.

On the occasion, the Sports Department Orakzai also distributed sports kits and equipment among the players. The initiative aims to promote healthy and positive activities among the youth, while fostering a spirit of unity and patriotism during the Independence Day festivities.

## Authorities blamed for issuance of illegal permits

**F.P. Report**

**WANA:** Tensions are running high in Wana, as a fresh dispute over the general bus stand has erupted into a heated controversy. Transporters have staged protests, accusing the authorities of alleged collusion and issuing illegal permits.

According to the transporters, a general bus stand was legally established under an authority letter issued by the Tehsil Municipal Officer (TMO). However, they allege that the Regional Transport Authority (RTA) in Dera Ismail Khan has unlawfully granted permission to another party without following due legal proce-

dures — a move that has infuriated the local driver community.

In a demonstration outside the District Press Club Wana, followed by an emergency press conference, the protesting drivers declared that issuing a "fake licence" to an unrelated party when a legally approved bus stand already exists is unjustifiable. They warned that the district administration would be held fully responsible for any loss of life or property resulting from the dispute.

The protesters have called on the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government and senior officials to launch an immediate investigation into the controversial permit and guarantee

the protection of the legally established bus stand in Wana Bazaar.

### Completion of plans directed F.P. Report

**QUETTA:** Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti has stated that all available resources are being utilized to address scarcity of water in Gwadar.

Presiding over a meeting in Quetta today (Friday), he said capacity of water filtration plant will be increased to six hundred thousand gallons of water per day in next three days.





MEXICO CITY: Migrants and asylum seekers carry a banner that reads 'Exodus for justice' as they march out of Tapachula, Mexico.

## Rwanda to accept 'third-country' deportations from America

KAMPALA: Rwanda has confirmed it will accept deported migrants from the United States, as President Donald Trump continues to push for mass deportation from the North American country. A spokesperson for the Rwandan government, Yolande Makolo, acknowledged that the African country had agreed to receive up to 250 deported individuals.

Rwanda is now the third African country, after South Sudan and Eswatini, to strike a deal with the US to accept non-citizen deportees. "Rwanda has agreed with the United States to accept up to 250 migrants, in part because nearly every Rwandan family has experienced the hardships of displacement, and our societal values are founded on reintegration and rehabilitation," Makolo said in a statement obtained by the Reuters news agency.

But the Trump administration's efforts to rapidly deport migrants from the US have raised myriad human rights concerns, not least for sending people to "third-party countries" they have no personal connections to. Some of those countries, including Rwanda, have faced criticisms for their human rights records, leading advocates to fear for the safety of deported migrants. Other critics, meanwhile, have blasted Trump for

using African countries as a "dumping ground" for migrants with criminal records. In this week's statement, Makolo appeared to anticipate some of those criticisms, underscoring that Rwanda would have the final say over who could arrive in the country.

"Under the agreement, Rwanda has the ability to approve each individual proposed for resettlement," she said. "Those approved will be provided with workforce training, healthcare, and accommodation support to jumpstart their lives in Rwanda, giving them the opportunity to contribute to one of the fastest-growing economies in the world over the last decade." In 2024, Trump successfully campaigned for re-election in the US on the premise that he would expel the country's population of undocumented immigrants, a group estimated to number around 11 million. But many of those people have been longtime members of their communities, and critics quickly pointed out that Trump lacked the infrastructure needed for such a large-scale deportation effort. In response, the Trump administration has surged money to immigration-related projects. For example, his "One Big Beautiful Bill", which was signed into law in July, earmarked \$45bn for immigration detention centres, many of which will be run by private con-

tractors.

An additional \$4.1bn in the law is devoted to hiring and training more officials with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), with another \$2.1bn set aside for bonuses. But the Trump administration has made expelling migrants from the country a top priority, prompting legal challenges and backlash to the rapid pace of such deportations. Critics say deported migrants have been denied their right to due process, with little to no time allotted to challenge their removals. Then, there are the cases where undocumented migrants have been deported to "third-party countries" where they may not even speak the language.

Within weeks of taking office in January, Trump began deporting citizens of countries like India, China, Iran and Afghanistan to places like Panama, where migrants were imprisoned in a hotel and later a detention camp. Trump also accused more than 200 men, many of them Venezuelan, of being gang members in order to authorise their expedited removal to El Salvador in March. Lawyers have since cast doubt on Trump's allegations, arguing that many of their clients were deemed to be gang members based on little more than their tattoos and fashion choices. — Aljazeera

### Syria to revamp Damascus airport

DAMASCUS: Syria has signed a series of investment deals with international companies, covering 12 major strategic projects in infrastructure, transportation and real estate valued at a total of \$14bn, the latest lifeline aimed at reviving its war-ravaged economy.

The plans included a \$4bn investment project for Damascus airport signed with Qatar's UCC Holding and a \$2bn deal with the United Arab Emirates national investment corporation to establish a metro in the Syrian capital, Latal al-Hilali, head of the Syrian Investment Authority, said during the ceremony at the presidential palace in Damascus. Since the overthrow of longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad in December in a lightning rebel offensive, Syria's new authorities have worked to attract investment for the reconstruction of infrastructure destroyed in the country's devastating, nearly 14-year-long civil war.

The projects "will extend across Syria and represent a qualitative shift in infrastructure and economic life", al-Hilali said, adding that the agreements were "a turning point" for Syria's future. Al-Sharaa and United States special envoy for Syria Tom Barrack were both present at the signing ceremony, Syria's official SANA news agency reported. — Aljazeera

### Sudan says army destroys aircraft

DARFUR (AFP): Sudan's air force has destroyed an Emirati aircraft carrying Colombian mercenaries as it landed at a paramilitary-controlled airport in Darfur, killing at least 40 people, the army-aligned state TV said. A military source, speaking to AFP on condition of anonymity, said the UAE plane "was bombed and completely destroyed" at Darfur's Nyala airport.

The airport has recently come under repeated air strikes by the Sudanese army, at war with the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) since April 2023. There was no immediate comment from the RSF or from the United Arab Emirates. Colombia's President Gustavo Petro said his government was trying to find out how many Colombians died in the attack. "We will see if we can bring their bodies back," he wrote on social media platform X. State TV said the aircraft had taken off from an airbase in the Gulf, carrying dozens of foreign fighters and military equipment intended for the RSF, which controls nearly all of Darfur. The army, led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, has long accused the UAE of supplying advanced weaponry, including drones, to the RSF via Nyala airport. Abu Dhabi has denied the accusations, despite numerous reports from UN experts, US political officials and international organisations. Satellite images released by Yale University's Humanitarian Research Lab have shown multiple Chinese-made long-range drones at the airport of the South Darfur state capital.

In June, three witnesses told AFP that a cargo plane was bombed shortly after landing at Nyala airport. Sudan's army-aligned government accused the UAE of recruiting and funding Colombian mercenaries to fight for the RSF, claiming it has documents proving that. Reports of Colombian fighters in Darfur date back to late 2024 and have been confirmed by UN experts. This week, the Joint Forces -- a pro-army coalition in the vast western region of Darfur -- reported over 80 Colombian mercenaries fighting on the RSF's side in El-Fasher, the last Darfur state capital still under army control.

Several were reportedly killed in drone and artillery operations during the RSF's latest offensive, the coalition said. The army also released video footage it said was of "foreign mercenaries believed to be from Colombia". AFP was not able to verify the videos. In December, Sudan said Colombia's foreign ministry had expressed regret "for the participation of some of its citizens in the war".

## Blood shortage in Gaza as deaths from Israeli attacks

GAZA: Gaza's already battered healthcare system is in a state of collapse as blood banks run dry and Israeli forces continue targeting clinics and facilities housing patients and displaced families while maintaining an aid blockade. Healthcare officials in the besieged enclave reported that there is a severe shortage of blood as many would-be donors are too malnourished due to a severe Israeli-induced hunger crisis that has so far claimed the lives of 193 Palestinians, including five in the past 24 hours.

Al Jazeera's Hani Mahmoud, reporting from Gaza City, said blood donations are desperately needed across the remaining operational medical facilities in Gaza - al-Shifa Hospital, Al-Aqsa Hospital, and Nasser Hospital. "We've seen at the blood banks many people who were begging doctors to allow them to give blood donations to save their loved ones, but they had to be turned away because they were not fit to donate blood due to the enforced dehydration and starvation," Mahmoud said. Amani Abu Ouda, head of the blood bank at al-Shifa Hospital, said most would-be donors who arrive are malnourished, which affects the safety and quality of blood donations. As a result, she said, "when they donate blood they could lose consciousness within seconds, which not only endangers their health but also leads to the loss of a precious blood unit." More than 14,800 patients in Gaza are still in urgent need of specialised medical treatment, the head of the World Health Organization (WHO) has warned, calling on the international community to act swiftly. "We urge more countries to step forward to accept patients and for medical evacuations to be expedited through all possible routes," said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus in a statement posted on X.

Israeli attacks have continued to pound Gaza, killing at least 44 people. An overnight attack in Gaza City's Sheikh Radwan neighbourhood injured dozens of people. The attack targeted the Sheikh Radwan Health Centre, previously run by the UN refugee agency for Palestinians. "Last night, while we were having dinner, we suddenly heard people shouting, calling for evacuation. There was no time to take anything no food, no clothes, no bedding. We just ran," Ghabeh Tafesh, a displaced Palestinian resident, told Al Jazeera.

Among those killed were 18 hungry aid seekers, who were shot dead as they approached UN aid trucks and aid distribution sites operated by the United States and Israeli-backed GHF. So far, more than 1,560 Palestinians seeking aid have been killed by Israeli forces while trying to receive food

since GHF began operating in late May. This week, a group of UN special rapporteurs and independent human rights experts called for the GHF to be disbanded, saying it is "an utterly disturbing example of how humanitarian relief can be exploited for covert military and geopolitical agendas in serious breach of international law".

Israel's air and ground assault has also destroyed nearly all of Gaza's food production capabilities, leaving its people reliant on aid. A new report by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization and the UN satellite centre found that just 8.6 percent of Gaza's cropland is still accessible following sweeping Israeli forced evacuation orders in recent months. Just 1.5 percent is accessible and undamaged, it said. Hamas, meanwhile, called for protests across the world against the starvation in Gaza.

"We call for continuing and escalating the popular pressure in the cities, capitals and squares, and all the upcoming days with marches, protests and demonstrations in front of the Zionist and US embassies," Hamas said in a statement. Israel's blockade extends to medical supplies and much-needed fuel - shortages that have forced several medical facilities to shut down in recent months. Farhan Haq, deputy spokesperson for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, warned that Israel's continued blockade on the entry of fuel into Gaza is affecting "lifesaving" operations. "In the past two days, the UN collected some 300,000 litres from the Kerem Abu Salem [Kerem Shalom] crossing," Haq told reporters. "This is far less than what is needed to sustain operations," he said. "For example, our partners working in health warned today that the lives of more than 100 premature babies are in imminent danger due to the lack of fuel."

Haq also said that, since March, more than 100 health workers, including surgeons and specialised staff, had been denied entry into the Strip. The latest deaths came as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was expected to announce further military action - and possibly plans for Israel to fully reoccupy Gaza. Experts say Israel's ongoing offensive and blockade are already pushing the territory of some 2 million Palestinians into famine. The UN has called reports about a possible expansion of Israel's military operations in Gaza "deeply alarming" if true. Despite international pressure for a ceasefire, efforts to mediate a truce between Israel and Hamas have collapsed. An expansion of the military offensive in heavily populated areas would likely be devastating. "Where will we go?" said Tamer al-Burai, a displaced Palestinian living at the edge of Deir el-Balah in central Gaza. — Aljazeera

## M23 rebels killed 319 civilians in DR Congo

NEW YORK: Rwanda-backed M23 rebels killed at least 319 civilians, including 48 women and 19 children, last month in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Volker Turk, UN high commissioner for human rights, said, citing "first-hand accounts".

The violence in the Rutshuru territory of North Kivu Province produced "one of the largest documented death tolls in such attacks since the M23's resurgence in 2022," Turk said in a statement. With Rwanda's support, the M23 has seized swaths of the mineral-rich Congolese east from the DRC's army since its resurgence in 2021, triggering a spiralling humanitarian crisis in a region already riven by three decades of conflict.

July's violence came only weeks after the Congolese government and the M23 signed a declaration of principle on June 19 reaffirming their commitment to a permanent ceasefire, following months of broken truces. "I am appalled by the attacks on civilians by the M23 and

other armed groups in eastern DRC amid continued fighting, despite the ceasefire that was recently signed in Doha," Turk said in a statement. "All attacks against civilians must stop immediately, and all those responsible must be held to account," he added.

Turk's UN Human Rights Office said it had documented multiple attacks in North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri provinces, in the conflict-ridden east of the country bordering Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. In the agreement signed in Doha, the warring parties agreed to "uphold their commitment to a permanent ceasefire", refraining from "hate propaganda" and "any attempt to seize by force new positions". The deal includes a roadmap for restoring state authority in eastern DRC, and an agreement for the two sides to open direct talks towards a comprehensive peace agreement. It followed a separate agreement signed in Washington by the Congolese government and Rwanda, which has a history of intervention in the

eastern DRC stretching back to the 1990s. Rwandan President Paul Kagame and Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi are due to meet in the coming months to firm up the Washington agreement, whose terms have not yet been implemented. Last week, the two countries agreed to a US State Department-brokered economic framework outline as part of the peace deal. "I urge the signatories and facilitators of both the Doha and Washington agreements to ensure that they rapidly translate into safety, security and real progress for civilians in the DRC, who continue to endure the devastating consequences of these conflicts," said Turk.

Rich in key minerals such as gold and coltan, the Congolese east has been riven by fighting between rival armed groups and interference by foreign powers for more than 30 years. Dozens of ceasefires and truces have been brokered and broken in recent years without providing a lasting end to the conflict. — Aljazeera

## Israel pushes for more illegal settlements in occupied West Bank

GAZA: Israeli authorities are moving forward with plans to dramatically expand illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank, despite growing international condemnation and warnings that the move would destroy already moribund prospects for a two-state solution.

The Israeli government has set as the date to discuss building thousands of new housing units in the E1 area, east of occupied East Jerusalem. The proposed expansion would link the large and illegal Ma'ale Adumim settlement with Jerusalem, effectively bisecting the West Bank and isolating Palestinian communities.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's far-right government also appears on the cusp of announcing its intention to occupy all of Gaza as its genocidal war on the besieged enclave rages on. The E1 plan in the West Bank has long been criticised by the international community, including the European Union and suc-

cessive United States administrations. In 2022, Israel postponed the plan following US pressure, but in recent months, the government approved road-widening projects in the area and began restricting Palestinian access - a move rights groups say indicates a renewed push to entrench control.

Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem are illegal under international law. The International Court of Justice, the top United Nations tribunal, reaffirmed that position last year, saying that Israel's presence in the occupied Palestinian territories is unlawful and must end "as rapidly as possible". Germany reiterated its strong opposition to the E1 project. "We, as the federal government, strongly reject the E1 settlement project," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Kathrin Deschauer said. "What we are concerned about is that a two-state solution is possible in the long term."

The plan would see near-

ly 1,214 hectares (3,000 acres) of Palestinian land stolen to build more than 4,000 settlement units, as well as hotels and roads connecting Ma'ale Adumim to West Jerusalem. Palestinians say the project is part of broader efforts to "Judaize" East Jerusalem and entrench Israeli control over occupied territories in violation of international law.

Palestinian leaders seek the entirety of the West Bank, along with the Gaza Strip, and as a capital, East Jerusalem - areas Israel captured in the 1967 war - for their future state. Currently, more than 500,000 settlers are living in the West Bank, and some 220,000 others in East Jerusalem. Al Jazeera's Nida Ibrahim said the plan has been in the works since "the early 90s". "The plan has been described by US officials ... as devastating and a disastrous plan," Ibrahim said, as it threatens "the unity" of a potential Palestinian state. According to Ibrahim, the Israeli objective is to ensure there

is "no Palestinian state on the ground" by the time Western and European countries recognise Palestine as a state.

Israel would be "cutting the West Bank into so many different sections, fragmenting them, creating what Palestinians have been calling as cantons," she said, predicting that his would push Palestinians into "very small, caged communities". The move comes amid a broader Israeli crackdown in the occupied West Bank. At least 30 Palestinians were arrested overnight across multiple cities including Hebron, Nablus, Bethlehem, Ramallah, and Tulikarem, according to the Palestinian Authority's Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs. Among those detained were two women, a female journalist, and several former prisoners. The commission said more than 18,500 Palestinians have been arrested in the West Bank since Israel began its genocidal assault on Gaza in October 2023. — Aljazeera

## Pacific microstate sells first passports to fund climate action

NAURU (AFP): A remote Pacific nation has started selling passports to fund climate action, but is so far struggling to attract new citizens to the low-lying, largely barren island. Pacific microstate Nauru, one of the world's smallest nations, has a novel plan to fund its fight against climate change by selling so-called "golden passports".

Selling for US\$105,000 each, Nauru plans to drum up more than US\$5 million in the first year of the "climate resilience citizenship" programme. Almost six months after the scheme opened in February, Nauru has so far approved just six applications -- covering two families and four individuals. Despite the slow start -- Nauru hopes to sell 66 passports in the scheme's first year -- President David Adeang remained upbeat.

"We welcome our new citizens, whose investment will assist Nauru to secure a sustainable and prosperous future for generations to come," he told AFP. Nauru believes the passport programme could eventually generate \$43 million -- or about 500 successful applicants -- which would account for almost 20 percent of total government revenue. But there are fears the scheme could be ripe for exploitation. Edward Clark, who runs Nauru's climate passport programme, said one application has already been withdrawn after officials flagged "adverse findings" during background checks.

"The application would have been rejected had it not been withdrawn," he told AFP. A previous Nauru attempt to sell passports ended in disaster. In 2003, Nauru officials sold citizen-

ship to Al-Qaeda members who were later arrested in Asia. Among the first batch of climate passports approved was an unnamed German family of four living in Dubai, said Clark, touting the "major milestone". "They were looking for a second citizenship to provide them with a Plan B given the current global political volatility," he said. The Nauru passport provides visa-free entry into more than 80 countries or territories. More than 60 different nations offer some form of migration for investment schemes, Australia's Lowy Institute has found.

Pacific nations such as Vanuatu, Samoa and Tonga have all dabbled in selling passports. The island republic of Nauru sits on a small plateau of phosphate rock in the sparsely populated

South Pacific. With a total landmass of just 21 square kilometres (eight square miles), it is one of the world's smallest nations. Unusually pure phosphate deposits -- a key ingredient in fertiliser -- once made Nauru one of the wealthiest places, per capita, on the planet. But these supplies have long since dried up, and researchers today estimate 80 percent of Nauru has been rendered uninhabitable by mining. What little land Nauru has left is threatened by encroaching tides. Scientists have measured sea levels rising 1.5 times faster than global averages. Nauru will eventually need to relocate 90 percent of its population as creeping seas start to eat away at its coastal fringe. The first phase of this mass relocation is estimated to cost more than \$60 million.

our duty to raise our voices and mobilise all available means to support our colleagues in this noble profession. If the international community fails to act, the death of these journalists will not only be a moral catastrophe, but it will also be the death of truth itself in Gaza. Our inaction will be recorded in history as a monumental failure to protect our fellow journalists and a betrayal of the principles that every journalist strives to uphold. We, the undersigned, demand: Immediate Food and Medical access: Urgent delivery of food, clean water and medical supplies to all journalists in Gaza through protected humanitarian corridors. International Media Access: End the blockade on foreign press entry into Gaza and allow global journalists to operate freely and independently. — Aljazeera



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## Reforming NASA: A path to Mars and beyond

**D**ESPITE everything that is broken and unsettling in the world, America and our great space agency is worth fighting for - and fixing. From the moment Jared's nomination to head NASA was announced last year, the reaction from passionate space enthusiasts and professionals was overwhelmingly positive. Everyone had ideas - big, small, crazy, pragmatic and visionary. It became immediately clear that no other federal agency attracts the level of engagement NASA does. Space captivates people - us included. So, we wanted to share a few of our ideas. Please consider these thoughts just a drop in the sea of ideas that come from many knowledgeable voices who long for humankind's next giant leap.

The first step to fixing a problem is admitting we have one. If NASA wants to get back to generating world-changing headlines, we must confront some difficult facts. Every president for the past 35 years has called for a return to the Moon and a path to Mars. More than \$100 billion has been spent, yet the return path remains distant and uncertain. Major programs are over budget, behind schedule and often canceled. This wastes opportunities for science and discovery and undermines public confidence in NASA. Similarly, we have maintained a continuous presence in low Earth orbit (which is a great accomplishment). But we still haven't cracked the code on creating the commercial orbital economy. If we don't, humankind's future in space will forever be tethered to taxpayer funding and inefficient government spending. The federal government is entering a challenging budgetary environment. The national debt is exploding, and we can't spend our way out of it. NASA can and must do more with less. Already, NASA isn't getting the most out of its budget - whether it's \$20 billion or \$25 billion. The agency's leadership has often said, "If we have 10 healthy centers and take care of people, the science will take care of itself." By this logic, any CEO with a good human resource department should be as successful as Steve Jobs. This is ludicrous.

One of leadership's current solutions to budget pressures is to reduce astronaut crew sizes and mission frequency. Meanwhile, bureaucratic positions proliferate. This is unacceptable. Astronauts - not bureaucrats - are the human identity of the agency. There are too many managers, deputies, assistants and review boards - and not enough doers. Bureaucracy is stifling innovation. The culture must return to being mission focused. We need to empower the best and brightest to make decisions and take calculated risks. Some efforts - such as exploring worlds beyond our own - involve risks worth taking.

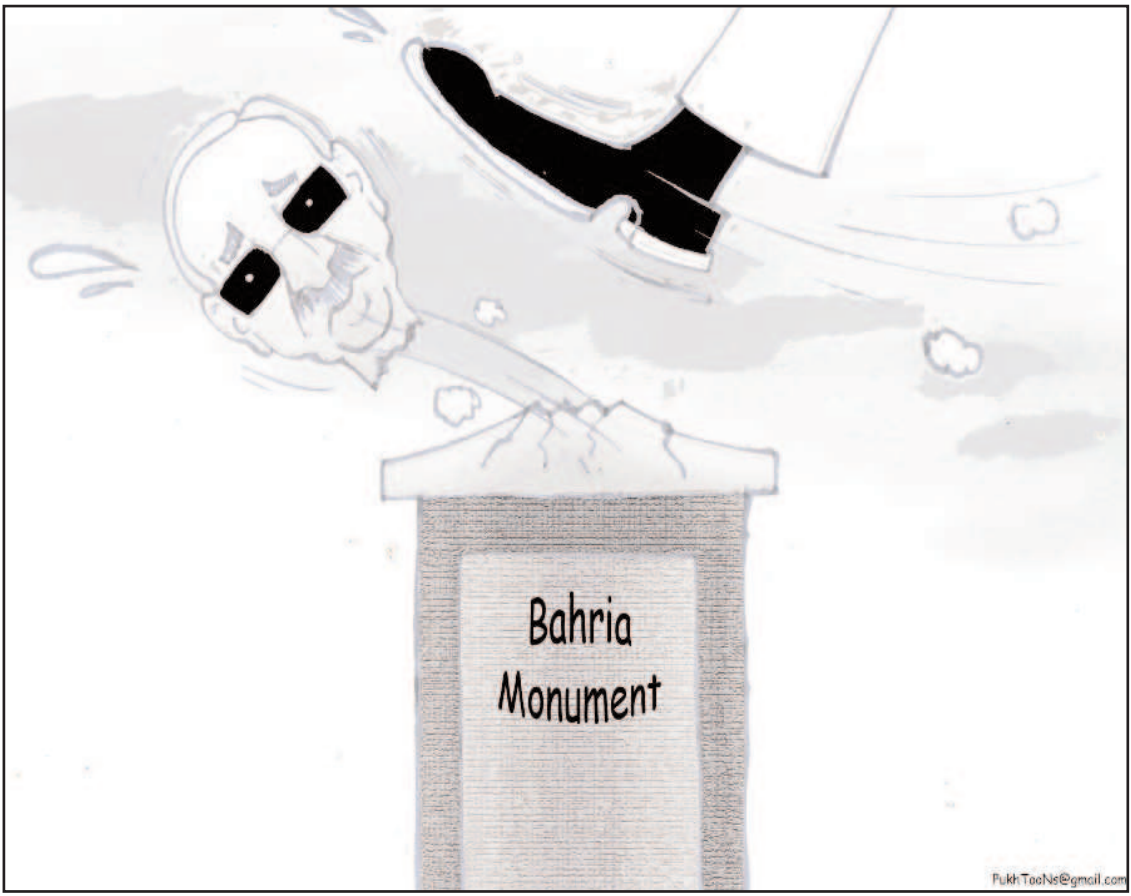
NASA has also lost its ability to inspire and excite people. The agency's storytelling is fragmented. NASA has numerous social media channels and countless small initiatives that dilute the big, bold mission the agency was established to achieve. NASA must reorganize, cut the bureaucracy and align responsibilities logically with agency priorities alongside a cultural rebirth. We should create engineering and finance strike teams that can identify inefficiencies, solve problems and fix failing programs. Of course we will also need to use what we already have. This means using the Space Launch System vehicles that are already funded to return to the Moon. This being said, Artemis II must get to the pad and launch by Christmas. To get to Mars, we must work in parallel alongside the commercial industry that is pioneering the reusable heavy lift vehicles. NASA should support the development of reusable systems for routine deep space missions and focus agency resources on the challenges commercial industry will not be capable of solving.

Ultimately, we should move beyond Space Launch System. The agency should redirect talent and resources to nuclear electric propulsion. This is the logical evolution for power, efficiency and exploration at scale with dual use potential. NASA needs a mini-Manhattan Project to get America underway on nuclear power in space. In addition to returning to the Moon and going to Mars, NASA needs to develop an industry outreach effort to prioritize high-value science and commercial work aboard the International Space Station. This incredible investment can generate economic returns. The taxpayers alone can't fund the future we all want to see in space. As we mentioned before, a strong commercial orbital economy is imperative. If NASA is operating as it should, we should be able to generate a continuous cycle of amazing scientific discovery. We all love the James Webb Space Telescope, Hubble and the Mars rovers. But we need to launch missions like these frequently.

A flagship science program shouldn't have to cost a billion dollars. Administrator Dan Goldin was right. NASA should focus on lower-cost, higher-frequency missions, that accept more risk. Today's commercial space sector makes this model much more viable. This could help enable academic institutions to leverage their \$1 trillion in endowments to fund their own extraordinary scientific missions. NASA can be a facilitator and partner in a new age of discovery. These are turbulent times, and budget pressures are real. But delay and defeat are not options. NASA was never meant to be a caretaker of history. The agency was built to make history. China is moving fast with bold ambitions in the ultimate high ground of space. If we fail to be the leader, we will be the follower - and we may never catch up.

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## Rise of strategic non-alignment

Imran Khalid

**I**N Rio de Janeiro's Itamaraty Palace, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva raised a quiet toast. There was no anti-American rhetoric, no thunderous declarations - just a call for "cooperation without coercion." As BRICS leaders gathered for their July 6-7, 2025, summit, the message was unmistakable: this was not about replacing the United States, but about creating space from it.

In President Trump's second term, global diplomacy is not erupting into confrontation. It's slipping into something quieter, more deliberate and perhaps more enduring - strategic non-alignment. This isn't the return of Cold War rivalry. It's the rise of what policymakers are calling multi-alignment - or more pointedly, active non-alignment. From Brasília to Jakarta, Ankara to Nairobi, governments are no longer organizing their foreign policy around loyalty. They're organizing it around leverage. Rather than form bloc-based alternatives or pledge allegiance to rival powers, these states are playing the field - engaging Washington where useful, Beijing where strategic, and building new horizontal alliances among themselves. It's not anti-Americanism. It's strategic flexibility.

The recent BRICS summit in Rio de Janeiro offered a quiet, elegant demonstration. While some expected fireworks or a bold anti-Western manifesto, the bloc instead issued the "Rio de Janeiro Declaration," a 31-page document calling for reform of UN and Bretton Woods institutions, ethical AI governance, and increased climate finance, while condemning attacks on Iran and supporting a Gaza ceasefire. The declaration noticeably steered clear of anti-US rhetoric. Lula, who hosted the summit, clarified the bloc's ethos: BRICS, he argued, is not a tool of confrontation but a platform for reform, drawing inspiration from the 1955 Bandung Conference. Lula emphasized "equidistance" between major powers and reaffirmed Brazil's non-aligned posture.

Brazil's behavior reflected this balancing act. While hosting China, Russia, and expanding BRICS membership to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran and the UAE (with Saudi Arabia as a partner), it resisted Trump's tariff demands without escalating retaliation. India's posture echoes this ambivalence. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government continues to deepen defense cooperation with Washington but also embraced chairmanship of the 2026 BRICS summit, advocating a "humanity first" approach, and bolstered trade with China and the UAE, including a pledge to triple bilateral trade with Brazil. New Delhi now defines its foreign policy as "issue-based engagement" - hedging pragmatically without ideological commitment. Turkey offers yet another illustration. While remaining a NATO member and participating in US military procurement, Ankara sent Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan to Rio, affirming Turkey's interest in deeper BRICS collaboration. Turkish officials frame their diplomacy as "multi-directional," building influence from Brussels to Baku without fixed allegiance. This is no longer anecdotal. According to the Munich Security Report 2025, 57 percent of surveyed Global South policymakers now describe their diplomacy as "multi-aligned" - a 21-point increase since 2020. These governments are not rejecting the US or embracing its rivals. They're diversifying, recalibrating and insulating their interests.

Why now? The answer lies in the lived reality of Trump's second term. His foreign policy decisions have triggered uncertainty, friction and strategic de-risking - even among long-standing allies. First, Trump withdrew the United States from the Paris climate agreement on his first day in office. Citing unfair burdens on American industry, the move sent shockwaves through global climate diplomacy - halting billions in climate finance and stalling joint decarbonization frameworks. In response, BRICS called for

\$300 billion annually by 2035 from developed nations to support Global South climate goals. Second, his administration reinstated Section 232 tariffs on steel and aluminum imports from 12 countries, including Brazil, South Africa, India and the European Union. By April, tariff rates ranged between 25 percent and 35 percent, prompting diplomatic protests and early signs of trade retaliation. Third, Trump halted US contributions to the World Bank's clean energy lending platform, suspending America's role in shaping development finance norms and accelerating alternatives among Global South states.

Fourth, he froze diplomatic aid to non-NATO countries, labeling them "security freeloaders" under his transactional doctrine. Governments in Africa, Southeast Asia and Latin America responded by pivoting toward regional solutions and partnerships. Fifth - and perhaps most destabilizing - has been Trump's tariff strategy itself. On July 6, he announced a 10 percent tariff on all BRICS imports, effective Aug. 1, with threats of escalation to 25 percent to 40 percent if bilateral deals fail, and 100 percent tariffs if BRICS nations reduce dollar usage. A 50 percent tariff was specifically imposed on Brazil, citing its hosting of the summit and alleged "attacks" on US tech firms. The July 9 deadline for revised trade protocols, branded "Tariff D-Day," was extended to Aug. 1, prompting emergency negotiations and capital flight. According to recent IMF estimates, foreign direct investment inflows to the US declined 6.1 percent in the first quarter of 2025.

Meanwhile, Vietnam, Japan and Mexico initiated regional currency talks and trade hedging mechanisms to reduce exposure to US sanctions.

In response, Global South nations are increasingly turning to each other - not out of hostility toward the US, but out of necessity. Kenya and India launched a joint climate credit platform. Mexico and Colombia expanded

investment agreements with China and the UAE, bypassing dollar-clearing systems. China and Vietnam agreed to advance railway cooperation, while China and the United Arab Emirates signaled investments in Brazil's Tropical Forests Forever Facility. The BRICS Multilateral Guarantee mechanism, launched by the New Development Bank, aims to boost infrastructure and climate investments. Even traditional Western partners are rethinking their footing. Germany's foreign office, in an internal memo, warned that Washington's offer of partnership is shrinking. France convened a strategic sovereignty dialogue with Brazil and Egypt. These aren't alliances dissolving. They're alliances mutating. Testimony before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee this spring further validated these trends. Joseph Ledford, senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, declared: "Washington's reliance on loyalty has outpaced its offering of leadership."

That's the crux of this new era: strategic autonomy isn't ideological. It's adaptive. Governments are resisting dependency, not relationships. They're refusing exclusivity - not engagement. None of this amounts to an anti-American bloc. The Global South doesn't want confrontation. It wants co-authorship. The BRICS expansion - now representing 45 percent of global population and 35 percent of GDP - is not a Cold War redux. It's a forum for pluralism, not polarity. And that presents an opportunity. For the US, the challenge is not competition. It's relevance. If Washington can embrace multipolar diplomacy - grounded in mutual respect and institutional reform - it still holds the tools for leadership. But if it continues to demand allegiance while offering volatility, it risks being sidelined not by adversaries, but by indifference. In Trump's second term, America still matters. But increasingly, the world no longer waits. The US can still lead, but only by listening. It must join the world's new diplomatic table - not demand to own it.

The Hill

## Putin is aging and nobody wants to do anything about it

Andrey Pertsev

**F**OR more than two decades, Russian President Vladimir Putin has cultivated an image as a strong leader. Initially, he liked to portray himself as a tight-lipped intelligence officer who was restoring order in Russia following the upheaval of the 1990s. Then he pivoted to a more macho image, which was supposed to frighten off enemies. Either way, a carefully curated public persona has always been a key element of Putin's popularity.

In part because Putin is now an elderly man, this image now seems outdated. In recent years, neither Putin nor his political managers have come up with anything new. As a result, both domestic and foreign audiences find themselves digesting the spectacle of an old man who is obviously out of touch with reality. In recent months, Putin's appearances have regularly included strange and sometimes inappropriate pronouncements peppered with impolite expressions. He tries to make jokes, indulges in reminiscing and embarks on long, entirely unnecessary historical digressions.

In one incident, he babbled on about the weather ("today it's one thing, tomorrow another") and in another, he appeared to suggest that the full-scale invasion of Ukraine was the result of "being bored" and "craving a bit of action." He also told a dirty joke in the middle of a conversation about global warming and recalled how, when drinking sake with one of Japan's leaders, the discussion turned to the quality of Japanese sperm.

Equally embarrassing are Putin's comments suggesting he does not grasp the real state of affairs in Russia. On several occasions, he has publicly argued with officials about average salaries. When Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin told Putin the average salary in the Russian capital was 160,000 rubles per month (\$2,038), Putin did not believe him. "Come on, it's more than that!" Putin responded. Sobyanin chose not to argue. Another of Putin's favorite topics is health. The president has said that his "good appearance" is down to exercise, and has bragged about not wearing glasses. He has even relayed the words of someone "close to him," who apparently described him as a "cyborg." The oddness of such claims is amplified by the fact that Putin clearly undergoes regular plastic surgery and cosmetic procedures.

It wasn't always this way. For many years, Putin cultivated the taciturn macho image of a security services officer whose job it was to clear up the mess left by the politicians of the 1990s. He spoke in harsh, abrupt, and memorable phrases. He dressed in unremarkable suits. In public, he only commented on issues that pertained to his position. Family life and hobbies, for example, were strictly taboo. Of course, this was an artificially constructed image. Kremlin spin doctor Gleb Pavlovsky, who worked with Putin in the early 2000s, said that Putin's public image in this period was based on Max Otto von Stieritz, the tight-lipped spy famous from the blockbuster Soviet thriller series "Seventeen Moments of Spring."

Once the country had begun to leave the 1990s

behind, Putin's image was modified. Instead of Putin as an intelligence officer, we got macho Putin - a symbol of a strong Russia. The president became known for stunts like diving for ancient Greek urns on the bottom of the Black Sea, flying alongside cranes in a motorized hang glider, testing Russian-made cars in Siberia and being photographed shirtless and carrying weapons in the taiga. After his confrontational speech at the Munich Security Conference in 2007, Putin began to put a greater emphasis on the differences between Russia and the West - and accordingly drew comparisons between himself and supposedly weak and indecisive Western leaders. The image of a physically fit Russian strongman was supposedly a foil for flabby Western bureaucrats in suits and ties.

The Kremlin promoted this sort of image - somewhere between Indiana Jones and James Bond - for a relatively long period of time. As recently as 2021, the public was still being treated to photos and video of Putin in the Siberian forest accompanied by his regular companion on such trips, then defense minister Sergei Shoigu. However, there is an obvious expiry date on this sort of positioning: no one can stay young forever. Even at the time of that trip with Shoigu, Putin was already nearly seventy. Almost imperceptibly, Putin has become something of a caricature of an elderly man who likes to tell stories, gives unsolicited lectures, pretends to be young and complains about life. While he regularly criticizes Western politicians - sometimes menacingly, sometimes with humor - nothing actually comes of those threats. Such meaningless grumbling contrasts dramatically with Putin's ruthless spy and macho man images, in which every word carried meaning and had consequences.

It would be logical for the Kremlin to try to come up with a new public persona for Putin now that he is in his seventies. For example, he could be marketed as a wise elder statesman who conserves his strength and rarely appears in public, whose age has given him a wealth of relevant experience. However, either no one has ever suggested to Putin that he cultivate such an image, or he has rejected the idea. Kremlin officials appear to be acting according to an old playbook: do what the tsar wants, and try not to anger him. Putin clearly enjoys appearing in public and trying to show that he is immune to the aging process.

In reality, though, what people see in Putin's public appearances is a struggling old man whose talk about physical exercise is at odds with the fact that he spends most of his time on video conference calls. Indeed, Putin's love of mentioning his own good health raises a question: if everything is so great, why does he talk about it all the time? Of course, there is nothing unusual about the aging process. But a failure to accept what is happening risks turning Putin into a joke, and exposes serious problems with the political decision-making process in Russia. It is increasingly clear that no one around Putin is willing to alert him to his own mistakes. In authoritarian regimes like modern Russia, such an intervention would simply be too risky.

## Difference among colleges, universities, and factories: A misconception

Prof. Dr. Imtiaz Ahmad

**A** misguided notion among some bureaucrats is gaining traction, suggesting that universities can generate their own resources without investment and resources. The government has been hesitant to invest in universities, expecting them to become self-sufficient. But is this approach feasible? Let's discuss what this means and the potential consequences of such a policy.

Higher education is a dream for many parents in Pakistan. However, our universities face numerous challenges, including inadequate funding, poor facilities, and over political employment issues. The government expects universities to manage their employees' salaries and benefits through student fees being the lonely source, but this approach is unsustainable. As a result, universities are struggling to provide quality education.

tion, and the burden is being shifted to students.

A Comparison of Universities with Colleges and Factories: In contrast, colleges receive more government funding, offer affordable education, and provide better facilities at door-steps. They are responsible for producing middle-standard educated and skilled laborers who can facilitate factories and industries. Factories, on the other hand, drive economic growth but lack compulsory collaboration with universities. This disconnect hinders the development of skilled labor and innovation and students financial support as practiced in other countries.

The Role of Universities: Universities are meant to produce highly qualified professionals who can contribute to the country's growth. They are the topmost institutions that can prepare individuals to meet the challenges

of national and international levels. However, the current system prioritizes employment re-employment based on politics and connections rather than merit based promotion. This leads to a lack of job satisfaction, burden on judiciary, poor facilities, and inadequate salaries for university employees.

The Consequences of Under-funding: The consequences of under-funding universities are far-reaching. The number of universities is increasing, but employment opportunities are limited, and government funding is decreasing. This has resulted in poor facilities, inadequate salaries, lacking of service structure and a lack of job satisfaction among employees. The burden is being shifted to students, who are forced to pay increasing fees. This approach is not only unfair but also unsustainable.

A Call for Revolutionary Change: The government should invest equally in all levels of education, from primary to higher education. Universities should not be expected to generate revenue like factories. Instead, we should focus on creating a conducive environment for innovation, research, and collaboration between universities, industries, and government institutions. This can be achieved by providing adequate funding, promoting research, and encouraging collaboration. To transform universities into hubs of innovation, we need to attract international students and faculty. This can be achieved through scholarships, peace, and stability in the country. By doing so, we can convert universities into industries that generate revenue and drive economic growth. A positive

thinking can resolve issues of universities otherwise the increase in tuition fee and decrease in admission shall ruin the higher education system.

The Way Forward: The government needs to rethink its approach to higher education. Instead of expecting universities to generate their own resources, we should invest in them and create a supportive environment. This can be achieved by: Providing adequate funding to universities, promoting research and innovation, encouraging collaboration between universities, industries, and government institutions, attracting international students and faculty collaboration for attraction as well as creating a conducive environment for innovation and entrepreneurship.

By adopting this approach, we can unlock the potential of our universities and drive economic growth. It's time for a rev-

olutionary change in policy to attract international students, promote research, and collaboration. By investing in universities and creating a supportive environment, we can transform them into hubs of innovation and drive economic growth.

The current approach to higher education is flawed. We need to rethink our strategy and invest in universities. By creating a supportive environment and promoting research and innovation, we can unlock the potential of our universities and drive economic growth. It's time for a change. Let's work together to create a better future for our country through investment in higher education and universities.

The author is a PhD from the University of Essex, UK, and is a Professor of Mathematics at University of Malakand.



# Trump’s break-up with Putin is a slap on wrist, not a knock-out punch

Jason Corcoran

WHEN Donald Trump announced plans to shorten the deadline before secondary sanctions kick in on companies doing business with Russia, the Kremlin responded with a shrug. Stoic statements flowed from Moscow officials, dismissing the move as yet another Western bluff and insisting they are fully prepared - even as the new deadline looms on August 8.

But the markets were not fooled. The ruble sank almost 3% against the dollar. Russian government bond yields spiked, with 10-year OFZs climbing over 50 basis points. The country's main stock index retreated 1.5%, with energy giants and state-owned banks leading the slide as investors reacted to rising geopolitical risk. United States President Donald Trump doubled down on July 31, declaring that the US would definitely impose sanctions. Referring to Russia's ongoing bombing of Ukraine, he added, "I think it's disgusting what they're doing." Secondary sanctions do not just block American firms from trading with Russia; they threaten to cut foreign companies off from the entire US financial system if they fail to comply. That puts real pressure on firms in China, India, and Turkey, key buyers of Russian crude that help fund President Vladimir Putin's war machine.

China and Turkey have signaled they will not bow to US pressure - at least not publicly. China continues to import billions of dollars' worth of Russian crude, while Turkey maintains its trade ties with Moscow and steers clear of Western sanctions alignment. However, India has started to shift its position. Several Indian refiners have reportedly halted purchases of Russian crude in the past week, a sign that the threat of secondary sanctions may already be biting behind the scenes. According to sources cited by Bloomberg, the Indian government

has also instructed refiners to begin preparing plans to source oil from places other than Russia That said, officials said Saturday that India would continue to source cheap oil from Russia, saying that India's economic policy could not be decided by another country.

Despite the outward defiance, there are signs of growing unease in India and elsewhere. If Trump follows through, the consequences could be severe: restricted access to the US financial system, steep tariffs and a chilling effect on the banks, insurers and shippers enabling Russian trade. Secondary sanctions could hit Russia far beyond oil sales by targeting the broader web of countries that still trade with Moscow. From machinery and electronics from Germany and Italy to food and manufactured goods from Brazil and Uzbekistan, Russia relies on this patchwork of economic ties to keep its wartime economy afloat. Cutting off access to the US financial system could chill those flows, making it riskier for firms and banks in these countries to keep doing business with Russia, even if their governments look the other way. For even the biggest economies, those consequences are tough to ignore. But there is good reason to doubt how far Trump will go in enforcing full secondary sanctions. China and India are central to wider US strategic interests and it is unclear whether he is truly willing to risk broader cooperation with them for the sake of punishing Russia.

Washington also knows that secondary sanctions imposed on the Kremlin's trading partners could backfire, driving up costs for US consumers and businesses. Still, pressure on Russia's energy sector, which funds roughly 40% of its federal budget, is mounting even before Trump's deadline arrives. The EU's latest sanctions

package slashed the price cap on Russian crude to \$47.60, blacklisted over 100 shadow tankers, and banned imports of refined fuels tied to Russian oil - all aimed at choking off Putin's wartime revenue. Combined with a fast-cooling economy and Trump's looming threat of secondary sanctions, Moscow may be heading into a perfect storm. The squeeze is now coming from both ends and Russia's war-hardened economy may struggle to hold the line.

The Kremlin, for its part, has responded to Trump's ultimatum with a mixture of bemusement and bluster. Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov publicly questioned the logic behind Trump's shifting timelines - from "24 hours, then 100 days" and claimed Moscow simply wants to "understand" the US president's thinking. But his tone was dismissive, insisting Russia has weathered unprecedented sanctions before and "will handle these new measures too." Indeed, Russia has withstood 17 rounds of EU sanctions aimed at its energy, financial, defense, and hybrid capabilities - part of a broader tsunami of nearly 20,000 restrictions imposed globally on its companies and individuals.

More combative was Dmitry Medvedev, who derided Trump's warning as a "theatrical ultimatum" and warned him against "playing the ultimatum game with Russia." But the clearest response came not in words, but in bloodshed. Just hours after Trump's latest cease-fire demand, Moscow launched a new wave of airstrikes across Ukraine, targeting a hospital in Kamianske and a prison in Zaporizhzhya, killing at least 17. The message from the Kremlin was brutal and direct, a clear reminder that Russia's war aims remain unchanged: to break Ukraine's will, cripple its infrastructure, and erase its sovereignty. Putin will not contemplate a cease-

fire until he seizes full control of the four Ukrainian regions he now claims as Russian - Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson. And with momentum on his side, there's little reason to believe he would stop there. But the real question is whether Trump will actually follow through and hit Putin where it hurts? Given his long history of deference and open admiration for Putin, whom he has variously called "brilliant," "savvy" and "a genius, it is hard to tell if Trump's latest moves signal a genuine policy shift or just another act of political theatre. His repeated sycophancy toward the Russian leader even raises provocative questions about whether he is acting as a secret Russian agent or merely staging a spectacle to distract from the ongoing Epstein scandal.

Many still believe the Kremlin has kompromat on Trump, which they say explains his unusually servile posture toward Putin. The lurid "pee tape" claims in the infamous Steele dossier were never proven. But years of investigations have never fully erased the suspicion that Moscow holds some kind of leverage over Trump - and his track record of being soft on Russia continues to keep that theory alive. Either way, this looming deadline feels more like a show designed for headlines than a serious step toward meaningful policy change. Even Trump himself, usually a strong advocate for sanctions, admitted on July 30: "I don't know that sanctions bother him," sounding less like a commander-in-chief and more like an ex still trying to figure out Putin's inner thoughts. While this latest gesture hints at some distance from his long-time Kremlin crush, history suggests otherwise. It is more likely to be symbolic - a TACO [Trump Always Chicks Out] rather than a takedown. In other words, it will be a slap on the wrist rather than decisive action that could truly alter the course of the war.

# How Russia’s new internet restrictions work and how to get around them

ON July 31, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a law that would fine Russians who deliberately searched for "extremist" content. Owners of VPN services will also be fined for providing their services. But how can this law actually be enforced? Will citizens be fined for stumbling across banned content? And how can Russians protect themselves from repression?

Restrictions on freedom of speech sharply intensified in Russia with the full-scale invasion of Ukraine and continue to tighten today. According to Roskomsvoboda, some 25,000 websites have been blocked under military censorship laws since 2022. In 2024, the authorities banned writing about circumventing these restrictions, even in scientific articles. They also throttled YouTube, blocked Signal and Discord and banned advertising on "foreign agents."

In 2025, Russia blocked access to the Cloudflare web service, cutting off access to even greater swathes of the internet. Moscow also adopted new laws allowing the authorities to monitor user traffic and penalize people for reading banned material.

Censorship and surveillance in Russia are carried out on several levels, from physical through equipment (namely TSPU and SORM) to laws and political pressure on global companies. Facebook and Instagram are blocked as "extremist," YouTube and X have been slowed down to the point of being impossible to use normally. There is even talk of blocking Telegram and WhatsApp. The only effective way for people to get beyond the Kremlin's digital iron curtain is to use VPNs and other tools to bypass blockades. But the state is fighting them hard.

Along with the tightening of legislation, the authorities are increasingly blocking VPN protocols. In this situation, reputable Western VPN providers have left the Russian market due to sanctions, lack of economic viability, and difficulty maintaining operations amid restrictions. Only services created by natives of Russia, who know the political context well and react quickly to changes, continue to work effectively.

A new law introduces punishment for searching for Nazi or "knowingly extremist" materials from the almost 5,500 organizations on the Justice Ministry register, the vast majority of which relate to antisemitism and radical hate groups. Some materials are merely described as "1.jpg," which tells users nothing about the content of this material. Potentially, the presence of a file with the same name on a user's device could lead to criminal proceedings. Additionally, there is no searchable list that could allow someone to check whether what they are looking at is permitted. How the authorities plan to prove that a person searched for banned material intentionally is unclear. It is also unclear how the Russian authorities are going to catch targeted searches for "extremist" content on Instagram and Facebook, which are not only unlikely to cooperate and are themselves owned by the recognized "extremist" organization Meta.

A little earlier, the State Duma simplified the application of administrative punishment, legalizing the recognition of an organization or community as extremist if the owner/administrator of the group has already been accused of creating an extremist community. Because of this, charity projects such as "Tales for Political Prisoners" began to close. The creator, the mother of political prisoner Yevgenia Berkovich, was afraid that some of the subscribers might be subject to prosecution. In addition, the bill allows not only legal entities, but also communities based in WhatsApp or Telegram group chats, to be included in the list of the Ministry of Justice.

Anastasia Burakova, founder of Kovcheg (The Ark), a non-profit organization and media outlet that helps anti-war Russians, is convinced that the purpose of any repressive laws, including this one, is to create an

Sarkis Darbinyan

atmosphere of fear. The State Duma passes new laws and restrictions at an unthinkable speed, formulating them in such a way that the widest possible range of people would be affected. She told me that, even as a lawyer, she finds it difficult to keep track of all the changes. Ordinary people cannot stand a chance of understanding the rules of the game.

Mazai Banzaev, founder of the popular Amnezia VPN, agrees with her and believes that the new legislation is primarily aimed at intimidating users to make them give up trying to search for information and cede access to the free internet for fear of punishment. In addition, the new law envisages punishing VPN providers that refuse to connect to the registry of blocked sites to filter traffic and for refusing to restrict access to prohibited information. Authorities intend

let alone researching banned topics - may be misinterpreted and want to hide their activity from telecom operators. Whenever the audience has questions or the authorities pass new laws like this, the development team promptly publishes explanations and digital security tips. Restrictions on the Internet are causing discontent even among citizens with no desire to access restricted content. The head of the Ministry of Information told Putin that users who unknowingly search for extremist material had no reason to worry.

Nevertheless, there is potential for penalties to become more severe. Fines could be raised and criminal charges could be added after the second offense. If even the meme with Pepe the frog in a rainbow wig, published by VK in 2020, was recognized as extremist, the space for charges under the new norms is immense. In order to

***The creator, the mother of political prisoner Yevgenia Berkovich, was afraid that some of the subscribers might be subject to prosecution. In addition, the bill allows not only legal entities, but also communities based in WhatsApp or Telegram group chats, to be included in the list of the Ministry of Justice. Anastasia Burakova, founder of Kovcheg (The Ark), a non-profit organization and media outlet that helps anti-war Russians, is convinced that the purpose of any repressive laws, including this one, is to create an atmosphere of fear. The State Duma passes new laws and restrictions at an unthinkable speed, formulating them in such a way that the widest possible range of people would be affected.***

to fine VPN services between 50,000 (\$624) and 5 million rubles (\$62,386) in cases of repeated violation. Also, administrative punishment is introduced for failure to provide access to information systems or databases to the FSB, SVR and police.

Penalties for advertising VPN services are another attack on the opposition, in particular, "undesirable" media. Some of them - including The Insider, Novaya Gazeta Europe and Mediazona - have developed their own VPNs and are selling them to readers. However, they were already under pressure even before the amendments. State Duma deputy Mikhail Delyagin called for Kovcheg to be punished for advertising its VPN. Formally, using a VPN is not enough for conviction alone. But it could be considered evidence of intent. The law says that the use of a VPN would be considered an aggravating circumstance in criminal convictions, but offers no details on how that would affect sentencing.

If a user has a VPN enabled, neither their internet provider nor law enforcement agencies will be able to find out what the user was looking for. This is probably the reason for tougher penalties for recalcitrant VPN providers. VPN creates a tunnel through which all traffic is encrypted, from basic metadata to the name of the resource the user is accessing. Russian companies Yandex and VK share data with the FSB, so it will be easy to identify people who used them to search for banned media. For other search engines, social networks, messengers and torrent clients, requests for "extremist" materials are detected by automated monitoring systems such as Vepr and Oculus, which the authorities have access to. Neither of these systems de-anonymizes users: they analyze publicly available information by keywords. The fight against VPNs has been going on for years. Accordingly, many of them have long since built resistance to such restrictions into their product architecture. For example, hidemy.name notes that the new round of censorship does not hinder their work. On the contrary, it increased interest in their product.

Users are afraid that their usual online activity -

reduce your risk of falling foul of this law, there are steps you can take.

If you are going to use a free VPN, be careful about which one you choose. Some services sell user data to advertisers or more nefarious groups. It is better to choose a service from among reliable VPN providers, for example, those recommended by human rights activists from Roskomsvoboda or trusted services from the VPN Guild list. Choose a VPN with a kill switch function. This severs your internet connection if the VPN disconnects while you are using it, protecting your traffic and IP address.

Do not use Russian browsers or services like Yandex, VK, Rutube or tools like the Alice LLM to search for anything political. Set up your own VPN server. This is easier than it sounds; you can open source solutions such as Amnezia and Outline. Despite the risks, independent media and VPNs do not plan to change their approach to their work. Burakova has already received a prison sentence of 7.5 years in absentia, so everything that could have happened has happened. The founder of Amnezia VPN also says that the situation is already complicated, so little will change. VPNs that work for Russian users are already violating the law in the eyes of the state, so the new laws will not change much. Timur Olevsky, editor-in-chief of The Insider, told me that the chilling effect of a lack of awareness of the new laws is more dangerous than the possible consequences for reading "extremist" materials.

"In the Soviet Union, information was completely controlled by the party and the KGB. But there were people who risked jail to listen to Western radio stations in secret. With access to independent information, they learned about the deadly levels of radiation after the Chernobyl accident, and it saved their health and lives. No placards or warnings will prevent people from urgently seeking out our or other media, finding out the information they care about," he said. People will keep on searching for information that the state would rather they never saw. But they will learn to avoid leaving any traces of having done so.

The Moscow Times

# Challenging social media monopolies: What sets Türkiye’s Next Sosyal apart?

Ersin Çahmutolu

FOR a long time, the term "social media" instantly brought to mind popular platforms like X, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. These digital spaces, where billions of people produce, consume, and interact with content, are in reality highly centralized systems. In other words, the companies behind these platforms hold the power to decide what users see, which content gets prioritized, and, at times, what ends up censored.

In recent years, a new concept has emerged, challenging this dominance and established order: decentralized social media. The term has gained even greater prominence with the announcement of Türkiye's homegrown platform, Next Sosyal.

Decentralized social media refers to platforms built on distributed networks, free from the absolute control of any single company or central authority. These platforms typically run on open protocols, such as ActivityPub, which allow greater transparency and flexibility. Notable examples include Mastodon and Bluesky, the latter founded by Twitter's former CEO, Jack Dorsey.

On these networks, content isn't stored in a single central hub. Instead, control is distributed across servers located anywhere in the world. This gives server administrators and communities full authority over their own data. Decentralized platforms stand out as a compelling alternative in the social media ecosystem, differing from traditional platforms through greater user control over data, stronger content freedom, and transparent algorithms. Unlike traditional social media platforms, services like Mastodon are built to function without a central authority, operating on a protocol known as ActivityPub. This framework lets users share content free from centralized control while giving third-party developers the flexibility to build their own applications and algorithms.

Next Sosyal, built on the

Mastodon framework, is open source, meaning its software can be accessed and improved by external developers. Open source ensures that the platform's code is fully visible, copyable, and modifiable by anyone. This approach not only strengthens security but also gives users the ability to examine how the platform operates in detail. In this way, Mastodon provides a structure that avoids storing user data on centralized servers, instead granting individual servers and their communities greater control over their own information. The Mastodon framework also lets users customize their content feeds through filters set by each community or server, rather than imposing rigid, fixed algorithms. This approach promotes transparency and personalization in how content is displayed. Next Sosyal is built and operates on this very principle.

Centralized social media platforms developed by companies like X, Meta, and ByteDance maintain full control over user data, typically using it for targeted advertising or algorithm-driven content manipulation. In contrast, decentralized platforms keep data on the servers where it originates. For instance, X can freely manipulate all user data stored on a single central server. Meanwhile, networks built on Mastodon can consist of thousands of servers, with each server owner solely responsible for storing and protecting their users' data. Content moderation and similar functions are managed locally by individual administrators. And because these platforms don't rely on ad targeting, they require only minimal personal information from users.

Decentralized platforms are inherently designed to resist censorship and filtering policies. In contrast, companies such as X and Meta often censor content arbitrarily, sometimes to comply with government demands and other times based on internal decisions, filtering

out words or phrases they consider "objectionable." They achieve this easily by tweaking their algorithms. On decentralized platforms, however, such practices aren't possible. Open-source code ensures complete transparency around how algorithms function.

Next Sosyal, powered by the Mastodon framework, currently runs on a single server. Through this setup, users can engage in topic-based discussions, similar to X, or share personal content within the network. While it may appear similar to X at first glance, its underlying infrastructure and algorithmic approach set it apart in significant ways. Here's a breakdown of those differences: On X, content policies are set by the company and can change arbitrarily at any time. In contrast, platforms built on Mastodon's infrastructure, like Next Sosyal, allow each server to establish its own community rules.

Platforms like X often suppress certain content algorithmically or hide it through measures such as "shadow banning" (limiting the visibility of specific posts). For instance, Meta's shadow bans on Turkish users in the past led to widespread content censorship and account closures. With Next Sosyal, such practices are impossible because there is no centralized authority or hidden algorithmic system in place. On platforms like X and Meta, content is often removed at the request of certain governments, such as the US or Israel, due to corporate structures and behind-the-scenes agreements, something we've witnessed repeatedly. In contrast, platforms like Next Sosyal make such practices structurally impossible. Moreover, foreign-owned platforms such as X frequently fail to take adequate measures against cybercrime or digital offenses targeting users in Türkiye and sometimes even complicate legal proceedings. Since Next Sosyal operates entirely within Türkiye, these legal challenges sim-

ply do not arise. Another key difference is user authenticity. While platforms like X grapple with fake accounts, bots, and anonymity issues, Next Sosyal eliminates these problems altogether. Every user is verified, creating a safer environment that prevents cybercriminals or bad actors from engaging in harassment or abusive behavior.

In short, social media platforms built on Mastodon-like infrastructures provide users with far greater freedom of expression and a more secure online experience. Unlike X and other similar platforms, networks such as Next Sosyal are not subject to the legal challenges and obstacles that often arise elsewhere.

When talking about Next Sosyal, we must also question how long the current system - in which global giants like X, Meta, and ByteDance attempt to control what we discuss and how we share - can endure. Over the past six years, decentralized social networks have emerged as a promising alternative. But can they really dismantle the entrenched order these corporations have built?

It's too soon to give a definitive answer, but success for platforms like Next Sosyal, BlueSky, Mastodon, and even Truth Social will depend on their ability to generate significant momentum and attract large global user bases. As long as centralized giants like X and Meta persist in limiting freedom of thought and expression through algorithmic control, decentralized social media is likely to gain even more traction in the years ahead.

In the near future, many governments are expected to take stronger, more decisive steps toward developing their own domestic social media platforms. This issue isn't just about user safety or freedom of expression, it also raises serious national security concerns when data is transmitted abroad. Recent moves by countries like France, South Korea, Russia, China, and Iran to restrict or block foreign-owned apps and platforms underscore the magnitude and urgency of this challenge.

# Suspension of Serbia-Kosovo normalization talks

Dr. Idlir Lika

IN the latest rhetorical escalation of tensions between Serbia and Kosovo, on July 21, Belgrade announced it would suspend the EU-brokered normalization process with Pristina following the arrest and pre-trial detention of Igor Popovic, a Serbian negotiator and deputy director of Serbia's Office for Kosovo and Metohija. Popovic was accused by high-level Kosovo officials, including Prime Minister Albin Kurti and Interior Minister Xhelal Svecla, of "inciting hatred and interethnic divisions" by calling the Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK) a "terrorist organization" at a rally commemorating wartime Serb and Roma victims in Rahovec. In a rhetorical tit-for-tat, both Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic and Foreign Minister Marko Duric branded the pre-trial detention of Popovic "a continuation of a sustained cycle of repression" and said that "Serbia will respond in a strong and firm way."

This latest escalation can be interpreted in two different ways. First, one can make the case that it is the time-tested strategy of both

the Belgrade and Pristina administrations to provoke mini crises in bilateral relations in order to divert attention from domestic troubles they are facing. Indeed, both countries are facing significant internal instability. Vucic is still grappling with months of student-led demonstrations that have now critically upped their demands to include early elections and an end to his rule. On the other hand, Kosovo has failed 52 times to constitute the country's new parliament since the Feb. 9 parliamentary elections, making the prospect of snap elections increasingly likely. In this respect, the latest crisis over the pre-trial detention of Popovic is no different from the clashes in the four Serbian-dominated municipalities in northern Kosovo in May 2023, the ban on the use of the Serbian dinar in January 2024, or the shutting down of Serbia-run parallel offices in 10 municipalities south of the Ibar River in January 2025.

The second way to make sense of the latest escalation in Serbia-Kosovo relations is that it reflects an attempt by Balkan political

elites in general to adapt themselves to the shifting geopolitical reality in the region in the short-to-medium term. More specifically, the US retreat from its role as security provider under the Trump administration has led Europe to try to fend off security challenges on its own. All this has provided more leeway for selfish and corrupt Balkan elites to play the nationalist card for political ends. Seen from this angle, the latest Belgrade-Pristina tensions are no different from the racist insults against Albanians heard during a basketball match in Kumanovo, North Macedonia a few days ago. Indeed, both ethnic majority and minority parties have already cashed in on this incident and will undoubtedly use it for the upcoming local elections in October.

At the same time, the new geopolitical reality marked by the US retreat also provides new opportunities for regional powers to assert themselves and project influence in the Balkans. The Balkan Peace Platform that Türkiye most recently initiated is fundamentally a fresh framework

for regional cooperation and stability that seeks to complement the already existing general framework provided by the EU and West. In the platform's very first meeting in Istanbul on July 26, chaired by Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, Türkiye acknowledged the importance of Euro-Atlantic institutions for achieving and preserving peace and stability in the region, but also emphasized the need to give more weight to regional actors themselves, including Türkiye, to provide for their region's security.

As aptly put by Fidan: "We also reached a consensus on generating regional solutions to regional problems. Rather than waiting for a hegemon, contributions from outside should be welcomed; however, if we as the countries of the region possess the capacity to resolve our own problems, it is both our duty and responsibility to demonstrate that capacity." In short, Türkiye recognizes the new geopolitical vacuum created in the Balkans and the opportunity this provides to do more for preserving peace and stability in a region with which it shares deep historical, ethnic, religious and cultural ties.





FAISALABAD: Farmers picking and collecting seasonal fruits at farm field.

## Cybersecurity capacity with PCI DSS training Pakistans financial sector takes a leap forward

F.P. Report

KARACHI: In a bid to strengthening cybersecurity resilience across Pakistan's financial and fintech sectors, the National Institute of Banking and Finance, Pakistan (NIBAF-Pakistan) in collaboration with Risk Associates, delivered a two-day capacity-building training on the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS), held on 7-8 August 2025.

This pioneering initiative was made possible through the forward-looking vision of the State Bank of Pakistan, whose leadership continues to champion digital security across the country's banking and payments ecosystem. The session brought together cybersecurity professionals and representatives from

leading banks and financial institutions, reflecting a shared commitment to securing financial data and building trust in digital payments.

Risk Associates, a globally recognised certification body and PCI Qualified Security Assessor (QSA), led the training with technical expertise and actionable insights on PCI DSS v4.0. The program focused on payment security architecture, cardholder data protection, and compliance lifecycle management-critical pillars for institutions navigating today's sophisticated threat landscape.

The initiative signals a long-term commitment to building cybersecurity capability within Pakistan's financial ecosystem, particularly in the fast-evolving fintech space. It also supports the country's ambi-

tion to contribute skilled cybersecurity professionals to regional and global markets, especially across the Middle East and GCC financial hubs.

Co CEO NIBAF-Pakistan Ms. Lubna Malik while sharing her thoughts on this occasion noted that the training marks a major milestone in NIBAF-Pakistan's commitment to enhancing the cybersecurity capabilities of banking professionals across Pakistan. She further noticed that by embedding international standards like PCI DSS into our learning framework, we are ensuring financial institutions are better prepared for today's dynamic threat environment.

CEO Risk Associates Dr. Aftab Rizvi while commenting on the completion of the training program said that the collaboration

with NIBAF-Pakistan marks a transformative moment for Pakistan's cybersecurity landscape. He further added that by aligning with the State Bank of Pakistan's vision, his organization is not only empowering financial institutions with global standards like PCI DSS but also fostering local expertise to meet international benchmarks.

As digital payment adoption accelerates, standardised, resilient security frameworks like PCI DSS are essential to protect sensitive data and enable trust-driven growth. Building on this success, Risk Associates and NIBAF-P plan to expand their collaboration to include advanced training on cybersecurity governance, ISO/IEC 27001, and emerging threats shaping the financial sector.

## Nishat Group unveils OMODA and JAECCOO in Pakistan

F.P. Report

LAHORE: One of Pakistan's largest business conglomerates, Nishat Group, through its subsidiary Nexgen Auto, has officially introduced the renowned automotive giant Chery International's global brand OMODA and JAECCOO to the local market.

At a high-profile launch event held at Expo Centre Lahore, OMODA and JAECCOO unveiled their highly anticipated electric

vehicle models, the Omoda E5 and Jaecoo J6, along with compelling pricing.

Demonstrating Nishat Group's commitment to innovation and excellence, the event was executed with precision and vision. The showcase of the future lineup reflected the Nishat Group's clear vision and strategic planning for the automotive industry. The lineup featured the Jaecoo J5, Jaecoo J7 and Omoda C7, each model thoughtfully selected to cater to

the evolving needs of Pakistan's automotive consumers.

The launch represents a pivotal moment in Nexgen Auto's mission to transform mobility in Pakistan through cutting-edge technology, eco-conscious design, and intelligent performance. With OMODA and JAECCOO, the company is introducing global innovation and a modern driving experience to local roads, setting a new benchmark in the market.

The event was attended

by senior political leaders, environmental advocates, and prominent automotive influencers, highlighting the significance of this milestone in shaping the country's electric vehicle landscape. The official car reveals were supported by strategic insights from Nexgen Auto's leadership, sharing their long-term vision for redefining electric mobility in the region.

With this launch, Nexgen Auto is starting a new chapter in Pakistan's automotive landscape.

## Collection of Hajj applications Branches of designated banks to remain open on Saturday

F.P. Report

KARACHI: In order to facilitate the collection of Hajj applications from registered applicants of Hajj 2026, State Bank of Pakistan on the request of Ministry of Religious Affairs &

Interfaith Harmony has directed 14 designated banks to keep their concerned branches open from 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Saturday, August 9, 2025 throughout the country.

Earlier, in terms of Hajj Policy, the Ministry of

Religious Affairs & Interfaith Harmony has designated 14 banks (viz. National Bank of Pakistan, Habib Bank, United Bank, MCB Bank, Allied Bank, Bank Alfalah, Zarai Taraqiati Bank, Faysal Bank, Askari Bank, Bank

Al-Habib, Habib Metropolitan Bank, Soneri Bank, Meezan Bank and Bank Islami) to collect Hajj applications from registered applicants of Hajj 2026 w.e.f. August 4, 2025 till August 9, 2025 throughout the country.

## Kitchen items' prices up by 0.05 pc

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price

Indicator (SPI), witnessed an increase of 0.05 percent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on August 07, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

The SPI for the week

under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 328.12 points as compared to 327.94 points during the past week, according to the PBS data.

As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 1.73 per cent.

The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups.

The SPI for the lowest consumption group of up to Rs 17,732 witnessed an increase of 0.30 per cent by surging from 316.01 last week's to 316.97 points.

The SPI for consumption groups of Rs 17,733 to 22,888, Rs 22,889-

29,517; and Rs 29,518-44,175, increased by 0.26 percent, 0.19 percent, and 0.14 percent respectively.

However, the SPI for consumption groups of above Rs 44,175 decreased by 0.06 percent.

During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 12 (23.53%) items increased, 12 (23.53%) items decreased and 27 (52.94%) items remained stable.

The items, which recorded major increase in their average prices on a week-on-week basis included Onions (16.53%), Tomatoes (10.17%), Chicken (4.12%), Eggs (1.32%), Diesel (0.52%), Pulse Masoor (0.34%), Tea Prepared (0.31%), Mustard Oil (0.20%), Cigarettes (0.12%), Firewood (0.08%) and Fresh Milk (0.05%).

## Manufacturing sector revival key to economic growth: SAPM Haroon

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) Haroon Akhtar Khan on Friday emphasized that every possible effort would be made to facilitate the manufacturing sector, as its revival is essential for promoting economic activity, creating jobs, and increasing exports.

Chairing a meeting of the sub-committees on the restoration of sick industrial units and ease of access to credit under Pakistan's Industrial Policy, Haroon said export-based growth is a cornerstone of Pakistan's economic strategy, said a news release.

The meeting was

attended by representatives of the Pakistan Banking Association, Ministry of Finance, Pakistan Business Council, Chambers of Commerce, and the State Bank of Pakistan.

The SAPM Haroon emphasized that any industry failing to repay loans, closed for more than 12 months, inactive, or operating at less than 30% of its capacity, is considered a sick unit.

The committee proposed that the SBP should issue an easy framework for the revival of sick industrial units. This framework would include principal haircut options, options for tenor extension, adjustments in inter-

est rates, and easier access to fresh working capital.

Additionally, banks would be provided with incentives and protection from audits for voluntarily participating in the restoration of sick units.

The committee also proposed revival linked credit schemes by introducing sales tax duty linked loan scheme, and treat fresh lending for revival.

Furthermore, the committee recommended the establishment of a National Industrial Revival Commission, which would focus on classifying sick industrial units, creating tailored recovery plans, and ensuring coordination for financial and regulatory support.

A digital portal would be established to address issues faced by sick industrial units, with representatives from the Ministry of Industries, Ministry of Finance, State Bank, and SMEDA participating in the commission.

The committee also proposed that banks prominently display all export finance products on their websites.

Credit provision for SMEs was also under consideration, alongside measures to support the manufacturing sector.

Haroon Akhtar Khan directed the Ministry of Industries and the SBP to collaborate with banks in developing a long-term financing policy at a fixed rate to be finalized soon.

## PPL identifies cyber security incident of ransomware intrusion

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) recently identified a cybersecurity incident involving a ransomware intrusion targeting parts of its IT infrastructure. The event was detected on August 6, 2025, and our internal cybersecurity protocols were immediately activated.

Our IT and cybersecurity teams, in collaboration with external experts, took prompt and effective con-

tainment measures, including the temporary suspension of select non-critical IT services as a precaution to limit potential impact and ensure the integrity of our systems.

PPL operates a multi-layered cybersecurity framework, and thanks to these systems, the threat was rapidly isolated. At this point, there is no indication of compromise to business-critical or sensitive data. Core operational systems remain unaffected, and our Joint Venture

(JV) partners and external stakeholders continue to operate without disruption.

We can confirm that a ransomware note was received from an external actor identifying themselves as "Blue Locker". In accordance with best practices and legal guidelines, the matter has been reported to relevant law enforcement and regulatory authorities. Investigations are ongoing in coordination with these agencies.

We remain committed

to full transparency and are conducting a comprehensive forensic analysis to assess the scope and reinforce our cyber resilience. Our teams are working diligently to restore full system functionality in a secure and phased manner.

PPL places the highest priority on safeguarding its digital infrastructure and remains focused on maintaining the trust of its stakeholders through timely action and proactive cyber risk management.

## LCCI happy over pro-business amendments to Finance Act 2025

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI) President Mian Abuzar Shad Friday expressed optimism that pro-business amendments made in the Finance Act 2025 on the LCCI's demand, would serve as a cornerstone for a new era of economic revival, pave the way for sustained progress, enhance investor confidence and shared prosperity for both the business community and the national economy.

He was addressing a press conference, along with Senior Vice President Engineer Khalid Usman, Vice President Shahid Nazir Chaudhry and former LCCI president Muhammad Ali Mian here at Lahore Chamber.

The LCCI President said that the Federal Board of Revenue has decided to implement a transparent and structured procedure before initiating inquiries under sub-sections 8 and 9 of Section 37A of the Sales Tax Act 1990. For this purpose, Sales Tax General Order No. 02 of 2025 has been issued.

Mian Abuzar Shad

extended heartfelt thanks to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, Federal Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik, SAPM Haroon Akhtar, Bilal Azhar Kayani, Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider and FBR Chairman Rashid Langrial.

e paid rich tribute to Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff, Field Marshal General Asim Munir, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Sahir Shamshad, SIFC's General Sarfraz and General Asad Cheema, for listening attentively to the Chamber's concerns and ensuring their implementation. They have proven that while Pakistan's defense remains impregnable, our military leadership is equally committed to strengthening the nation's economic frontiers.

Mian Abuzar Shad also lauded the efforts KCCI President Javed Balwani, former LCCI presidents Mian Anjum Nisar and

Muhammad Ali Mian, former senior vice president Ali Hussam Asghar, former vice president Faheem Rehman Saigol, Kh. Shahzaib Akram, Gohar Ejaz and S.M. Tanveer.

He revealed that multiple Zoom meetings were held with government representatives, alongside seven visits to Islamabad. "Our consistent stance was that no inquiry or legal action should be initiated without prior consultation with business community representatives, to prevent fear and to build trust," he added.

The LCCI President explained that under the original budget provision of Section 37A, FBR officers had unlimited powers to arrest, creating serious concerns within the business community. Now, no arrest will be made unless approved by a three-member committee nominated by the FBR Chairman and relevant chambers will be taken into confidence — ensuring transparency.

He said that concerns over the immediate rollout of e-invoicing had been addressed: it will be

implemented in phases, beginning with multinational companies and will be operated solely via FBR's PRAL system, with nationwide awareness sessions beforehand.

Regarding the controversial Clause 21(S) that disallowed 50 percent of expenses on cash payments exceeding Rs 200,000, Mian Abuzar Shad confirmed that FBR has now clarified: if payment is deposited directly into a seller's bank account, it will be deemed as made via the banking channel, effectively removing the limit.

"These reforms are transparent, practical and designed to boost the confidence of Pakistan's business community, reduce unnecessary legal complications and foster sustained economic growth," he said.

He expressed deep gratitude once again to Field Marshal Asim Munir for extending a two-hour meeting to three and a half hours to listen to business concerns and appealed to the government to ensure the protection of local and foreign investors.

## Changan Karvaan UG launches with upgraded features to mark 25,000 units sold in Pakistan

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Master Changan Pakistan has unveiled the all-new Karvaan Power Plus UG (Upgraded Variant), marking a major milestone of 25,000 units sold in just five years. As Pakistan's most trusted 7-seater MPV, Karvaan has evolved once again this time bringing passenger car-grade features, modern styling, and safety enhancements to a segment long overlooked.

From the beginning, Karvaan reshaped Pakistan's commercial mobility landscape. It arrived not with hype, but with purpose. Today, with over 50% market share in the MPV segment, it stands as a symbol of trust-used by families, embraced by businesses, and relied upon by institutions nationwide.

Upgraded for Today's Roads and Realities

The new Karvaan UG (Upgraded) is built on the feedback of real-world



users. With a more powerful 1.2L engine, it now delivers 44% more power than the original 1.0L variant-offering improved fuel economy and smoother performance under load.

It also leads in safety, featuring: Dual Airbags (Driver + Front Passenger), ABS + EBD (Anti-lock Braking System & Electronic Brakeforce Distribution), Rear Parking Sensors for easier maneuverability, New Features for Enhanced Convenience and Style

The Karvaan UG brings several design and comfort upgrades, including:

- Body-Colored Side Mirrors
- B-Pillar Black Garnish for a sleeker profile
- Stylish Alloy Wheels
- Rear Charging Port
- Dual AC (Front + Rear) for all-passenger comfort
- M P 5 Touchscreen with Android Auto, Apple CarPlay, screen mirroring, Bluetooth, USB, and more
- Its flexible 7-seater lay-

out with flat-folding rear seats makes it ideal for families, cargo transport, or commercial use-without compromising comfort.


Sherpa Joins the Evolution

Changan's pickup truck Sherpa, known as "Pickup Ka Badshah", is also receiving the 1.2L power upgrade, providing greater torque, efficiency, and durability for both urban and rural terrain.

Driving Forward With this latest upgrade, Master Changan reinforces its role as the driving force behind Pakistan's mobility transformation. Both Karvaan and Sherpa now symbolize progress, practicality, and pride-bridging affordability with aspiration.

"We listened to our customers- and made their Karvaan even better," said a company spokesperson. "This isn't just an upgrade; it's a celebration of trust, and a promise of what's to come."

**PUBLIC NOTICE**



DHA City Karachi (DHAC)  
It is hereby informed to the general public that  
M r . / M r s . / M s t .  
S/O  
D / O  
W / O  
resident of \_\_\_\_\_ holding  
the following plot(s) in DHA Karachi  
(DHA City) has passed away on \_\_\_\_\_  
Details of Plots:  
a) Reference Plot File No. DCK/TARU-  
RES, Sector No. \_\_\_\_\_, Sub Sector No.  
65, measuring 129 Sq. Yds. (Approx)  
b) Reference Plot File No. DCK/TARU-  
RES, Sector No. \_\_\_\_\_, Sub Sector No.  
65, measuring 125 Sq. Yds. (Approx)  
The following individuals have applied  
for the transfer of the above-mentioned  
plots as legal heirs: a. Nargis Bibi (Wife)  
b. Jafila Bibi (Mother) c. Mahmood  
(Daughter) d. Faizan Muhammad (Son)  
e. Azlan Muhammad (Son) f. Rizyan  
Muhammad (Son).  
Any person having any claim/objection  
is requested to notify the Director  
Transfer & Record, DHA City Karachi, in  
writing within fifteen (15) days of this  
publication. No claim or objection shall  
be entertained thereafter.  
Note: (1) Strike out whichever is not  
applicable. (2) This notice is published  
with the photograph of the deceased.



**In brief****Lewandowski a doubt for Barca's season**

BARCELONA (AFP): Barcelona striker Robert Lewandowski has suffered a hamstring injury and may miss the start of the La Liga season, the Catalan club announced on Friday. "The first team player Robert Lewandowski has a hamstring problem in his left thigh," Barcelona said in a statement, without specifying how long the Polish striker would be out of action. The 36-year-old is "unavailable" for Sunday's friendly match against Como, which casts doubt on his presence in the matchday squad for Barcelona's La Liga opener against Mallorca on August 16. Lewandowski netted 42 times in 52 appearances in all competitions for the Catalan club last season as Hansi Flick's side won the Spanish league, cup and super cup.

**PSG to sign Lucas Chevalier**

PARIS (AFP): European champions Paris Saint-Germain have reached agreement with Lille to sign highly-rated goalkeeper Lucas Chevalier, a source close to the negotiations told AFP on Friday. The move is likely to pose questions over the future of Italian international 'keeper Gianluigi Donnarumma at PSG. Donnarumma, who was outstanding in PSG's 5-0 demolition of Inter Milan in the Champions League final in May, is in the final year of his contract and would likely interest Premier League clubs. Chevalier, 23, will sign a five-year contract and command a fee of around 40 million euros (\$46.5 million). He was nominated on Thursday for this year's men's Yashin Trophy for best goalkeeper at the Ballon d'Or gala after exceptional performances in Ligue 1 and the Champions League last season. Lille finished fifth in Ligue 1 last season and qualified for the Europa League.

**Kane hails Son partnership**

LONDON (Agencies): Harry Kane paid tribute to his former Tottenham Hotspur teammate Son Heung-min, describing their partnership as "one of the best" in Premier League history following the South Korean's departure from the club. Son, who combined with Kane for 47 league goals to form a lethal partnership for the best part of a decade at Spurs, joined Los Angeles FC on a record-breaking Major League Soccer transfer on Wednesday. The 33-year-old South Korea skipper had moved to North London from Bayer Leverkusen in 2015, bagging 173 goals and 101 assists in 454 appearances and leading them to their first trophy in 17 years by winning the Europa League title in May. "Massive congratulations to him and his career at Tottenham," Bayern Munich striker Kane told reporters after his side's 4-0 friendly win over former club Spurs on Thursday. "First and foremost, a great person. I've got to know him really well as a friend, and just how humble he is and how good a guy he is. "I think as a player, you know, we had one of the best partnerships in Premier League history. We just had that connection that we loved. "It's a great way for his Tottenham career to end, to lift the trophy last year with the team... and now it's a new chapter for him, he'll go to LA, and I wish him all the best, and I hope to see him soon and we can catch up." Kane spent most of his career at Spurs after joining their academy as an 11-year-old, scoring a club record 280 goals in over 430 appearances in all competitions. The 32-year-old England captain joined German giants Bayern in August 2023.

## New Zealand build big total in 2nd Test against Zimbabwe

BULAWAYO (AFP): Devon Conway, Henry Nicholls and Rachin Ravindra hit centuries as New Zealand produced a relentless batting performance on the second day of the second Test against Zimbabwe at Queens Sports Club on Friday.

New Zealand were 601 for three at the close in reply to Zimbabwe's first innings total of 125, a lead of 476 runs. Conway scored 153, ending a 16-match streak without a Test century.

Nicholls, playing in his first Test series since December 2023, made 150 not out, while Ravindra hammered an unbeaten 165 at better than a run a ball.

It was another day of

one-sided cricket after the Black Caps resumed on 174 for one, already 49 runs ahead. It took Zimbabwe an hour to remove nightwatchman Jacob Duffy, who made 36.

The rest of the day brought only one more wicket, that of Conway, who fell to the second new ball when he misjudged the bounce against Blessing Muzarabani and was bowled off his body.

Nicholls was on 64 when Ravindra joined him after Conway's dismissal. Ravindra, a left-hander like the other two centurions, quickly went on the attack and by the close had overtaken his partner.

Ravindra reached his

century off 104 balls. With stand-in captain Mitchell Santner opting not to declare despite having a significant lead, Ravindra went on the rampage towards the close, adding another 65 runs off just 35 balls.

Zimbabwe fast bowlers Muzarabani and Tanaka Chivanga, usually the team's most effective bowlers, were both expensive.

Muzarabani took one for 101 in 24 overs, while Chivanga went wicketless in conceding 94 runs off 17 overs. Zimbabwe captain Craig Ervine used seven bowlers in a futile attempt to stop the flow of runs on a day in which New Zealand scored 427 runs for the loss of two wickets.



**NORTHAMPTON:** Imam-ul-Haq celebrates his first Yorkshire hundred.

## Sulaman brothers scale Mushkpuri Peak

ISLAMABAD (APP): The brothers duo of Khuzaimah Sulaman and Ibrahim Sulaman, has successfully summited the Mushkpuri Peak (9,200 feet above sea level) this summer, with a message for all, 'Protect the Environment'.

Four-year-old Khuzaimah Sulaman and his eight-year-old brother Ibrahim Sulaman from Islamabad, embarked on the scenic yet challenging trail through the pine-covered slopes of Galliyat organized by Roam On Club, said a press release.

While the hike itself was impressive for someone so young, what truly

captured attention was their quiet campaign for cleaner mountains.

Both Khuzaimah and Ibrahim practiced and promoted environmental stewardship throughout the trek. When they noticed a fellow hiker discarding a bottle cap into the bushes, Khuzaimah gently intervened, saying, "The birds can eat it. And the forest gets sick." The hiker, moved by the child's sincerity, picked up the cap.

The brothers demonstrated not only physical endurance but a sense of responsibility far beyond their years. Ibrahim, the elder sibling, played a

guiding role, reminding his younger brother to leave no waste behind - a family value instilled in both the boys during their earlier trips.

At the summit, as mist clung to the meadows and clouds kissed the ridgelines, Khuzaimah picked up a stray wrapper, placed it in his pouch, and said quietly, "Mountains are our friends. We should keep them clean."

Their hike serves as a powerful reminder that age is no barrier to making a difference. With simple acts of care and courage, even the smallest hikers can inspire big change.

## PSB clarifies misleading statement

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) has taken notice of the statement circulating in the media from the wrestling coach and declared it contrary to the facts.

The wrestling coach had claimed in the media that the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) is not cooperating in wrestlers' training for the Asian Youth Games 2025 preparations, said a press release.

The Pakistan Sports Board (PSB), terming the said statement baseless and misleading, has clarified that full cooperation is being provided for wrestlers' training in preparation for the Asian Youth Games 2025.

Not only is the Pakistan

Sports Board providing complete facilities for training, but it has also provided the facility of a foreign training camp for wrestlers in connection with the preparations for the Asian Youth Games 2025.

According to PSB, the Pakistan Wrestling Federation had requested a foreign training camp for 4 wrestlers and 1 coach in preparation for the Asian Youth Games 2025 and the Youth Olympic Games 2026.

The PSB approved this request and instructed the federation to provide the training plan inclusive dates of travel, training programme abroad, boarding and lodging arrangements, and other details so

that immediate implementation could take place.

Furthermore, upon the federation's request, the PSB issued in advance a total of Rs 7.55 million more than the requested Rs 6.60 million, for the camp (Cheque No. B-520058, dated 22 May 2025), so that the training camp could be held without delay.

The PSB clarified that, despite these concrete facts, creating the impression in the media that the institution is not cooperating is not only irresponsible but also tantamount to misleading the public and damaging the reputation of national sports. The federation should take serious notice of such irresponsible statements.



**DUBLIN:** Muneeba Ali heaves the ball over the leg side, Ireland Women vs Pakistan Women, 2nd T20I.

### Hamza, Mahnoor wins in Table Tennis championship

HARIPUR (APP): The Marka-e-Haq Jashn-e-Azadi Table Tennis Championship at the City Sports Complex concluded with thrilling finals in boys', girls', and doubles categories, held in collaboration with the district administration and the Regional Sports Office.

In the boys' singles final, Hamza from Government Degree College defeated Huzaifa from Modern Age to lift the trophy, while in the juniors' category, Muhammad Harris from Army Burn Hall claimed victory over his opponent.

In the girls' singles, Mahnoor edged past Maryam in a nail-biting 3-2 contest to secure the title.

In doubles action, Huzaifa Chaudhry and Hamza overcame Huzaifa Zahid and Hassan Shahid to win the boys' doubles title, whereas Zarnash and Mahnoor defeated Qudsia and Maryam to clinch the girls' doubles championship.

Regional Sports Officer Ahmed Zaman distributed prizes among the winners, stating that the Directorate of Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in cooperation with district sports administrators, is committed to providing maximum facilities to the youth. He emphasized that sports play a vital role in promoting a healthy lifestyle and fostering a strong, vibrant society, and such events are a step toward achieving that goal.

### Nasir Iqbal falls to World No. 16

CHENGDU (APP): Pakistan's Nasir Iqbal gave a spirited performance but ultimately succumbed to World No. 16 Dimitri Steinmann of Switzerland in a hard-fought Round of 32 clash at the World Games 2025 in Chengdu, China on Friday.

The match ended in a 0-3 defeat (8-11, 8-11, 7-11) for Nasir, who pushed the higher-ranked Swiss player in every game but could not capitalize on crucial points. Despite the loss, Nasir showed grit and tactical awareness, earning praise from fans and analysts alike.

Earlier in the day, Pakistan's young sensation Noor Zaman had electrified the squad with a dominant 3-0 victory over China's Chen Haisong, raising hopes for a deep run in the tournament. While Nasir's campaign ends here, Noor has made it to the Round of 16, keeping Pakistan's medal hopes alive.

"Nasir fought hard against a top opponent, and there are positives to take," national coach Fahim Gul told APP after the match.

"He matched Steinmann in rallies but lacked finishing at key moments," he said. "Noor's confidence is high and we believe he can go far," Fahim added.

## Pak athlete Danish Elahi sets Guinness World Record



ISLAMABAD (APP): In a remarkable display of cultural pride and athletic prowess, Pakistani athlete Danish Elahi has set a new Guinness World Record by completing the Boston Marathon in traditional shalwar kameez.

Elahi finished the race with a time of 3 hours and 26 minutes, marking the

fastest time ever recorded in national attire, said a press release.

The achievement was celebrated by Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani, who met with Elahi to honor his accomplishment.

In recognition of Elahi's outstanding achievement and his efforts to promote a positive image of

Pakistan globally, the Secretary of the Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) presented him with a souvenir.

The Secretary praised Elahi's dedication to representing Pakistan with pride on an international stage.

Elahi also expressed his commitment to promoting sports within Pakistan. He announced his support for the newly constructed Padel Tennis Courts at Islamabad College for Girls (ICG), an initiative aimed at engaging youth and expanding sports opportunities.

This achievement not only highlights Elahi's personal dedication but also serves as an inspiration for aspiring athletes across Pakistan, demonstrating that cultural identity and athletic excellence can go hand in hand.

## Hanif Mohammad Trophy delayed till August 29

LAHORE (PPI): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced today that the Hanif Mohammad Trophy (HMT), the opening competition of the 2025-26 domestic cricket calendar, will commence on August 29, a two-week postponement from its original August 15 start date.

The delay accommodates the availability of Pakistan Shaheens' players for their regional sides. Twelve regional teams will vie for two coveted Quaid-e-Azam Trophy berths in this four-day non-first-class tournament, culminating on September 25.

Group A, consisting of

Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK), Faisalabad, Karachi Whites, Lahore Blues, and Quetta, will play their matches in Bahawalpur, Multan, and Rahim Yar Khan. Group B, comprising Dera Murad Jamali, FATA, Karachi Blues, Larkana, Multan, and Rawalpindi, will compete in Karachi.

Over 28 days, each team will participate in five matches across five rounds, with six matches per round. The top team from each group will advance to the prestigious Quaid-e-Azam Trophy, slated to follow the HMT. Teams will select their squads based on past

performance and the Regional Inter-District three-day tournament held in June and July.

The Quaid-e-Azam Trophy will feature Sialkot, Islamabad, Lahore Whites, Abbottabad, Peshawar, Bahawalpur, and the two HMT qualifying teams. The first round of the HMT, from August 29 to September 1, features Faisalabad versus Lahore Blues, Hyderabad versus Karachi Whites, and Quetta versus AJK in Group A; and Rawalpindi versus FATA, Karachi Blues versus Multan, and Dera Murad Jamali versus Larkana in Group B.

## Haider Ali granted bail after report of alleged rape

LONDON: Haider Ali has been arrested by the Greater Manchester Police on suspicion of rape and bailed pending further enquiries.

The Pakistan batter, who was with the Shaheens squad, the de facto 'A' team on a tour against of England, remains in the UK. A Shaheens squad, which includes a number of players on the England tour, has flown to Australia to take part in a multi-team T20 series. Haider was part of the squad due to go to Australia, and has been replaced by allrounder Mohammad Faiq.

"After receiving a report on Monday 4 August 2025 of a rape, we have arrested a 24-year-old man," a statement from Greater Manchester Police confirmed to ESPNcricinfo. "It's alleged that the incident occurred on Wednesday 23 July 2025 at a premises in Manchester. The man has since been bailed pending further enquiries. The vic-

tim is being supported by officers."

It is understood that Haider was arrested in Beckenham where the Shaheens were playing the last of their five games of the tour. Haider played each of the five games, including the first two on 22 and 25 July, between which the incident he was arrested for is alleged to have occurred in Manchester on 23 July. The offence carries a maximum sentence of life imprisonment in the UK.

On Thursday, the PCB issued a statement confirming Haider was under criminal investigation in the UK and suspended him pending the results of that investigation. It affirmed that the board "fully respects the legal procedures and processes of the UK" and were providing the player with legal support.

Haider, 24, has played two ODIs and 35 T20Is for Pakistan. Initially feted as a destructive power hitter, his

reputation burnished with standout performances in the PSL with Peshawar Zalmi in 2020, when he scored 239 runs at a strike rate of over 157. He was called up to the national side later that year, his international debut coming in a T20I game in Manchester, where he scored a 33-ball 54 as Pakistan won by five runs.

Inconsistency has dogged him since, and he has repeatedly found himself in and out of the side. However, his talent and explosiveness have kept him in international contention, and the current Shaheens tour was widely viewed as an opportunity to reintegrate a player whose batting approach aligns with the aggressive style Pakistan's current T20 set-up has made no secret they want to pursue.

The PCB has said that they intend to make no further public comment until legal proceedings are complete. —cricinfo

## Canadian teen Mboko outlasts Osaka to win WTA Montreal crown

MONTREAL (AFP): Canadian teenager Victoria Mboko conquered four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka 2-6, 6-4, 6-1 on Thursday, capping a fairytale run at the WTA Canadian Open with her first WTA title.

Mboko, 18 and playing in her first WTA final, denied Osaka her first tour-level title since the 2021 Australian Open, wearing down the Japanese star, 27, who has struggled to find consistency since returning from maternity leave early in 2024.

Mboko, who was ranked outside the top 300 to start the season and had climbed to 85th entering the week, is now projected to rise to 34th in the world.

Before an ecstatic center court crowd, she converted eight of her nine break points, seizing her fourth win of the week over a Grand Slam winner.

She ousted former Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin in the second round and toppled reigning



French Open champion Coco Gauff in the fourth before saving a match point en route to a semifinal victory over former Wimbledon winner Elena Rybakina.

Displaying vintage

power and precision, Osaka gave her inexperienced opponent little room to maneuver in the first set, gaining an early break on the way to a 3-0 lead and pocketing the set when Mboko, who had 22 unforced errors in the set, mis-fired on two forehands to drop her serve a second time.

Mboko turned the tide in a second set that featured seven total breaks of serve. Osaka looked bewildered as Mboko ramped up the pressure, the Canadian breaking her at love for a 5-2 lead.

Serving for the set, however, Mboko coughed up three double faults and was broken. Osaka capitalized on the reprieve with a hold at love, but Mboko took the set in the next game when Osaka sailed a forehand long on set point.

Osaka appeared demoralized as she was broken at love to open the third set.

Mboko couldn't consolidate the break, but Osaka was on the ropes again in the third game, drawing a warning for batting a ball skyward in frustration after missing her first serve on break point — which she surrendered with another errant forehand.

That launched a run of five straight games for Mboko.

Winners were proving hard to come by for both players, and when the Canadian saved four break points to hold for a 3-1 lead, Osaka had a mountain to climb that finally proved too steep.

When Osaka smacked a backhand into the net on match point, Mboko dropped to the court as the crowd roared out one more ovation.

Osaka, who had appeared energized in Montreal after a coaching shakeup, posted her best performance in a WTA 1000 tournament since she reached the final at Miami in 2022.





## In brief

### Death sentence for wife's murder

RAWALPINDI (APP): In a significant court verdict, a criminal named Saqib Jameel has been sentenced to death for murdering his wife. The honorable court also imposed a fine of Rs. 500,000.0 According to details, Saqib Jameel killed his wife with a knife during a domestic dispute. The case was registered in August 2024 at Chakri Police Station. Due to solid evidence and effective prosecution, the court delivered a just verdict. City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Hamdani while commending the investigative and legal teams for their efforts in securing the conviction in this serious case, reiterated police full resolve not to spare any effort in maintaining rule of law.

### Police arrest 10 criminals

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police continued operations against criminal elements on Friday and arrested 10 suspects including drug and liquor sellers and illegal arm owners. According to the police spokesman, four drug sellers were taken into custody with more than 3.5 kilograms charas from different areas, The Saddar Beroni and Kahuta Police detained one suspect each person recovering 1.48 kg and 1.1 kg charas from them respectively. Similarly, the Wah Saddar Police also detained two accused with 1.2 kg charas. Meanwhile, six accused were caught in the areas of Wah Saddar, Gujar Khan, Saddar Beroni, Pirwadhai, Westridge and Chaklala police stations with illegal weapons and ammunition, and 20 litres of liquor.

### Man arrested for abusing child

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Sadiqabad Police on Thursday arrested a man for allegedly abusing an 11-year-old boy in his neighbour. According to the case registered in June 2025, the accused had not only abused the child but also threatened him to kill if he told anyone about the incident. The accused had gone into hiding, however, the police used all means including human intelligence to nab him. Superintendent of Police Rawal Saad Arshad directed the Sadiqabad Police to prepare a challan against the accused with solid evidence to get him convicted from the court of law.

### NH&MP promotes 95 Sub-Inspectors

ISLAMABAD (INP): The National Highways and Motorway Police (NH&MP) has promoted 95 Sub-Inspectors (BS-14), including nine women officers, to the rank of Inspector (BS-16) in recognition of their performance and service. The promotions were approved by Inspector General Motorway Police B.A. Nasir following a meeting of the Departmental Promotion Committee, chaired by Deputy Inspector General (Human Resource Management) Shahid Javed, at the Central Police Office, Islamabad, said a press release issued on Friday. According to the NH&MP, the promotions were granted strictly on the basis of seniority and merit in accordance with departmental rules. Congratulating the newly promoted officers, IG B.A. Nasir said the decision reflects the organization's recognition of their dedication and professionalism. He expressed hope that the officers would continue to serve the public with honesty, commitment, and competence, further enhancing the reputation of the Motorway Police. He added that the NH&MP is proud to have highly educated and capable officers, and urged the promoted officials to uphold the institution's standards through diligence and exemplary conduct.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan exchanging views with Faisal Karim Kundi, Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) during meeting held in Islamabad on Friday.

## Kiran Dar calls PTI' protest attempt to undermine 'National Unity'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Parliamentary Secretary for Inter-provincial Coordination Kiran Dar on Friday expressed concern over PTI's call for protest on Azadi Day, calling it inappropriate and a deliberate attempt to undermine national unity and disrespect the spirit of independence.

While speaking in an exclusive conversation with the state-run news channel, the Parliamentary Secretary strongly criticized the PTI founder, calling him "habitually irresponsible" in his political conduct and priorities. She expressed disappointment over PTI's recent call for a protest on

August 14, saying it was an attempt to overshadow national unity on Independence Day.

Kiran Dar questioned the motives behind choosing such a symbolic day for political agitation, terming it a move against the spirit of patriotism. "Instead of uniting the country on a day that celebrates our freedom and sacrifices, PTI continues to pursue divisive politics," she remarked, urging political parties to respect national occasions and show maturity.

She also highlighted the PTI founder's silence on key national issues in the past, particularly on August 5, 2019, when India unilaterally revoked

the special status of Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

"At that critical time, PTI failed to raise a strong voice in defense of the Kashmiri people," she said, adding that their inaction exposed a lack of commitment to the Kashmir cause.

Dar emphasized that political point-scoring should never come at the cost of national interests.

She urged all parties to adopt a more responsible and unified stance on issues of national significance, especially when it comes to defending the rights of Kashmiris and upholding the sanctity of Independence Day.

## ICT Police finalizes security plan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police Inspector General (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi on Friday chaired a command conference at Safe City Islamabad and finalized a comprehensive security plan for August 13 and 14 to ensure law and order during Independence Day celebrations.

A police spokesperson told APP that all DIGs, SSPs, AIGs, and SPs attended the meeting, where the five divisions of the Islamabad Police presented their performance reports. The respective DIGs briefed participants on security measures for the upcoming national celebrations, while the Traffic Division outlined arrangements to maintain smooth traffic flow during the events.

The IGP said that any form of disorder, fireworks, aerial firing, or one-wheeling during the festivities would not be tolerated, and strict legal action would be taken against violators. He added that the possession and display of illegal weapons would also be dealt with sternly across the federal capital.

He lauded the crime-fighting efforts of newly appointed SP City Salman Zafar, noting that the ongoing crackdown on pro-claimed offenders and habitual criminals had led to a significant reduction in car and motorcycle theft incidents. Special checkpoints and patrols, he said, were proving effective in curbing street crimes, with Safe City Islamabad playing a key role in both crime prevention and traffic discipline.

The IGP said large-scale search and combing operations were underway in various parts of Islamabad and would continue in the days leading up to Independence Day. He directed all DIGs to personally supervise the security arrangements and instructed the DG Safe City to develop additional applications to improve public services.

## Governor KP, Federal Minister discuss promotion of trade

ISLAMABAD (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi met with Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal on Friday to discuss the promotion of trade activities in the province.

During the meeting, they exchanged views on enhancing commercial opportunities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, addressing the concerns of the province's traders, particularly those raised by the Chambers of Commerce and Industries, and other related matters.

The Federal Minister for Commerce assured the Governor of full coopera-

tion in resolving the issues faced by the business community in the province.

Meanwhile, Central leader of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) Senator Hafiz Hamdullah met Governor Faisal Karim Kundi at his residence.

The meeting discussed the recent Senate elections in which the opposition secured victory from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the province's political situation, and other matters of mutual interest.

Similarly, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi and renowned scholar and President of the International Research Council

Muhammad Israr Madani held meeting at Governor House Islamabad.

They discussed regional and global issues including religious harmony, democracy, religious freedom, and constitutional challenges.

The Governor lauded IRCRA's research initiatives and the Religious Diplomacy Program, terming them vital for promoting Pakistan's positive image.

Madani presented his research publications to the Governor, who assured support for future academic collaboration. IRCRA officials and religious leaders also attended the meeting.

## Pakistan, Poland seek to enhance strategic partnership in energy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Poland discussed on Friday enhancing bilateral cooperation in the energy sector, particularly in oil and gas exploration and mineral resources.

Federal Minister for Petroleum, Ali Pervaiz Malik, during a meeting with Maciej Pisarski, Ambassador of Poland to Pakistan, also discussed strengthening collaboration between Pakistan and Poland in energy exploration, technology transfer, and investment opportunities.

The Minister highlighted Pakistan's commitment to fostering international partnerships to meet its growing energy demands and highlighted the recent international interest in oil, gas and minerals reserves.

The Ambassador expressed Poland's interest in deepening ties with



Pakistan's energy sector, acknowledging the potential for mutual growth and knowledge exchange. Both sides agreed to explore avenues for joint ventures and technical cooperation to drive innovation and efficiency in the petroleum sector.

Ali Pervaiz Malik commended the longstanding diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Poland and reiterated the government's dedication to creating a favorable

environment for foreign investors.

He remarked that Pakistan can benefit from Polish expertise in mining, specifically in copper and coal. The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to advancing energy sector collaboration for the benefit of both nations.

The Acting Director of PGING (Petroleum & Gas Infrastructure & Network Group) was also present during the discussions.

## 27 countries to join Regional Transport Ministers' conference

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan will host a two-day Regional Transport Ministers' Conference in October, 2025, bringing together ministers, ambassadors and head of departments from 27 countries and leading international organizations.

The decision was finalized at a high-level meeting chaired by Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan, who approved key arrangements for the event, said a press release issued on Friday.

The Conference is scheduled to take place in Islamabad on October 23 and 24, 2025 with the aim of strengthening regional cooperation, enhancing road connectivity and improving transportation infrastructure across the region.

Invited countries include

Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, China, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Malaysia, Nepal, Oman, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, UAE, Uzbekistan, Egypt, Indonesia, Morocco and Kenya.

In addition, heads and representatives of major International Organizations such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, World Health Organization (WHO), and the International Road Organization (IRO) are also being invited to participate in the Conference.

Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan stated that the Regional Transport Ministers' Conference will

have a significant and positive impact on Pakistan's transportation sector and enhance regional harmony as well. Federal Ministers for Railways, Commerce, Aviation, and Maritime Affairs will also participate in hosting the event.

The high-level meeting chaired by the Federal Minister for Communication Abdul Aleem Khan also reviewed the proposed agenda of the two-day event which will feature multiple sessions, cultural programs and discussions on avenues for mutual cooperation.

Senior officials and the Federal Secretary for Communications presented various recommendations to ensure the successful organization of the Regional Transport Ministers' Conference.

## ISSI Celebrates Nelson Mandela International Day

### F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East and Africa (CAMEA) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Pakistan Africa Institute for Development and Research (PAIDAR), organized an event to commemorate Nelson Mandela International Day.

The proceedings, which began with the national anthems of Pakistan and South Africa, were moderated by Ms. Sarah Akram, Research Fellow, CAMEA. Speakers included Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Director General ISSI; Mr. Rudolph Pierre Jordaan, Acting High Commissioner of South Africa to Pakistan; Mr. Malik Muhammad Farooq, High Commissioner of Pakistan to South Africa; and Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BOG ISSI.

The Keynote Speaker was Ambassador Hamid Asghar Khan, Additional Secretary (Africa), Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Chief Guest on the occasion was Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, President PAIDAR. Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed said that as a Pakistani, he has often been struck by the similarities between Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Nelson Mandela and added that the latter was a strong supporter

of self-determination for the people of Palestine and Kashmir.

He praised Mandela's ability to connect with the grassroots, speaking the language of the masses, and highlighted his generosity and deep commitment to friendships. He stressed that the greatness of Mandela must be recognised, describing him as a shared heritage and a global role model for peace and reconciliation. Underscoring the role of education as a vital bridge between cultures and continents, he proposed renaming one of Pakistan's Universities in Mandela's honour and inviting students from the Global South.

In his remarks, Ambassador Sohail Mahmood paid tribute to Nelson Mandela, describing him as one of the most iconic figures who reshaped the moral compass of our times and stood firmly for justice, equality, and human dignity. He recalled Mandela's 27 years of incarceration, during which his spirit remained unbroken and his commitment to non-violence unwavering.

After his release, Mandela transformed personal suffering into national healing, promoting justice, tackling poverty, and empowering youth. His universal vision of freedom and moral clarity made him a truly transformative leader. Ambassador Sohail highlighted Mandela's visits to Pakistan, especially his historic visit to the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad in 1992.

He praised South Africa's move at the International Court of Justice in support of the Palestinian cause as a reflection of Mandela's enduring principles, and emphasized the need for moral courage in the pursuit of justice. He also noted Africa's growing potential and urged deeper Pakistan-Africa engagement. Mandela, he concluded, remains a guiding light for humanity and a living legacy for a more just and equitable world.

Ambassador Hamid Asghar, in his remarks, paid tribute to Nelson Mandela as one of the most admired figures in recent history who stood for justice, equality, and against discrimination. He recalled Mandela's long years of imprisonment, his unwavering commitment to a non-violent struggle, and his focus on freedom, justice, anti-corruption, poverty alleviation, youth empowerment, and land reforms as president. Highlighting Africa as the continent of the future, he noted Pakistan's principled support for liberation movements and praised South Africa's efforts at the ICJ as upholding Mandela's legacy.

Ambassador Rudolph Pierre Jordaan, highlighted that Nelson Mandela was more than a political leader; he was a symbol of moral courage, unity, and justice. He stated that Mandela once said, "If I did not leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I would still be in prison," after spending 27 years incarcerated



for opposing apartheid. He added that Mandela believed in action, not just words, and recalled how Mandela united South Africa during the 1995 Rugby World Cup despite opposition within his own party.

Ambassador Malik Muhammad Farooq hailed Nelson Mandela as a global symbol of justice and reconciliation whose principles continue to provide guidance. He recalled Pakistan's steadfast support for South Africa's struggle for inde-

pendence and noted that Mandela paid two historic visits to Pakistan. During one of these visits, he addressed the Joint Session of Parliament and was also awarded the highest civil award, the Nishan-e-Pakistan. He urged that communities should be brought together in the spirit of Mandela's lifelong fight against oppression and his vision of a just and inclusive world.

Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, in his concluding remarks, described Nelson

Mandela as a symbol of peace, justice, equality, and reconciliation. He noted that Mandela's legacy continues to inspire South Africa and the world. He highlighted Mandela's two visits to Pakistan, including one to ISSI, underscoring his enduring influence as a beacon of hope for those facing adversity today.

The event also featured an exhibition organized by the High Commission of South Africa in Pakistan to pay tribute to the legacy of Nelson Mandela.



Wood shop fire in Zabul causes 3m afghanis losses

KABUL (Pajhwok): A fire breakout at a wood shop in the Shajoy district of southern Zabul province caused financial losses of three million afghanis, police said on Friday. The Police Headquarters wrote on its Facebook page the fire broke out today (Friday) in a wood shop on the Shajoy district's wood sales street due to carelessness. The fire was brought under control with efforts of the Qalat city fire department, local officials.

UNICEF vows to fight child malnutrition in Afghanistan

KABUL (Pajhwok): The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) says it supports the local economy and domestic production in Afghanistan to prevent the production of goods that cause child malnutrition. On its X page, the General Directorate of the Office of the Prime Minister wrote Deputy PM for Administration Maulvi Abdul Salam Hanafi met with UNICEF deputy executive director and Operations Manager Ted Chaiban and his delegation.

Afghanistan, Tatarstan sign \$183 million trade deals



KABUL (BNA): Afghanistan and Tatarstan have signed trade agreements totaling \$183 million. The agreements were formalized during trade meetings held between members of the Afghan private sector and Tatarstan's officials. The meetings were attended by Nooruddin Azizi, the Minister of Industry and Commerce of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, and Oleg Korubchenko, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Industry and Trade of Tatarstan, along with representatives from both regions' Chambers of Commerce and Industry. During the discussions, Minister Azizi expressed appreciation to the Russian Federation for its recognition of Afghanistan and emphasized the importance of fostering interactions between the private sectors of both regions. He urged Tatarstan's investors to explore opportunities in Afghanistan's mining, agriculture, and medicinal plant sectors. Korubchenko highlighted the diverse products of Tatarstan, including those in civilian and military sectors, and extended an invitation for the Afghan delegation to participate in an upcoming oil exhibition in Tatarstan on August 26. The trade meetings facilitated discussions across various sectors, including food production, helicopter manufacturing, water management, oil and gas, electrical appliances, detergents, sanitary products, building materials, and iron smelting. As a result, substantial agreements were reached, focusing particularly on the oil and construction industries.

Gap between religious, modern sciences eliminated with IEA return

KABUL (Pajhwok): The governor of central Kabul province has said science should serve the nation and society, and Afghan youth should excel in the field of science at the regional level. Speaking at a ceremony to honor the top ten students of the last year's Kankor exam, Kabul Governor Mullah Aminullah Obaid said: "Thank God, with the return of the Islamic system, the gap that the enemies of this nation had created between religious and modern sciences has been done away with, and this is a great honor for Afghanistan and the Muslim nation of this country." The governor emphasized that science should serve the nation and society, and Afghan youth should excel in the field of science at the regional level. Addressing the top students, Kabul Provincial Education Director Mawlawi Abdul Basit Haqqani said: "You are the future builders of this country and have a great responsibility. With knowledge, commitment, and piety, you can pave the way for the honor and progress of Afghanistan." Speaking on behalf of the best students at the ceremony, two top students in the Kankor exam thanked the Kabul provincial government and the Islamic Emirate authorities for their support. They promised to spare no stone unturned in development of the country. At the end of the ceremony, all the best students were awarded certificates of appreciation and cash prizes.

Dormitory completed, research farm launched at Ghazni varsity

GHAZANI CITY (Pajhwok): A construction project has been completed at a cost of 17 million afghanis at the university in Ghazni province and another project worth 19 million afghanis has been started. Ghazni University chancellor Maulvi Abdul Wasi Mansoor told Pajhwok that the Acting Minister of Higher Education inaugurated an agricultural research farm at the university during his visit to Ghazni and handed over the dormitory building for use after its completion. He said: "The construction of the dormitory, which was 96 percent completed during the previous government, started last year at a cost of about 17 million afghanis and was handed over for use today." He also said the project included a dining hall, mattresses and other necessary items. He also that the construction of an agricultural research farm worth 19 million afghanis has also begun at Ghazni University. He said the research farm would be equipped with all necessary equipment in order students of the Faculty of Agriculture could effectively conduct their research. He added that the research project would also be put into operation soon. According to him, the Acting Minister of Higher Education also visited a number of other incomplete projects of the university during his visit and promised to resume work on them. Meanwhile, a number of students of Ghazni University said they were happy with the construction of the dormitory because they used to live in private hostels and faced many problems.

Young artist turns to painting to resist Taliban education ban

KABUL (Amu tv): A young Afghan artist says she turned to painting in recent years as a way to cope with the emotional toll of being barred from education under Taliban rule. Safa, who has been painting for nearly four years, says she uses art to express the creativity and resilience of Afghan girls and to tell their stories to the world. "In the face of these challenges, I chose art to escape the shadow of educational deprivation," she said. "Through the language of painting, I want to communicate everything I've left unsaid." Safa says her artwork primarily focuses on the conditions in Afghanistan. "All of my paintings carry messages. I try to make each piece convey something meaningful to the viewer," she said. "I speak through my art. I want to use the silent language of painting to connect with my people and show my art to the world. It inspires me and gives me positive energy." She says she has created dozens of works, many of which depict the experiences of ordinary Afghans, especially girls and women. Despite a landscape filled with restrictions and uncertainty, Safa insists she remains committed to a brighter future. Her concerns, however, go beyond personal expression. She notes a severe lack of support for artists in Afghanistan and highlights the economic struggles many face. "Unfortunately, there has been no support from the authorities in painting or the arts in general," she said. "We call on officials to support us in every way possible so we can show our art to the world — to show that Afghan girls are strong and capable." Since returning to power in 2021, the Taliban have imposed sweeping restrictions on women and girls, banning them from schools above grade six and from universities. Despite widespread domestic and international condemnation, the policies remain in effect. Still, many Afghan women and girls continue to push back through any avenue they can find — including art — seeking to break through the suffocating barriers and work toward a brighter tomorrow.

New Iron and Steel Plant Opens in Herat

HERAT (BNA): A new smelter has officially commenced operations in Herat, marking a significant investment of approximately \$7 million. The factory, owned by Khan Gul Ishaqzai, boasts a daily production capacity of 150 tons of rebar and has created jobs for 150 local residents. Herat Governor Sheikh Mauwana Islamjan expressed strong support for domestic production, emphasizing the importance of quality over quantity for local industrialists. "We need to focus on producing high-quality goods to compete effectively," he stated. Mawlawi Mohammad Bashir Sirat, head of the Herat Industry and Trade Department, highlighted ongoing efforts to bolster employment opportunities for citizens by supporting investors. "We are dedicated to creating more jobs while fostering a thriving industrial sector," he added. The new facility is the fourth iron ore factory to start operations in Herat province, reflecting a growing trend towards domestic production. Herat industry officials are optimistic that these initiatives will not only meet the country's iron demands but also contribute significantly to job creation for the local workforce.

Taliban introduces digital payment system

KABUL (Amu tv): The Taliban-run Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation said Friday that road transport service fees in the country will now be paid electronically, ending the use of cash transactions. Previously, fees were collected in cash at various checkpoints along highways. Under the new system, transport companies will use bank cards to make payments directly. In a video released by the ministry, several drivers said the shift to digital payments reduces delays and prevents traffic congestion at payment points. "Now we no longer need to stop to pay in cash," one driver said. Drivers also noted that, in the past, fees were paid at multiple locations along highways. Under the new system, companies make the payments centrally, which drivers say has streamlined operations. Azimullah Kamran, the Taliban's head of revenue regulation and control at the ministry, said the system is currently operational in Kabul and will be expanded to other provinces soon. According to the ministry, the system currently applies to passenger buses and other vehicles traveling from Kabul to various provinces. He said: "Last summer, we were importing 400 megawatts from Tajikistan, but now the figure has dropped to 310 to 320 megawatts. He said: "Last summer, we were importing 400 megawatts from Tajikistan, but currently we have 310 and sometimes 320 megawatts. One major reason is the short-

Taliban ban women from traveling without burqa

PANJSHIR (Amu tv): Taliban have barred women in Panjshir from traveling without wearing a burqa, local sources told Amu TV, adding that the ban applies to both entry into and exit from the province. According to the sources, Taliban morality enforcers have established multiple checkpoints throughout Panjshir to monitor women's clothing. At these posts, women are required to wear a full-body burqa to pass. The sources added that even girls under the age of 15 have been questioned and warned that they are not allowed to travel unless they wear a burqa — even if they wear a traditional cloak and cover their faces. Since returning to power nearly four years ago, the Taliban have imposed increasingly strict restrictions on the rights and freedoms of women and girls across Afghanistan. Under a decree issued by the Taliban in August of last year, the Taliban's Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue.

Mass returns: IOM urges urgent funding to scale up response



KABUL (Pajhwok): The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has issued an urgent call for international support to scale up its response to the largest return movements in recent history of Afghanistan. Since September 2023, more than four million Afghans have returned from Iran and Pakistan, with over 1.5 million returning in 2025 alone. A further one million Afghans are expected to return from Pakistan following the Pakistan government's decision not to extend the stay of Afghan nationals. To respond to the growing needs at the borders and in areas of return, IOM appealed for additional funding to scale up its response. Without urgent support, the systems in place face severe risk of collapse, putting millions at risk. "I spoke with families arriving at the border with Iran who were completely exhausted, many with small children and nowhere to go," said Mohammed Abdiker, IOM's Chief of Staff, who was visiting Afghanistan this week. "As lead of the Border Consortium, IOM is doing everything it can, but right now we can only assist one in ten people who need help. That is a situation no one should face. Afghanistan must not be forgotten." Returns from Pakistan began increasing in April after Pakistan authorities set a deadline for undocumented Afghans to leave or face deportation. Around the same time, an even larger wave of returns from Iran began and continues to grow. With Pakistan now confirming it will not renew temporary stay permits, including for Afghans holding Proof of Registration cards, more people are expected to arrive in Afghanistan in the coming weeks. IOM in Afghanistan operates four reception centers at major border crossings, including Islam Qala and Milak with Iran, and Torkham and Spin Boldak with Pakistan. The Organization also operates four transit centers where returnees receive food, temporary shelter, transportation, health care, cash assistance, and psychosocial support, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups such as women and children. Abdiker, accompanied by Iori Kato, IOM's Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, noted that while the border situation is critical, the pressures on the communities where returnees are settling must not be overlooked. "Many of these areas already lack basic services and economic opportunities. Without investment, returnees will struggle to reintegrate, and this often leads to further movement. Breaking this vicious cycle requires sustained support," he added. The vast majority of Afghan returnees are undocumented, which presents significant challenges in accessing identification, public services, and formal assistance. These barriers make reintegration especially difficult, particularly as the country heads into winter, when humanitarian needs are expected to rise sharply. The situation is further compounded by the ongoing impacts of four consecutive years of drought in the last five years and repeated climate shocks, which is among the leading drivers of internal displacement in Afghanistan, according to IOM data. IOM continues to emphasize that returns must be safe, voluntary, and dignified. Without regional cooperation and immediate international support, the situation could spiral into a broader humanitarian crisis, with severe consequences for Afghanistan and beyond.

Electricity imports from Tajikistan drop as Kabul faces power shortages



KABUL (TOLONews): The head of the Breshna company told TOLONews that Afghanistan imports about 80 percent of its electricity from abroad, but this summer, electricity imports from Tajikistan have decreased. Abdul Bari Omar added that last summer, 400 megawatts of electricity were imported from Tajikistan, but now the figure has dropped to 310 to 320 megawatts. He said: "Last summer, we were importing 400 megawatts from Tajikistan, but currently we have 310 and sometimes 320 megawatts. One major reason is the shortage in imported electricity, which is a significant drop of 80 or 90 megawatts. Another reason is drought and climate change. Last year in the summer, we were getting about 102 megawatts from the Naghlu and Surobi dams." Despite these challenges, Breshna has managed to supply 12 to 13 hours of electricity to consumers daily. According to the Breshna head, thermal generators have also been activated to compensate for the shortfall. In 12 hours of daily operation, they consume between 200,000 to 250,000 liters of diesel. The cost of generating thermal electricity for Breshna reaches 35 afghanis per kilowatt, while this electricity is sold to the public, traders, and industrialists at much lower rates. Abdul Bari Omar added: "Including administrative and operational costs, one kilowatt of electricity costs us 35 afghanis, but we sell it to the public at 2.5, 6, and even to traders at 14 afghanis, and to industrialists at 6 afghanis. We bear a loss in this area." This electricity shortage has made daily life difficult for Kabul residents. Some citizens are calling on the Islamic Emirate, especially the Breshna company, to address the electricity issues in the capital. Saqibullah, a Kabul resident, said: "Most of the time, there is no electricity. The power problems are very serious. Often, there is no electricity at all. If it comes, it's for a very short time." Barakatullah, another Kabul resident, added: "We ask Breshna to solve the electricity issues so that in the future there will be no power shortages." Experts believe that to solve the electricity crisis fundamentally, Afghanistan needs large-scale investment in domestic energy production. Mir Shakir Yaqubi, an economic expert, said: "There is a need to prepare platforms for major investments within the country. Some incentive packages should be considered for investors, and opportunities should be provided for investing in electricity production sources." A week ago, an agreement was signed between the Ministry of Water and Energy and a local private company for electricity production projects totaling 10,000 megawatts, valued at 10 billion US dollars. According to the agreement, projects for electricity production from solar, coal, water, wind, and gas sources are planned to be implemented.

Afghanistan eyes regional hub status through railway expansion projects



KABUL (TOLONews): Afghanistan is striving to secure a new regional position through the implementation of infrastructure projects, especially the development of railway lines. The Ministry of Public Works says that the increased facilitation for domestic and foreign investors has led regional countries, including Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Russia, the United Arab Emirates, China, and Iran, to express interest in investing in Afghanistan's infrastructure projects. Mohammad Ashraf Haqshenas, spokesperson for the Ministry of Public Works, said: "Neighboring countries including Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Iran, and some other countries have shown broad interest in investing in Afghanistan's infrastructure projects, particularly in railway projects. Memoranda of understanding and minutes have also been signed with some of these countries." According to economic experts, connecting to railway lines not only links Afghanistan to the markets of neighboring countries but can significantly expand Afghanistan's trade relations and lay the groundwork for sustainable economic growth. Abdul Nasir Reshtia, an economic expert, said: "If we want Afghanistan to progress, its economy to grow, and job opportunities to be created for the people, railway lines must be connected to the provinces and trade with other countries must occur through railways." Abdul Shukoor Hada Wal, another economic analyst, said: "Connecting to the regional railway network can boost Afghanistan's trade, lead to increased investment in the country, and create many job opportunities for the people." Currently, 261 kilometers of railway are active within the country. However, two major regional projects, Trans-Afghan and Kandahar-Spin Boldak, are also on the verge of launching. With the start of these projects, Afghanistan's regional position will be strengthened, turning it into a hub connecting Central Asia and South Asia.





ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Attaullah Tarar attending the send-off ceremony as chief guest joined by Senior officials from Government of Pakistan, NDMA and Embassy of Palestine, at airport.

## Tarar slams Indian media, calls for unified response to misinformation

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Friday strongly criticized the Indian media for spreading disinformation, asserting that Pakistan's Parliament, armed forces, media, and the nation had delivered a unified and resolute response to Indian aggression.

Speaking during question hour in the National Assembly, Tarar responded to a query raised by MNA Sharmila Faruqi and lauded Parliament's role in Operation Bunyaan Marsus. He said a clear message was sent to the enemy from the floor of the House, that the Parliament of Pakistan stands firmly with its armed forces. Referring to false claims by Indian media that the ports of Lahore and Multan had been destroyed, Tarar said Pakistan's collective response effectively countered the disinformation, demonstrating that media ethics continue to hold ground in the country.

He commended both government and opposition members for effectively presenting Pakistan's narrative across national television platforms, noting that media houses played a key role in shaping the domestic discourse, which enabled Pakistan to engage confidently on international media fronts. Tarar also acknowledged the contribution of Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, and political parties representatives, who played a pivotal role in articulating Pakistan's position on global media platforms.

The minister emphasized that combating misinformation is now a global priority, citing discussions at the World Economic Forum where international leaders identified disinformation as one of the defining chal-

### Minister flags off 18th Pakistani aid consignment to Gaza

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Friday sent off Pakistan's 18th humanitarian aid shipment to Gaza, carrying 200 tons of food and medical supplies on the orders of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to help Palestinians facing a deepening humanitarian crisis. Speaking at a ceremony at Islamabad International Airport, Tarar said the two consignments - each weighing 100 tons - contained dry rations, essential food items, and life-saving medicines. He stressed that the aid was being sent at a time when the blockade had prevented many international agencies from delivering much-needed relief to Gaza. "Children and innocent civilians are suffering from malnutrition, and the situation is a great humanitarian crisis," the minister told media. Tarar highlighted that Pakistan has so far dispatched 1,800 tons of humanitarian assistance to Gaza since the escalation of hostilities. He commended the Al-Khidmat Foundation and Jamaat-e-Islami leadership for their contributions and for consistently raising the plight of Palestinians on various platforms. Reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to stand "shoulder to shoulder" with the people of Palestine, Tarar said the National Disaster Management Authority acted on the prime minister's directive to ensure the urgent delivery of aid.

lenges of the time. He noted that the issue has become significantly more complex with the rise of artificial intelligence. To address these challenges, Tarar said the Ministry of Information has launched the Fact Checker Twitter handle and amended its 1970 rules to establish Pakistan's first Digital Communication Department, equipped with modern software to ensure timely and accurate public messaging.

He added that state-run media organizations-including Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (PBC), Pakistan Television (PTV), the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP), and the Press Information Department (PID)-have developed robust systems to actively counter misinformation. He highlighted the launch of Fake News Buster, an English-language program on PTV World aimed at exposing Indian prop-

aganda, which he said lacks a commitment to truth.

Tarar stressed the need for a national alliance to expand efforts against disinformation, stating that while research is underway to identify false narratives, it is not enough. He called for coordinated action across the Ministries of Information Technology, Information, and Law to address challenges on both domestic and international fronts. To institutionalize these efforts, Tarar proposed the formation of a parliamentary committee and urged opposition members to participate constructively. He said that if the committee delivers strong recommendations, the credit would rightly belong to the National Assembly. Responding to the proposal, National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq assured that the matter would be taken up in the Ministry of Information's committee.

### India pauses plans to buy US arms after Trump's tariffs

NEW DELHI (Reuters): New Delhi has put on hold its plans to procure new US weapons and aircraft, according to three Indian officials familiar with the matter, in India's first concrete sign of discontent after tariffs imposed on its exports by President Donald Trump dragged ties to their lowest level in decades.

India had been planning to send Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to Washington in the coming weeks for an announcement on some of the purchases, but that trip has been cancelled, two of the people said. Trump on Aug 6 imposed an additional 25 per cent tariff on Indian goods as punishment for Delhi's purchases of Russian oil, which he said meant the country was funding Russia's invasion of Ukraine. That raised the total duty on Indian exports to 50pc — among the highest of any US trading partner.

The US president has a history of rapidly reversing himself on tariffs, and India has said it remains actively engaged in discussions with Washington. One of the people said the defence purchases could go ahead once India had clarity on tariffs and the direction of bilateral ties, but "just not as soon as they were expected to".

Written instructions had not been given to pause the purchases, another official said, indicating that Delhi had the option to quickly reverse course, though there was "no forward movement at least for now." India's defence ministry and the Pentagon did not respond to Reuters' questions. Delhi, which has forged a close partnership with America in recent years, has said it is being unfairly targeted and that Washington and its European allies continue to trade with Moscow when it is in their interest.

Reuters is reporting for the first time that discussions on India's purchases of Stryker combat vehicles made by General Dynamics Land Systems and Javelin anti-tank missiles developed by Raytheon and Lockheed Martin have been paused due to the tariffs.

### Germany to halt military exports to Israel

BERLIN: Germany has suspended all military exports to Israel that could be used in Gaza after Israel's security cabinet approved a plan to take over Gaza City, an escalation in the 22-month war. Chancellor Friedrich Merz announced the decision on Friday, shortly after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office confirmed the security cabinet voted in favour of a plan to seize the largest city in the besieged Palestinian territory.

A day earlier, Netanyahu had declared that Israeli forces were aiming to take full military control of the entire Gaza Strip despite mounting international condemnation over Israel's war, which has killed tens of thousands of people and caused a starvation crisis. "Under these circumstances, the German government will not authorise any exports of military equipment that could be used in the Gaza Strip until further notice," Merz said.

While continuing to back what he called Israel's "right to defend itself" and the release of captives held by Hamas, Merz stressed that Germany could no longer ignore the worsening toll on civilians. "The even harsher military action by the Israeli army in the Gaza Strip, approved by the Israeli cabinet last night, makes it increasingly difficult for the German government to see how these goals will be achieved," he said.

Netanyahu spoke with Merz on Friday and expressed disappointment with the arms decision, according to a statement by the Israeli government released late in the day. It added that it feels Germany is rewarding Hamas and failing to support Israel's "just war". The timing of another major Israeli ground operation remains unclear since it will likely hinge on mobilising thousands of soldiers and forcibly removing civilians, almost certainly exacerbating the humanitarian catastrophe. — Aljazeera

## UN asks Israel to immediately halt plan to control Gaza

SYDNEY/GENEVA: UN human rights chief Volker Turk on Friday said that "the Israeli Government's plan for a complete military takeover of the occupied Gaza Strip must be immediately halted." "It runs contrary to the ruling of the International Court of Justice that Israel must bring its occupation to an end as soon as possible, to the realization of the agreed two-State solution and to the right of Palestinians to self-determination," he said in a statement.

Jordan on Friday also condemned, "in the strongest terms", Israel's plans "to entrench its occupation of the Gaza Strip and expand full military control over." Ambassador Sufian Al-Qudah, in a statement "affirmed the Kingdom's rejection and strong condemnation of this plan, which represents an extension of the extremist Israeli government's policy that uses starvation and siege as weapons against the Palestinian people."

"Full military control over the Gaza Strip undermines international efforts aimed at reaching a ceasefire agreement and ending the humanitarian suffering in the sector, stressing the necessity for Israel ... to immediately halt its aggression on Gaza" a portion of the statement said. King Abdullah II has assured Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas of Jordan's continued support and solidarity, and as he reiterated Amman's rejection and condemnation of Israel's plan to consolidate the occupation of Gaza and expand military control over it.

The King also affirmed the Kingdom's commitment to supporting them in obtaining their just and legitimate rights and establishing their independent state, on the basis of the two-state solution, state news agency Petra reported, during a call between the two leaders. The Turkish foreign ministry also strongly condemned Israel's decision to take control of Gaza

City, saying every step taken by the "fundamentalist Netanyahu government" to continue its genocide and expand its occupation dealt a heavy blow to global peace and security.

Australia earlier urged Israel "not to go down this path," after Prime Minister Netanyahu said Israel intended to take military control of Gaza. "Australia calls on Israel to not go down this path, which will only worsen the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza," Foreign Minister Penny Wong said in a statement on Friday.

Wong said permanent forced displacement was a violation of international law and repeated calls for a ceasefire, aid to flow unimpeded and for militant group Hamas to return the hostages taken in October 2023. "A two-state solution is the only pathway to secure an enduring peace — a Palestinian state and the State of Israel, living side-by-side in peace and security within internationally-recognized borders," she added.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer on Friday also said Israel's decision to take control of Gaza City was wrong and urged the government in Jerusalem to reconsider. "The Israeli Government's decision to further escalate its offensive in Gaza is wrong, and we urge it to reconsider immediately," he said in a statement. "This action will do nothing to bring an end to this conflict or to help secure the release of the hostages. It will only bring more bloodshed."

Australia has not yet joined Western allies such as the UK, Canada and France in announcing it would recognize Palestinian statehood but has said it would make a decision "at an appropriate time," while escalating its criticism of Israel's actions. Wong's comments come in response to Netanyahu saying Israel intended to take military control of all of Gaza during an interview with Fox News. — Agencies

## PHC reserves verdict in wheat scandal case

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has reserved its judgment in the bail application of a suspect accused of embezzling wheat from the Addakhil wheat storage facility. During the hearing, Justice Syed Arshad Ali questioned the progress made by the Anti-Corruption Department and expressed dissatisfaction with the department's reliance on others for evidence, on Friday.

The court was informed by the suspect's lawyer, Farooq Malik Advocate, that the petitioner was not the sole accused and that others were also involved in the alleged embezzlement. The lawyer argued that there was no concrete evidence against the petitioner and that his role was limited to managing the records.

The Additional Advocate General, Inam Yousafzai, opposed the bail application, stating that the suspect was part of a larger scheme that had caused a loss of over 190 million rupees to the national treasury. He also informed the court that the bail applications of two other suspects had been rejected by the Chief Justice of PHC.

The Additional Director Food, Imran Jadoon,

### Court accepts Shaukat' appeal

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has accepted the appeal filed by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Shaukat Yousafzai against the decision of a lower court that directed him to pay damages to Asfandiyar Wali Khan, the leader of the Awami National Party (ANP). The court has issued a notice to Asfandiyar Wali Khan in this regard, on Friday.

ANP Asfandiyar Wali Khan filed defamation suit against Shaukat Yousafzai, alleging that Yousafzai had made defamatory statements against him. The lower court had ruled in favor of Asfandiyar Wali Khan and directed Shoukat Yousafzai to pay one million rupees in damages. However, Yousafzai's lawyer argued that the lower court had ignored several legal points and that the decision was contrary to the principles of justice.

The lawyer argued that the petitioner had not made any personal allegations against Asfandiyar Wali Khan but had merely quoted a statement made by the late Azam Khan Hoti, a former federal minister and ANP leader. The lawyer claimed that Shoukat Yousafzai had only repeated what Azam Khan Hoti had said in his statement, which had been published in the national media. Despite this, the lower court had ruled against Shoukat Yousafzai. PHC single member bench of Justice Farah Jamshed after hearing the initial arguments, has issued a notice to Asfandiyar Wali Khan and has admitted the appeal for regular hearing.

informed the court that an audit had been conducted and a report had been submitted. However, Justice Syed Arshad Ali expressed dissatisfaction with the audit report, questioning the absence of the auditor and the reliance on others for evidence.

The court observed that the Anti-Corruption Department's investiga-

tion was incomplete and that the department was relying on others for evidence. The court also noted that the suspect's lawyer had offered to weigh the wheat at his own expense to verify the allegations. After hearing the arguments from both sides, the court reserved its judgment on the bail application.

## Pakistan condemns

(Continued from Page 1)

It was told that under the National Incubation Center, 386 new startups were supported, 14 were sent to the global stage, and 40 e-

employment centers were established in 26 cities across the country. Four Pakistani teams were ranked among the top 50 globally at Black Hat MEA, and investment agreements and MoUs worth \$700 million were signed. Moreover, approximately 315,000 students, including around 115,000 women, were provided professional IT training to ensure equal opportunities for women in the IT sector. The National Incubation Center supported 130 women-led startups, and dedicated training centers for women were established nationwide. Additionally, 2,200 federal government officers and staff were trained, and around 3,000 students received cybersecurity training.

The representatives of the meeting were told that Rs. 6.2 billion in taxes were collected through Pak-App. E-Office implementation reached 98% in federal government offices, and 51 new systems were introduced to enhance governance. During the briefing on the telecom sector, it was told that last year, the target of providing 4G access to over 580,000 people was surpassed. Telecom

connections crossed the 200 million mark, with 1 million new internet users and a 24% increase in internet usage during the last financial year.

Regarding NITB, it was informed that work on creating a modern system aligned with contemporary requirements was in its final stages. The Board is working on over 179 websites, more than 31 mobile applications, over 113 portals, and 57 consultancy projects. The NITB's restructuring focuses on enhancing user experience, preparing for future changes, building modern infrastructure, improving governance and service delivery, strengthening cybersecurity, risk management, research, innovation, and increasing workforce capacity. The meeting was attended by federal ministers Ahad Khan Cheema, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Prime Minister's Coordinator Musharraf Zaidi, and relevant senior officials.

**Shehbaz calls for urgent action plan to boost tourism in Pakistan:** Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif called for the formulation of a comprehensive and actionable plan to enhance both domestic and international tourism while emphasizing the country's vast untapped tourism potential.

The prime minister chaired a high-level meet-

ing here at the Prime Minister's House to review and strategize the promotion of tourism across Pakistan, a Prime Minister's Office news release said. "Pakistan is immensely blessed by nature. From snow-covered mountains and lush forests to rivers, deserts, and a vibrant coastline, our country holds a unique and significant place in the world," the Prime Minister remarked. He noted that Pakistan is home to one of the world's oldest civilizations, and such heritage must be showcased to the world through better infrastructure and hospitality.

PM Shehbaz stressed the importance of attracting tourists to scenic regions like Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu & Kashmir, underlining the need for modern infrastructure, efficient transport connectivity, and high-standard recreational facilities. He directed authorities to swiftly draft an action plan for promoting tourism in Islamabad, AJK, and Gilgit-Baltistan. He instructed relevant ministries and departments to develop tourism projects that are both practical and can be completed in the short term. He also called for a strategic plan to build top-quality hotels, resorts, and other tourism facilities in northern regions, particularly to cater to both local and international visitors.

### Dubai hosts Pakistan Independence Day gala

F.P. Report

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates is set to stage its largest-ever celebration of Pakistani culture on August 10, 2025, at the Dubai Exhibition Centre, Expo City Dubai, marking the 78th Independence Day of Pakistan. The high-profile public event aims to honor the achievements, heritage, and contributions of the Pakistani diaspora in the Emirates.

Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, UAE Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence, along with Pakistan's Ambassador to the UAE, Faisal Niaz Tirmizi, will attend the event. Diplomats, business leaders, social figures, and distinguished members of the Pakistani community will also be present.

Organized under the theme "Emirates Loves Pakistan", the celebration is hosted in collaboration with the Pakistan Association Dubai and supported by Dubai Police. It will showcase Pakistan's vibrant cultural heritage through traditional folk music, Sufi performances, storytelling, and art exhibitions.

Star performers include Sahir Ali Bagga, Natasha Baig, renowned storyteller Yousuf Bashir Qureshi, Moez Mohmand from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), and artists from AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan. Notable community members will be honored for their role in the UAE's sustainable development.

With an estimated 60,000 attendees, the event is set to be the largest public display of Pakistani culture in UAE history. Pakistan and the UAE established diplomatic ties in 1971 under the leadership of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, fostering decades of friendship.

## Port security and Harbour defence exercise conducted

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Navy conducted a two-day Port Security and Harbour Defence Exercise at Karachi harbour. The exercise aimed to enhance operational tactics, techniques, and procedures, and to strengthen inter-agency coordination among all relevant stakeholders.

Multiple scenarios were rehearsed to improve the readiness and integrated response capabilities of Pakistan Navy's Coastal Command, Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA), Karachi Port Trust (KPT), and other law enforcement agencies.

During the course of exercise, participating units rehearsed coordinated actions in a high-pressure



environment, focusing on swift detection, deterrence, and neutralisation of potential threats to critical maritime and naval infrastructure. Special emphasis was placed on real-time communication, joint situational awareness, and the streamlining of command and control mechanisms to ensure a rapid and cohesive

response in evolving situations.

The successful conduct of exercise reaffirmed the determination, operational readiness, and capability of Pakistan Navy and other participating agencies to safeguard national assets and ensure secure, uninterrupted port operations under all conditions.

## SC allows NAB property auction, Bahria Town plea rejected

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan rejected Bahria Town's request to halt the National Accountability Bureau's (NAB) auction of its properties, linked to a failed plea bargain, paving the way for the sale of assets worth billions of rupees. A three-member bench, led by Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan, heard the appeal on Friday. Bahria Town's lawyer, Farooq H. Naek, expressed apprehension about the case's abrupt listing, stating he received notification late the previous night. Justice Amin proposed scheduling the case for the following week, but Naek requested an immediate suspension of the ongoing auction. The bench briefly adjourned before reconvening.

Upon resumption, Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan clarified that only a supplementary request was being reviewed and directed

the inclusion of complete NAB reference copies to clarify the alleged financial wrongdoing. He pointed out that the defendant had previously agreed to a plea bargain, surrendering eight properties. However, the defendant now alleges coercion and has asked the NAB Chairman to revoke the agreement. Justice Afghan questioned how NAB could proceed with an auction before a conviction.

Naek contended that both the application to nullify the plea bargain and the related NAB references were pending. Justice Amin insisted that no stay order would be issued without hearing the opposing side. The court demanded the submission of relevant paperwork, including NAB references against Malik Riaz and Bahria Town, postponing the hearing until August 13.

Meanwhile, NAB successfully auctioned three properties on August 7,

realizing Rs2.27 billion. The Rubaish Marquee sold for Rs508 million, while two commercial buildings received provisional bids of Rs876 million and Rs881.5 million, respectively. The sale of three remaining properties — Arena Cinema (reserve price Rs1.1 billion), Bahria Town International Academy (Rs1.07 billion), and Safari Club (Rs1.2 billion) — all situated in Bahria Town, Rawalpindi, was delayed due to insufficient bids. These assets were seized in relation to a defaulted plea bargain involving Zain Malik, son-in-law of Malik Riaz and co-owner of the Bahria Town developments.

Malik Riaz, a controversial property magnate, remains overseas, reportedly avoiding apprehension in multiple high-profile legal proceedings, including the £190 million Al-Qadir Trust case and the Bahria Town Karachi corruption reference.