

PTI to boycott polls
F.P. Report

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), under the directives of incarcerated party founder Imran Khan, has announced a boycott of all upcoming by-elections except for the vacant seat of Mian Azhar. PTI has also declared it will boycott the Senate election for Ijaz Chaudhry's vacant seat, following instructions from Imran Khan.



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Shehbaz, Erdogan review bilateral relations

PM attends reception for world leaders attending SCO summit

BEIJING (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and President of the Republic of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Sunday reviewed the current state of Pakistan-Türkiye relations and expressed satisfaction over the growing momentum in bilateral ties.

They noted with appreciation the steady increase in high-level exchanges and cooperation across a broad spectrum, including political, economic, defense, and security domains.

The prime minister held a constructive bilateral meeting with the Turkish president on the sidelines of the SCO Council of Heads of State in Tianjin, China. PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The Turkish president offered sincere condolences over the loss of precious lives and property as a result of the ongoing floods across various parts of Pakistan.

He also expressed his country's solidarity with the people of Pakistan and said that the government and people of Türkiye stood shoulder to shoulder with Pakistan in this hour of need. The two sides exchanged views on key regional and international developments.

They expressed grave concern over the worsening humanitarian situation in Gaza and reaffirmed their shared commitment to using international platforms to advocate for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and to condemn the ongoing

Israeli aggression and genocidal policies.

The meeting reaffirmed the deep-rooted brotherly ties between Pakistan and Türkiye and underscored their shared resolve to further strengthen cooperation for peace, stability, and prosperity in the Muslim world and beyond.

PM attends reception for world leaders attending SCO summit

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Sunday attended the reception for world leaders participating in the 25th Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Heads of State Council meeting in Tianjin.

Chinese President Xi Jinping welcomed Prime Minister Sharif and leaders of other countries.

The Prime Minister held informal meetings with President of Russia Vladimir Putin, Prime Minister of Malaysia Anwar Ibrahim, President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko, President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, President of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdogan, President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon, President of Turkmenistan Serdar Berdimuhamedov, President of Kyrgyzstan Sadyr Japarov, President of Maldives Mohamed Muizzu and United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres.

The Prime Minister was the centre of attention of the world leaders who showed exceptional warmth to him.

The closeness seen in these meetings is a reflection of the brotherly and

friendly relations between Pakistan and these countries.

GoP policies closely align with President Xi's vision: PM

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday said that all the endeavors and initiatives of the incumbent Government in Pakistan are closely aligned with President Xi's vision and philosophy, that were anchored in the progress and prosperity of the Chinese nation.

Addressing students and faculty members of Tianjin University, the prime minister urged the Pakistani students currently studying there to gain the latest knowledge and technology with sheer commitment and hard work and utilize their expertise in Pakistan for the welfare, progress and prosperity of their people. In his address broadcast on national TV channels, the prime minister expressed his satisfaction that more than 200 students from various parts of Pakistan were getting an education in Tianjin University.

He said that it was an opportunity for them to be in a country and in such a university which was regarded as 'a cradle of great learning.' Terming students as ambassadors of Pakistan, he expressed the optimism that owing to their hard work, dedication and commitment to equip themselves with the latest knowledge and technology, they would return to Pakistan as architects for their future.

"Above all, you are the

torch bearers of Pakistan-China friendship," he added.

The prime minister opined that in Tianjin University which was considered as a cradle for learning, the students would become great experts and serve as helping hands not only in China's wonderful progress but also for the well-being and progress of Pakistan.

About Pak-China time-tested friendship, he said it was built by their elder generations through unwavering commitment, honesty and unbelievable sincerity thus laying the foundation of a friendship to stand on pillars of mutual trust.' Members of the prime minister's delegation, ambassadors, and officials were also present.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif further said that the enduring friendship between the two nations not only stood the tests of time but faced enormous challenges of history.

"It withstands owing to

commitment and clear vision in our minds; together to find a shared destiny," he said, adding that all the designs to keep these two great friendly countries were defeated by their united actions and clear understanding.

He said the friendship between the two nations would last forever, no matter what challenges came in their way. The prime minister further shared that Pak-China bilateral ties were as old as the Silk Road, and as profound as the religious ties between Gandhara, Taxila and Beijing.



TIANJIN: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meeting with President of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdogan on the sidelines of the SCO Council of Heads of State on Sunday.

Consensus Reached on Amendments to National Commission for Minorities F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A consensus-based amendment to the National Commission for Minorities Rights Bill, 2025 has been finalised in a recent meeting at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

The amended Bill has been forwarded to the Parliament for reconsideration in its Joint Session. These amendments were prepared in response to the President's earlier message to the Parliament under Article 75(1) of the Constitution of Pakistan.

The Bill seeks to establish a statutory commission to safeguard the rights of religious minorities, ensuring their representation and protection from discrimination. The commission will monitor implementation of minority rights, review relevant policies, and will have the powers to investigate rights violations, independently.

This legislation reflects a significant step toward fulfilling constitutional guarantees and international commitments to minority rights in Pakistan. The formation of the commission includes representatives from all provinces and minority communities, promoting inclusivity and effective oversight.

The Bill will proceed under the constitutional process for due consideration by the Parliament in its joint session.

Indonesian president says MPs' perks to be cut

JAKARTA (Aljazeera): Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto says political parties have agreed to revoke a number of perks and privileges for parliamentarians in a major concession to people taking part in antigovernment protests that have killed at least five people.

Protests over what the demonstrators have criticised as excessive pay and housing allowances for parliamentarians started on Monday and expanded into riots on Thursday after one person, a motorcycle rideshare driver, was killed in a police action at a protest site.

Rioters ransacked or set ablaze the homes of some members of the political parties as well as some state installations as protests rocked major cities in Southeast Asia's biggest economy.

"Leaders in parliament have conveyed that they will revoke a number of parliament policies, including the size of allowances for members of parliament and a moratorium on overseas work trips," Prabowo said at a news conference at the Presidential Palace while flanked by the leaders of various political parties.

President Xi highlights friendship, cooperation

TIANJIN (APP): Chinese President Xi Jinping is holding intensive bilateral meetings with foreign leaders on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit in Tianjin, where he has underscored the importance of friendship, practical cooperation and multilateralism.

The summit, from August 31 to September 1, marks the fifth time China has hosted the event and will be the largest in the organization's history. Leaders from more than 20 countries and heads of 10 international organizations will gather in the port city to review the SCO's achievements, chart its future course and push forward toward building a closer SCO community with a shared future.

Since Saturday, Xi has been holding bilateral meetings with visiting foreign leaders, highlighting the importance of enduring ties and friendship.

When meeting with Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly, Xi said China and Egypt should be good brothers, firmly supporting each other.

Madbouly, in turn, praised China as Egypt's true partner and friend, adding that Egypt is ready to further develop its bilateral relations. Meeting Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet, Xi hailed the "ironclad" China-Cambodia friendship, saying the bilateral friendship has stood the test of time, is rock-solid and a shared asset of the two peoples. In talks with

Myanmar's Acting President Min Aung Hlaing, Xi noted that the "pauk-phaw" friendship between the two peoples is deeply rooted and ever fresh.

Xi also spoke highly of the China-Nepal friendship when meeting with Nepali Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli. He said that China and Nepal, as close neighbors for generations, have jointly written a chapter of good-neighborliness and friendship over the past seven decades. Cooperation was another recurring theme in Xi's meetings.

In talks with Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Xi urged closer alignment of development strategies and deeper cooperation in energy, infrastructure and policies. With Egypt, he called for greater synergy between China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Egypt's "Vision 2030," emphasizing cooperation in joint manufacturing and green energy. Xi also highlighted two China-Cambodia joint projects: the Industrial and Technological Corridor (ITC) and the Fish and Rice Corridor (FRC), in talks with Hun Manet.

From the Suez Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone in Egypt to Cambodia's ITC and FRC, from the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor to enhanced connectivity with Nepal, China's BRI remains the central thread linking China's cooperation with SCO partners.

Over the past five years, trade between China and other SCO members has

surged, hitting a record \$512.4 billion in 2024. A recent CGTN poll showed that over 85 percent of respondents in SCO countries believe China's BRI has achieved remarkable results in promoting connectivity and high-quality development among SCO member states.

Upholding multilateralism and the correct view of WWII history

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the victory of the World Anti-Fascist War and the founding of the United Nations. In a meeting with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, Xi stressed that multilateralism, solidarity, and cooperation are the right answer to global challenges.

He reaffirmed China's commitment to genuine multilateralism and its support for the UN's central role in international affairs, adding that China is willing to deepen cooperation with the UN and jointly safeguard world peace and promote development and prosperity. Xi and other SCO leaders are expected to issue a statement marking the 80th anniversary of the victory of the World Anti-Fascist War and the founding of the United Nations at the Tianjin summit. According to Foreign Minister Wang Yi, the statement will reaffirm the nation's commitment to a correct view of history, uphold the hard-won fruits of WWII, and call on nations to learn from the past in building a better future.

Israel pounds Gaza City suburbs

CAIRO/JERUSALEM (Reuters): Israeli forces pounded the suburbs of Gaza City overnight from the air and ground, destroying homes and driving more families out of the area as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's security cabinet was set on Sunday to discuss a plan to seize the city.

Local health authorities said Israeli gunfire and strikes killed at least 18 people on Sunday, including 13 who tried to get food from near an aid site in the central Gaza Strip, and at least two in a house in Gaza City. The Israeli military spokesperson's office said they were reviewing the reports.

Residents of Sheikh Radwan, one of the largest neighborhoods of Gaza City, said the territory had been under Israeli tank shelling and airstrikes throughout Saturday and on Sunday, forcing families to seek shelter in the western parts of the city.

The Israeli military has gradually escalated its operations around Gaza City over the past three weeks, and on Friday it ended temporary pauses in the area that had allowed for aid deliveries, designating it a "dangerous combat zone."

"They are crawling into the heart of the city where hundreds of thousands are sheltering, from the east, north, and south, while bombing those areas from the air and ground to scare people to leave," said Rezik Salah, a father of two, from Sheikh Radwan.

An Israeli official said Netanyahu's security cabinet will convene on Sunday evening to discuss the next stages of the planned offensive to seize Gaza City, which he has described as Hamas' last bastion.

A full-scale offensive is not expected to start for weeks. Israel says it wants to evacuate the civilian population before moving more ground forces in. On Saturday, Red Cross head Mirjana Spoljaric said an evacuation from the city would provoke a massive population displacement that no other area in the Gaza Strip is equipped to absorb, amid severe shortages of food, shelter, and medical supplies.

"People who have relatives in the south left to stay with them. Others including myself didn't find a space as Deir Al-Balah and Mawasi are overcrowded," said Ghada, a mother of five from the city's Sabra neighborhood.

Around half of the enclave's more than 2 million people are presently in Gaza City. Several thousand were estimated to have left the city for central and southern areas of the enclave, according to local sources.

Israel's military has warned its political leaders that the offensive is endangering hostages still being held by Hamas in Gaza. Protests in Israel calling for an end to the war and the release of the hostages have intensified in the past few weeks.

Large crowds demonstrated in Tel Aviv on Saturday evening, and hostages' families protested outside the homes of ministers on Sunday morning. The war began with a Hamas-led attack on southern Israel on October 7, 2023, in which around 1,200 people were killed, mostly civilians, and 251 taken hostage. Twenty of the remaining 48 hostages are believed to still be alive.

Israel's military campaign in Gaza has killed more than 63,000 people, mostly civilians, according to Gaza health officials, and it has plunged the enclave into a humanitarian crisis and left much of it in ruins.

Schools to remain closed
F.P. Report

NAROWAL: All government and private schools will remain closed in flood-hit Narowal. As per details, a notification regarding the closure of all public and private educational institutions in the district due to the prevailing flood situation has been issued. Schools across Narowal will remain closed from September 1 to September 5.



GAZA STRIP: Smoke rises to the sky following an Israeli military strike in the northern Gaza Strip, as seen from southern Israel, Sunday.



KARACHI: Madrasa students take part in a rally organized by the Barkati Foundation on M.A. Jinnah Road in connection with Eid Milad-un-Nabi celebrations. —APP Photo

Floods displace 2 million in Pakistan: Musadik

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change Musadik Malik said on Sunday that nearly two million people have been displaced across Pakistan due to devastating floods, warning that the brunt of the crisis is falling on the country's poorest families. "Our first, second, and third priority is the poorest 40 percent—around 800,000 people—who do not have wealthy relatives to rely on and are in dire need of aid," Malik told media.

Flanked by National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Chairman Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik, the Climate Minister urged the nation to stand with the poor. "If there is any NGO in your area or if you personally can help a displaced family, please do so," he emphasized.

The government, he said, is prioritizing urgent relief measures including

the distribution of food, medicines, mosquito nets, clean drinking water, water tanks, and temporary electricity supplies to flood-hit communities. Authorities are also on high alert for the spread of epidemics in crowded makeshift camps.

Malik emphasized that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, despite being abroad, is receiving daily briefings and issuing guidance on relief operations. The same reports, he said, are shared with the country's military leadership, Field Marshal General Syed Asim Munir who is personally supervising the situation on the ground.

"The federal government is standing shoulder to shoulder with the provinces, and the Army, Rangers, NDMA, PDMA, and Rescue 1122 are all working together," Malik said. "No one can stop a natural disaster, but we are making every effort to mitigate its damage."

The minister noted that

early simulations and community evacuation drills conducted over the past six months have helped reduce the loss of human life compared to previous disasters, even as property, crops, and livelihoods have been destroyed.

Floodwaters remain a major threat at Head Trimmu, Head Panjnad, and Kot Mithan, where several rivers converge. Authorities are working to keep water flows below one million cusecs but are preparing for higher surges. Controlled breaches in uninhabited areas are planned to protect larger populations from disaster.

Malik pointed to Punjab's geography—where five rivers converge—as a challenge, warning that the Panjnad system could face flows as high as three million cusecs if conditions worsen.

Beyond the immediate disaster, Malik underscored that Pakistan's plight high-

lights the global climate crisis. "What we are calling climate change is a reality. Rising temperatures are melting glaciers, and this melting is causing disasters such as flash floods and blockages," he said.

He noted that Pakistan contributes less than one percent of global carbon emissions, yet bears the brunt of the consequences. "The top 8 to 10 countries in the world are responsible for 70 percent of these emissions," he stressed.

In addition to praising the efforts of provincial governments and security forces in Narowal, Sialkot, and flood-hit parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Malik urged national unity and solidarity.

"Let me emphasize: no single institution can take credit for this. This responsibility belongs to Pakistan, and any relief being provided is for Pakistan," he said. "Above all, the government stands with the poor."

Ministers visit flood-hit areas

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Agriculture Minister Ashiq Hussain Kirmani on Sunday visited the flood-hit areas of Okara, Sahiwal and Pakpattan districts.

Federal Minister for Water Resources Mian Muhammad Mueen Wattoo also accompanied him during the visit, said a press release issued here.

Ashiq Kirmani inspected the flood situation at Dad Baloch, Radha Kalan Barrage, Head Sulemanki and River Sutlej.

Both ministers inspected the protective embankment of River Sutlej at Head Sulemanki. They also visited the Control Room where they were given a detailed briefing on the rescue and relief operations. It was informed that relief camps had been set up in the affected areas, where flood victims were being provided with food, medical treatment and temporary shelter.

Moreover, rescue teams were continuously working to ensure timely and effective evacuation. Punjab Agriculture minister directed to expedite relief and rehabilitation efforts for the flood hit people.

Later, the minister visited flood relief camps and personally participated in ongoing activities. On this occasion, he said that the Punjab government would not leave people alone.

He said, "Punjab CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif herself is monitoring the relief operations, which will continue until the complete rehabilitation of flood victims."

He directed that the required machinery and manpower must remain fully available for flood relief and rescue operations so that immediate assistance could be provided to the victims.

All available resources were being utilized for the aid and evacuation of flood-affected people, he said and also directed the relevant officers to provide every possible facility to the public.

Govt announces closure of Utility Stores Corporation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhary Sunday announced the closure of the Utility Stores Corporation (USC) across the country.

Addressing a press conference alongside USC Managing Director Shabbir Khattak and Secretary General of the National Welfare Union of USC Raja Muhammad Miskeen, the minister assured that the rights of all USC employees — permanent, contractual, and daily wagers — had been fully protected under the directives of the Prime Minister.

A consensus, he added, was reached between the government and the USC employees' union to provide a comprehensive severance package worth Rs 28.2 billion. Dr. Tariq Fazal noted that USC, established in 1971, had

played a vital role in providing essential commodities to the public at subsidized rates.

Its network expanded to more than 5,500 stores nationwide by 2009, employing nearly 12,750 workers. However, despite government efforts, the corporation continued to suffer heavy losses.

"The Prime Minister has made it clear that employees must not suffer due to the closure," he said, adding that a special committee chaired by the Federal Finance Minister was constituted to oversee the process.

The Ministries of Finance and Industries, and Production also played a key role in finalizing the severance benefits.

Highlighting the unprecedented scope of the package, the minister said this was the first time in Pakistan's history that contractual and daily-wage

employees were being included, ensuring fair compensation for all USC staff. Turning to broader national issues, Dr. Tariq Fazal said Pakistan's economy was showing signs of improvement with key indicators moving positively.

At the same time, he expressed grief over the devastation caused by recent floods, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where around 800 lives had been lost. He praised the Pakistan Army, NDMA, provincial administrations, and civil society for their relief efforts, while lauding Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's directive for urgent assistance.

On the occasion, Raja Muhammad Miskeen expressed gratitude to the Prime Minister and the federal government for ensuring what he described as a fair and respectable settlement for USC employees.

WCLA conducts survey of dilapidated buildings

LAHORE (APP): The Walled City of Lahore Authority (WCLA) recently conducted a comprehensive survey of old and dilapidated buildings and issued notices to vacate those deemed dangerous, ensuring timely evacuation.

To facilitate the poor and underprivileged residents of these buildings, the Authority itself had bore the cost of their rents so that they could secure alternative housing, said a press release issued here on Sunday.

So far, the Walled City of Lahore Authority had vacated a total of 86 dangerous buildings, which include 14 in Lohari Gate, 10 in Bhatti Gate, 9 in Dehli Gate, 6 in Yaki Gate, 2 in Sheranwala Gate, 27 in Akbari Gate, 7 in Mochi Gate, 7 in Taxali Gate and 4 in Kashmiri Gate/Rang Mehal.

WCLA had also launched an extensive social mobilization campaign within the community, encouraging residents of Lahore's walled city to repair and secure their houses in order to prevent any potential accidents and loss of human lives.

Earlier this morning, the roof of an old house adjacent to the G-177, "Mughlan Da Kho" building, collapsed. However, the Walled City of Lahore Authority had already issued a notice and vacated the house some time ago, which prevented any loss of life. Following the incident, the WCLA team immediately inspected neighboring houses and reviewed necessary safety measures.

The Walled City of Lahore Authority DG Maleeha Rashid said,

"Our foremost priority is the protection of human lives. In this regard, the Walled City of Lahore Authority has always taken proactive measures to ensure that no precious lives are lost due to dilapidated or dangerous buildings. We not only relocate residents to safe places but also provide them with financial assistance.

This effort will continue in the future; however, at the same time, we expect the community to focus on repairing and restoring their homes through self-help.

The Walled City Authority will continue its struggle, together with the community, to make their homes safer."

The Walled City of Lahore Authority would continue its efforts to safeguard citizens and preserve heritage in the future, she added.

CM visits flood relief camp in Kasur, meets women, children

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Sunday visited the flood relief camp established at DPS Kasur, where she interacted with flood-affected women and inquired about their problems.

She also visited patients at the temporary hospital set up inside the camp, expressing concern for their well-being and offering words of comfort. During the visit, the CM was briefed that rescue teams had promptly responded to calls for help, evacuating victims from flood-hit areas and shifting them safely to the camp.

One of the women expressed her gratitude, saying, "We are deeply thank-

ful to Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif for rescuing us from the flood and bringing us safely to the camp."

CM Maryam Nawaz also showed affection for children residing in the camp. She lovingly placed them on her lap, interacted with students in a classroom in a cheerful mood, and awarded prizes to children who wrote their names on the whiteboard.

Authorities briefed the Chief Minister that 29 villages in Kasur district had been affected by the floods, with 18,300 residents evacuated and 36,129 rescued. Livestock were also shifted to safe locations. The relief camp is currently hosting

victims from Dhup Sari, Mboke, Ola Nagar, Aiman Pura, Mai Wala, Fati Wala, and surrounding areas.

At present, 60 families comprising 312 individuals are staying in the Kasur relief camp, where the district administration has ensured proper arrangements for food, education, healthcare, and recreation. Educational activities continue for children, who have also been provided with a playground facility.

Three doctors and medical staff remain available round the clock, with 170 people having already benefited from treatment at the medical camp.

Pattoki AC dies due to hear failure

LAHORE (APP): Assistant Commissioner (AC) Pattoki Furqan Muhammad Khan lost his life due to a ruptured cerebral artery while actively engaged in flood relief operations.

Farhan Ahmad, an official posted at Balloki Barrage, confirmed that the AC had been stationed at the Head Balloki Rest House and had been continuously supervising relief efforts in flood-affected areas for the past four days.

He suddenly collapsed on Sunday, and although immediate medical assistance was provided, he could not be revived. Pattoki is a tehsil of Kasur district, one of the regions hit hard by the ongoing floods.

Capacity building key to combating malnutrition

LAHORE (APP): Director General BISP Punjab Muhammad Nasir Khalily has said that through Nutrition Stabilization Centres (NSCs) and the capacity building of healthcare providers, every child should receive the care and support necessary to survive and thrive.

BISP spokesperson said on Sunday, the BISP DG expressed these views while addressing a training workshop organized in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Punjab Healthcare Department. The five-day programme focused on the Inpatient Management of Severe Acute Malnutrition.

Highlighting the Benazir Nashonuma Initiative, Khalily said it reflects the government's commitment to improving the health and nutrition of mothers and children across Punjab.

He stressed that malnutrition not only hampers children's growth but also restricts their future opportunities, adding that BISP, with WHO's support, will continue working to build a healthier and stronger generation.

The opening ceremony was attended by senior officials of BISP Punjab, the Specialized Healthcare Department, and Mayo Hospital Lahore while closing session, graced by the DG Health Punjab, Healthcare providers from 11 NSCs across Lahore, Kasur, and Sheikhupura joined the training.

Devastating floods causing delays on key routes

LAHORE (INP): Despite smooth movement of goods on motorways and highways, transporters have warned that devastating floods in Punjab are causing delays on other key routes.

The All Pakistan Goods Transport Alliance President, Nisar Hussain Jafri, said shipments from Karachi to Punjab and vice versa are facing delays of two to three days over the past three days.

Normally, goods including import and export consignments reach their destinations in two to three days.

He added that the

absence of diversion signs in flood-hit areas was forcing container trucks into dead-ends, wasting both time and fuel.

Executive Director of the Fertiliser Manufacturers of Pakistan Advisory Council (FMPAC), retired Brig Shershah Malik, said fertiliser shipments through flood-affected regions such as Sutlej, Ravi, and Chenab had been suspended.

He warned that if floods persist, fertiliser distribution and usage will be affected, especially once waters cross Multan and enter Sindh by September 6. However,

supplies via motorways and highways remain intact for now.

Vegetable and oil supplies under watch Haji Shahjehan, President of Falahi Anjuman Wholesale Vegetable Market, New Subzi Mandi, reported a decline in onion supplies from Balochistan and potato stocks from cold storage due to rains and floods.

Meanwhile, Oil Companies Advisory Council (OCAC) Secretary General, Syed Nazir Abbas Zaidi, said oil supplies to upcountry regions have so far remained unaffected.

Sindh govt committed to meet energy needs

LAHORE (APP): Sindh Energy Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah has said that addressing the energy requirements of the business community remains a top priority of the Sindh government.

Talking to a delegation led by Chaudhary Zahid Iqbal Arain, Chairman Local Councils Association Punjab, here on Sunday, the minister said Sindh, being rich in natural resources and renewable energy potential, is committed to strengthening inter-provincial cooperation to meet Pakistan's growing

power demands.

He noted that Sindh has taken the lead in wind and solar energy projects and is expanding transmission networks to ensure uninterrupted power supply to industries and commercial zones.

The minister emphasized that stable and affordable energy is critical for economic growth, industrial productivity, and job creation, especially at a time when the business community is facing high costs and power shortages.

He assured that Sindh is

open to joint ventures with Punjab's investors in renewable and conventional energy projects, paving the way for sustainable development.

The delegation appreciated Sindh's proactive approach, adding that energy cooperation between provinces would help strengthen the national economy.

The minister concluded that the Sindh government is determined to facilitate investors, resolve bottlenecks, and ensure uninterrupted power supply to boost regional trade and industrial expansion.



LAHORE: A vendor is selling fresh flower petals on the sidewalk with a plastic cover to protect himself from the rain and waiting for customers. —APP Photo

PHEC, Bargad host conference on university reforms

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Higher Education Commission (PHEC), in collaboration with youth development organization Bargad, convened the Vice Chancellors' Conference 2025 in Lahore.

The landmark event gathered more than 100 vice chancellors, rectors, policymakers, international experts, and civil society leaders to deliberate on reforms aimed at strengthening and sustaining the higher education sector in Punjab, said a press release issued here on Sunday.

The conference focused on five central themes: academic excellence, research and innovation, quality assurance, financial sustainability, and good governance.

In the inaugural session, Dr. Iqbal Ahmad Khan, Chairperson PHEC, and Sabiha Shaheen, Executive Director Bargad, emphasized the need to align higher education with global standards while prioritizing Pakistan's national development agenda.

Sardar Masood Khan, former Ambassador to the United States and China, chaired the first session on global perspectives and international collaboration.

International experts including Dr. Andreas Burkert (University of Kassel, Germany) and Prof. Raheel Nawaz (Staffordshire University, UK) underscored the importance of integrating artificial intelligence, data science, and climate resilience into university curricula by 2029.

A session on research and teaching innovation, chaired by former HEC Chairman Dr. Tariq Banuri, highlighted the urgency of strengthening research capacity and cultivating a culture of innovation across universities.

Shahnaz Wazir Ali, President SZABIST, presided over discussions on quality enhancement and institutional reforms, stressing the need for robust quality assurance systems.

Former HEC Chairman Prof. Dr.

Nizamuddin led deliberations on financial sustainability and governance, calling on universities to adopt modern governance models, secure financial independence, and accelerate digital transformation.

A special session on social cohesion and civic values, co-chaired by Sabiha Shaheen and Prof. Dr. Moed Yusuf, featured interventions by Prof. Dr. Bushra Mirza, Prof. Dr. Zaib-un-Nisa Hussain, and Dr. Saqib Mukhtar. Speakers highlighted the critical role of universities in fostering social responsibility, civic engagement, and national harmony.

In the concluding session, former FPSC Chairman Haseeb Athar urged greater investment in academic leadership and professional faculty development. The conference culminated with the release of a Joint Declaration on Higher Education Reforms 2025, outlining strategic recommendations to guide the future of higher education in Punjab.



PESHAWAR: Adviser to Chief Minister on Information, Barrister Said talking to media.

Zahid inaugurates tree plantation drive

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Adviser to Chief Minister on Tourism and Culture, Zahid Chanzeb, Launches Tree Plantation Drive in Galiyat. Adviser to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Tourism and Culture, Mr. Zahid Chanzeb, formally inaugurated a tree plantation campaign in Galiyat, aimed at addressing the challenges posed by climate change and promoting environmental sustainability in the province.

ceremony. Mr. Chanzeb stated that tree plantation is a highly effective method to counter the adverse effects of climate change. He highlighted that in recent years, climate-induced disasters-particularly floods-have caused widespread destruction across the province and the country, leading to significant loss of life, damage to property, and disruption to the economy, agriculture, and infrastructure.

Mr. Chanzeb noted that this campaign is part of the ongoing implementation of former Prime Minister

Imran Khan's vision of the "Billion Tree Tsunami", and represents a renewed commitment to preserving and restoring the environment for future generations.

A special ceremony was organized to mark the beginning of the campaign, where the importance of ecological preservation and sustainable development was emphasized. Participants discussed the critical role of forestation in maintaining environmental balance, reducing air pollution, and improving regional greenery.

In line with the direc-

tives of Chief Minister, the campaign includes plans to plant an additional 20,000 saplings in the coming days. This initiative is a practical step towards improving the province's environmental health and enhancing resilience against the growing threat of climate change.

The government remains committed to undertaking tangible measures for environmental protection and will continue its efforts to promote awareness and active participation in afforestation campaigns across the province.

Restoration of roads, markets initiated

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Communication and Works, Muhammad Sohail Afridi, visited the flood-affected Pak-Afghan Highway and Ali Masjid Bazaar in Katta Kushta area of District Khyber along with officials of the concerned department, wherein he reviewed the affected sites and also met with the local people.

Muhammad Sohail Afridi stated that the recent heavy rains and flash floods have damaged roads, bridges, and markets in Bara, Jamrud, and Landi Kotal, which has disrupted the mobility of the local population and hampered business activities. He said the provincial government will not leave the people alone in this difficult time, and restoration work in the affected areas has already been initiated on a priority basis.

IAP, PSX organize IPO conference

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Industrialists' Association Peshawar (IAP) in collaboration with Pakistan Stock Exchange Limited (PSX) and SECP organized an IPO Roundtable Conference at IAP office here the other day. The event was hosted by FF Steel Limited. The conference was attended by IAP President Ayub Zakori, Senior Vice President Haris Mufiti, Vice President Farhad Asfandiyar, Senator Nauman Wazir, Adeel Rauf, Malik Niazi Ahmed, Zarak Khan Khattak, Subhi Zia, Sajjad Zaheer, Saad Khan Zahid, Saeed Ullah, Mian Rahimdad Khan, Shoukat Hayat, Adnan Nasir, Taimoor Ahmad, Asfandiyar Shahid, Momin Saeed, Mohsin Saeed, Ismail Mohmand, Fayaz Jarral, Saad Riaz, and Murraza Hassan. A special participation was also done by Akif Saeed, Chairman, SECP, through Zoom, while Farrukh Sabzwari - MD & CEO, Pakistan Stock Exchange Limited (PSX), Syed Ahmad Abbas - Chief Listing Officer, PSX, Muhammad Farid Alam - CEO, AKD Securities Ltd, Sajjad Ali - Additional Director/HOD PMADD, SECP, Khawaja Ahammad Masood - Head of IPO & REIT Wing PMADD, SECP, Hamza Rehan - AVP Investment Banking, Arif Habib Limited, Omar Salah - MD Investment Banking, K-Trade Securities, Syed Imran Rizvi - Head of Investor Relations, Fauji Fertilizer Company Limited, Haider Ali - Section Manager IR, Fauji Fertilizer Company Limited, and Abdur Rehman - CFO & Company Secretary, BF Biosciences Limited, were also present on the occasion.

From ashes to order: Pakistan Army's triumph in rebuilding Kurram

Nabeeha Fajar Javed

FROM ashes to revival, when chaos engulfed Kurram and years of PTI's failed governance stood exposed, it was the Pakistan Army that turned despair into determination, rebuilding not just a bazaar, but the soul of a wounded region.

On November 21, 2024, Kurram district was plunged into chaos when a civilian convoy en route to Parachinar was brutally attacked, causing devastating human and material losses. The tragic event triggered public outrage, culminating in the torching of Bagan Bazaar, once a vital hub of commerce and community life.

The destruction went beyond physical infrastructure. It reflected the deeper, long-festering wounds of neglect, insecurity, and administrative failure. For over 13 years, under PTI's governance, the region suffered from poor service delivery, hollow promises of development, and an alarming lack of crisis management capacity.

Therefore, in moments when strong political leadership was most needed, the civilian administration remained absent, fragmented, or ineffective. What happened in Kurram was not an isolated breakdown it was the inevitable result of over a decade of governance decay.

But where the civilian leadership faltered, the Pakistan Army stepped in, not just to restore order but to rebuild confidence. In the immediate aftermath of the attack, the Army led with swift damage assessments, closely coordinated with local elders and the district administration, and rolled out a comprehensive, multi-phase reconstruction plan.

Their response was not reactive; it was strategic, people-centered, and executed with military precision.

This marked the beginning of a transformative chapter. The Army's approach went beyond security operations, it focused on winning hearts and minds by delivering real, visible change.

On May 16, 2025, the rehabilitation of Bagan Bazaar officially began. In just two months, the progress was nothing short of remarkable. 102 shops were reconstructed. The National Bank, NADRA office, waiting areas, schools, and madrasahs were rebuilt, roads were repaired, and street lights were installed. By July 22, 2025, a burned-down bazaar was not just standing again, it was thriving.

This reconstruction was more than physical, it was psychological. The presence of the Pakistan Army brought order where there was confusion, and hope where there had been despair. The community felt heard, supported, and safe something it hadn't experienced in over a decade under civilian governance.

As Sun Tzu wrote in The Art of War, "In the midst of chaos, there is also opportunity." The Army recognized that this moment of crisis was not just a threat, but a chance to rebuild not only infrastructure but win the people's hearts. And in doing so, they transformed a burned-out bazaar into a symbol of national resilience and restored dignity.

Today, the reconstruction of Bagan Bazaar stands as both a success story and a warning. It is a testament to what disciplined, compassionate leadership can achieve and a reminder of what neglect and political complacency can destroy. If the goal is to build a stronger, safer Pakistan, then responsibility must be matched with action, something the Pakistan Army has demonstrated, and the civilian leadership has long neglected.

Bilal Khattak:Peshawar's artist shines in the UK



F.P Report

PESHAWAR: Bilal Khattak, a multi-talented artist from Peshawar, has earned a prominent place in the United Kingdom through his artistic skills. With contributions in music, media, and technology, Bilal has introduced a unique identity by blending traditional Pashto music with modern tunes.

Bilal began his career with Khyber TV, where he rose to fame through programs like Zamung Khwakha and Khyber Beats Fusion. Apart from being a singer, music producer, videographer, editor, and TV host, he also

stands out for integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) into his creative projects—a rare skill in modern media production. He earned his Master's degree in Audio Production and Film from the University of Westminster, London. It is believed that he is the first individual from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa—and possibly from Pakistan—to achieve such an international qualification in this field. His success is seen as a milestone for aspiring artists and media professionals in the region. Fellow artists have praised Bilal Khattak's skills, call-

ing him a "cultural ambassador." According to his contemporary, the renowned singer and graphics designer Akbar Ali Khan, Bilal has proven through his hard work and vision that local music can be presented on a global scale. Other artists have described him as a "beacon of light" for the younger generation, saying his success is a true symbol of dedication and innovation.

Currently based in the UK, Bilal Khattak is working on various music and media projects that beautifully merge art, culture, and technology.

CPEC Phase II to boost technology, exports: Secretary Industries

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial Secretary of Industries, Commerce, and Technical Education, Masood Ahmad has said that in the second phase of CPEC, the transformation of technology will not only reduce production costs but will also earn Pakistan valuable foreign exchange through exports to Afghanistan and Central Asian countries.

Plans for a cargo train from Kohat to Afghanistan and Central Asian countries are currently under review.

He expressed these views during a media talk on the occasion of his visit to the China Window, the Chinese Cultural Center established in Peshawar. The Secretary of

Industries toured various galleries of China Window, signed the Friendship Wall, and recorded his impressions in the guest book, describing Pakistan-China friendship as everlasting.

Masood Ahmad stated that establishing industries in the province through a one-window operation is the government's top priority. Legislation is underway, and very soon, after amendments in the Provincial Assembly Act, industrialists will be provided one-window facilities.

He added that following the visit of the Chinese Foreign Minister to Pakistan and his meetings with senior leadership, it is expected that not only will

law and order improve in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, but investors from China and around the world will also come to invest in the province.

In response to a question, the Provincial Secretary said that the perception that factories in the province closed due to the provincial government is incorrect. There are multiple reasons for factory closures, which are being reviewed. However, in the future, while Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's importance for trade will increase, industrialists must also demonstrate integrity in trade.

Masood Ahmad described the CPEC project as vital for the national economy and expressed

hope that in the second phase, not only will factories be set up in the Rashakai Special Economic Zone of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, but employment opportunities will also be created.

He further stated that if the train from Kohat to Afghanistan and Central Asian states starts, it will significantly boost Pakistan's economy. Work on this project has already begun. Masood Ahmad described the Pakistan-China Friendship Center, China Window, as a state-of-the-art facility, stating that it plays an extremely positive and constructive role in promoting people-to-people contacts between the two countries.

Fading grandeur: Wazirbagh's Mughal majesty lost in neglect

PESHAWAR (APP): Once resonant with laughter, birdsong, and the scent of wet earth during the monsoon, Peshawar's historic Mughal era Wazirbagh garden now stand eerily silent, which are ghosts of a greener past, fading under the weight of neglect, urban encroachment, and environmental degradation.

Historical gardens like Wazir Bagh, Shalimar Garden, and Jinnah Park, which were once the emerald heartbeats of Peshawar, are now pale shadows of their former selves due to improper upkeep.

The towering pipal, siris and shisham trees that offered cool respite during scorching summers to Peshawarites in Wazirbagh have been felled, taking with them the chorus of birds and the joy of shaded picnics especially during monsoon.

"I returned to my favorite Wazir Bagh after 20 years and was heartbroken after seeing its dying greenery and neglect," said



Riaz Khan, a retired government servant, his eyes welling with nostalgia as his grandchildren played hide-and-seek around him. Riaz Khan, who had spent golden days of his childhood at Wazirbagh said, "the dying greenery and loss of those thick pipal trees hurt me the most."

He recalled how, decades ago, the park was alive with butterflies and children playing beneath dense canopies so thick they created twilight even in broad daylight.

Senior citizens gathered under these canopy trees to

share stories, while families picnicked on lush lawns now worn and dusty. Today, he sighed, "only concrete, dying greenery and silence remain."

Once a favorite spot for morning joggers and weekend visitors, Wazirbagh also boasted fruit-bearing trees such as apricots, pomegranates, pears and vibrant flowerbeds that dazzled both locals and tourists.

Riaz Khan remembered how communities like the Shinwaris, Afridis, Mohmands, and Khattaks, along with foreign visitors, came here and converged

for relaxation and cultural gatherings.

But over time, creeping encroachment and poor maintenance stripped these gardens of its soul. Shrinking flowerbeds, broken benches, and withered plants now tell a story of neglect and desertion.

The area of historical Jinnah Park was also shortened after construction of illplanned BRT corridor near Firdus square, depriving Peshawarties of much needed recreation.

"Wazir Bagh was the identity of Peshawar," Riaz told APP, adding he also visited a number of times with friends during student life and played under its tall pipal trees which is no more.

Calling on the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to restore the park to its former glory, he advocated for replanting native trees and even proposed a nominal entry fee to curb misuse and protect the space besides preventing it from further deterioration.

Promotion of S&T vital in KP: Governor

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi held a meeting with Chairman Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF), Professor Dr. Muhammad Akmal, to discuss ongoing and future projects of the foundation.

During the meeting, Dr. Akmal briefed the Governor on PSF's initiatives for the promotion of science and technology across the country.

He said the foundation is

working to advance education in order to equip students with modern-day knowledge and skills.

He highlighted that providing scientific and technical education to students from grades 7 to 12 is among the top priorities of PSF, enabling the younger generation to gain practical expertise and play a vital role in the country's development.

He emphasized that educational institutions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

should actively prepare to benefit from these initiatives. Governor Faisal Karim Kundi appreciated the efforts of PSF, saying that exposing youth to modern scientific knowledge is the need of the hour.

He said that if universities and educational institutions of the province take full advantage of PSF's projects, not only will the quality of education improve, but the younger generation will also emerge as a strong force for national progress

and prosperity.

Meanwhile, social activist and head of a developmental organization, Faheem Khan Miankhel, called on Governor Faisal Karim Kundi at the Governor's House. During the meeting, matters relating to the rehabilitation of flood-affected people, particularly relief activities in Dera Ismail Khan, were discussed in detail.

Governor Kundi appreciated the role of Pakistan Red Crescent Society

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, describing its efforts in flood-hit areas as exemplary.

He said the provincial chapter of the Red Crescent is actively working to deliver aid received from international donors to deserving families.

Similarly, President Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Abbottabad Region and renowned cricketer, Amir Nawab, called on Governor Faisal Karim Kundi.



PESHAWAR: A street child taking rest at roadside in Khyber Bazaar. Such children can be seen in every nook and corner in the City. — INP photo



In brief

Repatriation of Afghans resumes

LANDIKOTAL (APP): The process of repatriating Afghan nationals has once again resumed through the holding camp established in Landi Kotal. Additional Deputy Commissioner (Relief) Irshad Ali, accompanied by Assistant Commissioner Jamrud Fahad Zia and Additional Assistant Commissioner Naseemullah Shah, visited the Bhagiyari check post in Jamrud to review the situation on Sunday. During the visit, officials assessed the reopening of movement on the Pak-Afghan Highway, which had been affected by recent heavy rains and road blockages. Under the supervision of the Assistant Commissioner Jamrud, staff has been deployed to facilitate the smooth passage of families returning to the neighboring country.

Ph.D thesis defended

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Hayat Ullah Yousafzai, a PhD Scholar, at the Department of Sociology, University of Malakand, has successfully defended his doctoral dissertation, marking a significant academic achievement for the institution. The public defense in this regard, was held under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Arab Naz, Dean Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Malakand. The distinguished external examiners included Prof. Dr. Muhammad Bilal from the Department of Anthropology, Fatima Jinnah Women University (FJWU) Rawalpindi and Dr. Bushra Hassan Jan from the Department of Sociology, Agriculture University Peshawar. It is merit to mentioned that Hayat Ullah Yousafzai has been serving as Registrar of the University of Malakand, contributing both academically and administratively to the university.

Governor condoles

SWABI (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Sunday visited the residence of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader Gohar Inqilabi in Swabi and offered fateha on the demise of his brother. He prayed for the departed soul and conveyed his heartfelt sympathies to the bereaved family. Later, the Governor visited Razar tehsil where he met the family of late PPP activist Mir Wali Khan. He offered condolences to the deceased's son and relatives and prayed for the elevation of the departed soul. Speaking on the occasion, Governor Kundi said that Mir Wali Khan was a true PPP loyalist whose sacrifices and unwavering commitment to the party would always be remembered. He added that his lifelong devotion and struggle would remain a guiding light for other workers.

Three newborns die

WAZIRABAD (INP): Three newborns died as timely medical aid could not be provided to their mother in flood-affected Wazirabad. Life in Wazirabad has been severely disrupted due to the floods, with roads submerged in water, causing major transportation difficulties. According to rescue officials, the three newborns — two daughters and one son — passed away because the mother could not receive medical assistance on time due to the floodwater. The affected mother stated that the local hospital was surrounded by floodwater, and if medical aid had arrived promptly, her children could have been saved.

Seerat-un-Nabi Conference (PBUH) held in Kohat

F.P. Report

KOHAT: A grand Seerat-un-Nabi (PBUH) Conference was held at the District Council Hall KDA Kohat under the chairmanship of the Commissioner Kohat Division, Syed Motasim Billah Shah, as part of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government's "Ashra Rahmatul-lil-Aalameen (PBUH)" Celebrations.

Deputy Commissioner Kohat Rahimullah Mehsud, Pir Habibullah Shah of Ghamkol Sharif, Additional Deputy Commissioner (G) Hamid Iqbal, assistant commissioners, District Khatib Mufti Shafiullah, officials of the Education department, students from public and private institutions and seminaries, religious scholars, ulema and other dignitaries attended the event in large numbers. Qirat and Naat competitions were held among the students, with prizes distributed to those who performed exceptionally.

Speakers highlighted that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) came as a mercy for all mankind and that his life exemplifies brotherhood, equality, justice, prosperity and peace. They stressed the need to acquaint the younger generation with the Holy Prophet's (PBUH) teachings through more such events.

Commissioner Kohat

said that following the Holy Prophet's (PBUH) example leads to success in this world and the hereafter adding that Islam is a religion of peace, brotherhood, and justice, with no space for terrorism or injustice.

Deputy Commissioner Kohat said that the life of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) provides solutions to contemporary challenges and can ensure social harmony and development.

At the end, participants pledged to model their lives on the Holy Prophet's (PBUH) teachings. Successful students at the district level will now compete at the divisional stage, alongside winners from Hangu, Karak, Orakzai and Kurram districts.

Meanwhile, the government buildings, offices, main bazaars and entry and the exit points of the city have been decorated and illuminated on this Holy occasion, in line with the provincial government directions.

District level Qirat and Naat competition held

In line with the vision of the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the District Administration has the special directions of the Deputy Commissioner Hangu, Gohar Zaman Wazir, organized district-level Qirat and Naat competitions at the University Campus Hall, Hangu, as part of the Rahmatul-lil-Aalameen (PBUH) Conference 2025.

A large number of stu-

dents from various public and private schools as well as religious seminaries of the District Hangu participated in the spiritually enriching event. The participants beautifully recited verses from the Holy Quran and presented Naat in praise of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), which were highly appreciated by the audience.

The ceremony was attended by the Additional Assistant Commissioner (R) Hangu, district officers of the Education Department, teachers, the District Khatib, religious scholars and officials of the district administration.

Addressing the gathering, the speakers highlighted that such competitions play a vital role in the intellectual and spiritual development of the students and inspire the younger generation to lead their lives in the light of the teachings of the Holy Prophet. Students who got 1st, 2nd and 3rd positions were awarded certificates and prizes.

The district administration congratulated the participants and announced that more academic, literary and religious activities will continue under the umbrella of the Rahmatul-lil-Aalameen (PBUH) Conference.

The ceremony concluded with special prayers for the security, progress and prosperity of Pakistan, the unity of the Muslim Ummah and global peace.



KOHAT: Commissioner Kohat Division, Syed Motasim Billah Shah along with Deputy Commissioner Kohat Rahimullah Mehsud in a group photo with participants of Seerat-un-Nabi (PBUH) Conference.

Karak police conducts full scale operation

Shafiuddin Shafqi

KARAK: To maintain law and order, protect the lives and property of the people and root out elements hostile to the country and nation, Karak Police conducted a full-scale search and strike operation on the instructions of Regional Police Officer Kohat Region Abbas Majeed Khan Marwat and District Police Officer Karak Shabbaz Elahi. The operation was led by SP Investigation Muhammad Ashfaq Khan, in which DSP Javed Hussain, SHO Umar Nawaz Khan of Banda Police Station, SHO Jamshed Khan, SHO Asghar Khan, Rescue 15 Squad, DSB and CTD teams and other police personnel participated. The heavy contingent of police was equipped with modern small arms, drones and binoculars, with the help of which the areas of Mamikhel, Shakarkhel and other villages and mountain ranges were meticulously searched. At the same time, a thorough search operation was also carried out in the adjoining peaks and upper parts of the mountainous areas of Ghor Zandi and Dharmlok in Kohat district.

This operation by the Karak police is clear evidence that the writ of the state will be maintained at all times and no mischievous or anti-national element will be given a chance to disrupt the peace.

Meanwhile, annual Khatm-e-Nabuwat Conference held in Lawagar Park, thousands of children of Islam participated.

The annual World Conference on the Protection of the Finality of the Prophethood was held in Lawagar Park under the auspices of Maulana Abdul Raziq, the president of the conference. In which thousands of children of Islam, including distinguished scholars and speakers from all over Pakhtunkhwa, participated. Among the distinguished guests were Mufti Fazal Ghafoor, Qari Ikram-ul-Haq, Muhammad Arshad Madani, Maulana Hafiz Ibn-e-Amin, Mufti Ajmal Khan, Abdul Raziq, and a large number of scholars.

The venue built for the participants in Lawagar Park was insufficient because students, the general public, and people of all schools of thought participated from all over Karak, which reduced the limited space in Lawagar Park and the children of Islam sat in the scorching sun listening to the speeches of their distinguished scholars, which was an enviable sight.

Polio immunization drive from today

QUETTA (APP): The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Balochistan on Sunday has announced the launch of a week-long immunization campaign beginning September 1 (Monday).

The week-long initiative aims to vaccinate more than 2.179 million children against polio under the age of five across 26 districts of the province.

EOC Coordinator Inam-ul-Haq described the campaign as a vital step in the ongoing fight against the poliovirus, which is still present in the environmental samples of the province.

The campaign will span the districts including Quetta, Pishin, Killa Abdullah, Chaman, Barkhan, Dera Bugti, Hub, Jaffarabad, Jhal Magsi, Kalat, Khuzdar, Killa Saifullah, Loralai, Mastung, Nushki, Naseerabad, Sherani, Sibi, Sohbatpur, Usta Muhammad, Zhob,

Musakhail, Chaghi, Duki, Lasbela, and Ziarat.

During the campaign a total of 8,933 teams will be mobilized, including 652 fixed teams at health facilities and public locations and 459 transit teams stationed at bus stops and entry/exit points.

Thousands of door-to-door teams reaching homes in both urban and remote rural areas of the province.

Inam-ul-Haq confirmed that all logistical and operational preparations have been completed, ensuring full coverage across the province.

He urged parents to ensure their children receive the anti-polio drops, warning that failure to vaccinate could result in lifelong disability.

"Even if a single child remains unvaccinated, it puts all children at risk," he emphasized.

Inam-ul-Haq also called on civil society, educators, and religious leaders to

actively promote awareness and encourage families to participate.

In addition to anti-polio drops, Inam-ul-Haq highlighted the importance of routine immunization, which protects children from 12 life-threatening diseases including measles, tuberculosis, hepatitis B, and diphtheria. Families are encouraged to visit nearby health centers and ensure their children complete their vaccination schedules.

"Protecting the health of our children is a shared responsibility," he added.

This campaign is part of Pakistan's ongoing commitment to eradicate polio, supported by global health partners including WHO, UNICEF, and Gavi. While progress has been made, transmission pockets remain in parts of Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Sindh, requiring sustained efforts.

Rahmatul Lil Alameen (PBUH) Conference held in Bannu

BANNU (APP): The Divisional Rahmatul Lil Alameen Conference was held at the Auditorium Hall Bannu, attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner Umer Khitab along with officials, students, and scholars.

As part of the conference, Qirat and Naat competitions were organized in which contestants from across the division partici-

pated with great enthusiasm.

At the conclusion of the event, prizes and certificates were distributed among the winners by the chief guest ADC Umer Khitab.

Speaking on the occasion, the Additional Deputy Commissioner highlighted the importance of holding such spiritual and educational gatherings, saying that they pro-

mote love, peace, and respect for the teachings of the Holy Prophet (PBUH).

According to the Provincial Government's schedule, the winners of the divisional-level contests will now represent Bannu division in the upcoming provincial-level competitions.

The event concluded with prayers for peace, unity, and prosperity of the country.

Defence minister visits flooded areas

SIALKOT (APP): Federal Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif visited the flood-affected areas of Sialkot on Sunday, where he conducted a detailed inspection of Naullah Aik, a key water channel passing through the city.

During the visit, Khawaja Asif interacted with local residents and made it clear that illegal encroachments on waterways will not be tolerated under any circumstances. He directed the district administration to immediately remove all such encroachments to restore the natural flow of water and reduce the risk of urban flooding.

The minister empha-

sized that strict and effective measures are essential to safeguard citizens and to prevent similar flooding incidents in the future.

Member of the Provincial Assembly (MPA) Muhammad Manshaullah Butt also accompanied the minister during the visit.



CHINIOT: Rescue 1122 personnel evacuate residents and their animals from flood-hit areas to safer locations after the River Chenab overflowed.

Awareness session inspires cadets to pursue medical studies abroad

Ex-cadet Fizza Ali Tunio shares her journey, guiding young cadets on admissions, opportunities

F.P. Report

NAWABSHAH: The Bakhtawar Cadet College for Girls (BCCG) Nawabshah recently hosted an inspiring awareness session on pursuing medical education abroad at the International University Kyrgyzstan, International School of Medicine (IUK-ISM). The session aimed to guide aspiring cadets who are passionate about choosing medicine as their career path.

The keynote speaker, Fizza Ali Tunio, a proud ex-cadet of BCCG and current MBBS student at IUK-ISM Kyrgyzstan, shared her first-hand experience of applying, studying, and thriving at the university. Drawing from her personal journey, she provided detailed insights on the

admission process, eligibility requirements, documentation, visa formalities, and student life in Bishkek.

Encouraging cadets, Ms. Tunio remarked: "Failure is not the end result-failure is part of learning." She urged students to remain focused, informed, and determined while pursuing their dreams of becoming doctors.

Highlighting the unique strengths of IUK-ISM, she said:

"The university is PMDC-approved and among the top-ranked foreign medical universities."

"It offers separate secure hostels for boys and girls, equipped with modern surveillance and 24/7 Wi-Fi facilities."

"Students enjoy fresh, halal, and delicious meals three times a day, making Pakistani students feel at

home.

"The environment rewards hardworking and brilliant students, helping them excel academically."

She also informed that IUK-ISM has now established its dedicated regional office in Karachi (DHA), headed by Dr. Ali Gulab Tunio, which exclusively assists Pakistani students. Importantly, all admission services are offered free of charge.

As a special gesture for Bakhtawar cadets, Ms. Tunio unveiled an exclusive scholarship package: students from BCCG choosing IUK-ISM will be offered free air travel and mess services.

The event concluded with a heartfelt souvenir exchange between Dr. Farida Shaikh, Principal of BCCG, senior faculty mem-



bers, and Ms. Tunio, accompanied by her proud parents, Mr. & Mrs Ali

Gulab Tunio. The interactive Q&A session allowed cadets to clarify queries on

expenses, accommodation, curriculum, and career prospects, leaving them

motivated and well-informed about their future possibilities.



India committed to improving ties with China, Modi tells Xi

TIANJIN, China, Aug 31 (Reuters) - Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said New Delhi was committed to improving ties with China in a key meeting with President Xi Jinping on Sunday, as both leaders discussed the need to expand trade and investment ties against the backdrop of U.S. tariffs.

Modi is in China for the first time in seven years to attend a two-day meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, along with Russian President Vladimir Putin and other leaders from Central, South and Southeast Asia and the Middle East, in a show of Global South solidarity.

The meeting comes days after Washington imposed 50% tariffs on Indian goods in response to New Delhi's purchase of Russian oil, a move analysts say has pushed Modi and Xi to stand against Western pressures.

Modi said India and China pursued strategic autonomy, and their ties should not be seen through the lens of a third country, according to an Indian foreign ministry readout of the meeting.

Modi emphasised reducing India's trade deficit with China and expanding cooperation on regional and global issues, including terrorism and fair trade practices, the ministry added.

The leaders also discussed expanding common ground on bilateral, regional, and global issues, and challenges like terrorism and fair trade in multilateral platforms, the Indian statement said.

"We are committed to progressing our relations based on mutual respect, trust and sensitivities," Modi told Xi during the meeting on the

sidelines of the summit, according to a video posted on his official X account.

At a reception for the summit Xi told leaders that the SCO now bears "greater responsibilities" for safeguarding regional peace and stability, and for boosting development of various countries, Chinese state news agency Xinhua reported on Sunday.

Modi said an atmosphere of "peace and stability" has been created on their disputed Himalayan border, the site of a prolonged military standoff after deadly troop clashes in 2020, which froze most areas of cooperation between the nuclear-armed strategic rivals.

He added that an agreement had been reached between both nations regarding border management, without giving details. The neighbours share a 3,800 km (2,400 miles) border that is poorly demarcated and has been disputed since the 1950s.

"We must ... not let the border issue define the overall China-India relationship," Xinhua reported Xi as saying. China-India ties could be "stable and far-reaching" if both sides focused on viewing each other as partners instead of rivals, Xi added. Both leaders had a breakthrough meeting in Russia last year after reaching a border patrol agreement, setting off a tentative thaw in ties that has accelerated in recent weeks as New Delhi seeks to hedge against renewed tariff threats from Washington.

Direct flights between both nations, which have been suspended since 2020, are being resumed, Modi added, without providing a timeframe. China had agreed to lift export curbs on rare earths, fertilisers and

tunnel boring machines this month during a key visit to India by China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

China opposes Washington's steep tariffs on India and will "firmly stand with India," Chinese Ambassador to India Xu Feihong said this month.

For decades, Washington painstakingly cultivated ties with New Delhi in the hope that it would act as a regional counterweight to Beijing.

In recent months, China has allowed Indian pilgrims to visit Hindu and Buddhist sites in Tibet, and both countries have lifted reciprocal tourist visa restrictions.

"Both India and China are engaged in what is likely to be a lengthy and fraught process of defining a new equilibrium in the relationship," said Manoj Kewalramani, a Sino-Indian relations expert at the Takshashila Institution think tank in Bengaluru.

However, other long-term irritants remain in the relationship.

China is India's largest bilateral trade partner, but the long-running trade deficit - a persistent source of frustration for Indian officials - reached a record \$99.2 billion this year. Meanwhile, a planned Chinese mega-dam in Tibet has sparked fears of mass water diversion that could reduce water flows on the major Brahmaputra River by up to 85% in the dry season, according to Indian government estimates.

India also hosts the Dalai Lama, the exiled Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leader whom Beijing views as a dangerous separatist influence. India's arch-rival Pakistan also benefits from staunch Chinese economic, diplomatic and military support.



BEIJING: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif visits the National Facility for Earthquake Engineering Simulation during his visit of Tianjib University in China.

Macron's decision to recognize a Palestinian state in September angers Israel and the US

PARIS (AP) - French President Emmanuel Macron's decision to recognize a Palestinian state, prompting similar moves from other Western nations, angered Israel and its U.S. ally by putting a two-state solution back at the heart of diplomatic efforts to end the devastating war in Gaza.

In a letter to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu last week, Macron wrote that "our determination to see the Palestinian people have their own state is rooted in our conviction that lasting peace is essential to the security of the state of Israel."

France's diplomatic efforts "stem from our outrage at the appalling humanitarian disaster in Gaza, for which there can be no justification," Macron added. Israel on Friday declared Gaza's largest city a combat zone as the death toll surpassed 63,000 Palestinians, according to the territory's Health Ministry, since the war started on Oct. 7, 2023, with a Hamas-led attack on Israel.

France, the U.K., Canada, Australia and Malta have said they would formalize their pledge during the annual gathering of world leaders at the U.N. General Assembly, which starts Sept. 23. Some others, including New Zealand, Finland and Portugal, are considering a similar move.

Netanyahu rejects Palestinian statehood and plans to expand the military offensive in Gaza.

Macron's letter comes after Netanyahu accused him of "fueling" the "anti-semitism fire" with his call for a Palestinian state, remarks Macron denounced as "abject."

Last week, U.S. Ambassador to France Charles Kushner also wrote a letter arguing that "gestures toward recognition of a Palestinian state embolden extremists, fuel violence and endanger Jewish life in France." Kushner was summoned by the French foreign ministry and represented in his absence by his deputy.

Such angry reaction "shows that symbols matter," said geopolitics expert Pascal Boniface, director of the Paris-based Institute for International and Strategic Relations.

"There is some kind of race against time between the diplomatic path, with the two-state solution back at the heart of the debate, and the situation on the ground (in Gaza), which is every day making this two-state solution a little more complicated or impossible," Boniface said.

Boniface said some supporters of a two-state solution showed disappointment at leaders' decision to wait until September to officially recognize a Palestinian state, because they "fear that recognition will come when Gaza has even more become a graveyard."

Macron and other international leaders have urged Israel to stop its offensive in the besieged territory, where most of its over 2 million residents are displaced, neighborhoods lie in ruins and a famine has been declared in Gaza City.

The occupation of Gaza, the forced displacement of Palestinians, their reduction to starvation ... will never bring victory to Israel," Macron wrote in his letter to Netanyahu. "On the contrary, they will reinforce the isolation of your country, fuel those who find pretext for anti-semitism, and endanger Jewish communities around the world."

More than 140 countries already recognize a Palestinian state in what is a mostly symbolic move.

"The world will be the same the day after," said Muhammad Shehadeh, a Gaza political analyst and visiting fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations think tank.

Still, it adds diplomatic pressure on Israel, he stressed. Heavyweight Western nations demonstrating strong support for a two-state solution "shatters the illusion that Netanyahu is trying to sell to the Israelis and to the international community that mass population transfer or depopulation is the only way to solve the Palestinian issue," Shehadeh said.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot insisted this week that diplomatic efforts led by France and Saudi Arabia also resulted, for the first time, in highly significant condemnation of the Hamas attacks against civilians by all 22 members of the Arab League.

During a July conference

co-hosted by France and Saudi Arabia at the U.N., Arab League nations agreed in their New York Declaration that "Hamas must end its rule in Gaza and hand over its weapons to the Palestinian Authority."

Shehadeh expects the move to strengthen the camp of moderate Palestinians, including by demonstrating to the public that the Palestinian Authority is gaining weight in negotiations.

He said it may weaken the most violent leadership in Hamas by "creating a diplomatic track that provides Palestinians with an alternative to violence, sending a message that diplomatic engagement will pay off and will lead to a Palestinian state, whereas violence will not take you anywhere."

The Palestinian Authority hopes to establish an independent state in the West Bank, east Jerusalem and Gaza — areas captured by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war. Hamas drove out the PA when it seized Gaza in 2007, a year after winning Palestinian parliamentary elections. After the Hamas takeover of Gaza, the PA was left with administering semiautonomous pockets of the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Though European leaders have put a reformed Palestinian Authority at the heart of their statehood push, it remains deeply unpopular among Palestinians, who see it as corrupt and unable to govern effectively.

UAE-based Afghan business leaders join hands

Asif Ali Yousafzai

DUBAI: The Balkh Chamber of Commerce and Investment organized a special event in Dubai to honor Afghan entrepreneurs residing in the United Arab Emirates. The ceremony, held at a local hotel, was attended by Haji Obaidullah Sader Khaili, Chairman of the Afghan Business Council UAE; Abdul Rahman Fida, Afghanistan's Consul General in Dubai; Ahmad Bilal Totakhail, representative of the Ministry of Commerce; Tawakal Ahmadyar, Chairman of Ahmadyar Developments; and several representatives of the Afghan and international business community.

Addressing the gathering, Haji Obaidullah Sader Khaili highlighted that Afghanistan, with its 34 provinces, is entering a new era of opportunities. He announced that the Frontline Group of Companies has launched the "New City Housing Project" just seven kilometers from Mazar-e-Sharif, with an investment of USD 70 million. The company has already completed over 170 projects nationwide. Calling it the first large-

scale housing project in Afghanistan's history, Sader Khaili emphasized the urgent need to provide housing and employment for the millions of returning Afghan refugees. According to him, 2.5 million Afghans have already returned from Pakistan and Iran, and the number could reach 6 million by the end of this year.

He congratulated the Frontline Group and the Balkh Chamber of Commerce and urged the swift implementation of the Hairatan Free Zone Law, similar to Uzbekistan's free zone model, to generate further employment opportunities.

Haji Sader Khaili highlighted the importance of establishing the Hairatan Free Zone in Balkh. He stated that while Uzbekistan already operates a successful free zone, Afghanistan's Hairatan Free Zone is still under development.

He emphasized that work on the related law is ongoing and, once implemented, it will create new employment and business opportunities for the region.

Tawakal Ahmadyar, Chairman of Ahmadyar

Developments, described Balkh province as a strategic gateway. He noted that the Hairatan Dry Port, located near Mazar-e-Sharif, connects Afghanistan to Central Asia and global markets, opening new avenues for economic growth.

Afghanistan's Consul General in Dubai, Abdul Rahman Fida, remarked that despite decades of war, the country has experienced relative peace over the past four years.

Afghan entrepreneurs who have been conducting business abroad for decades are now returning home to invest.

He praised Balkh province for its higher literacy rates and strong regional connectivity, and added that Afghanistan's annual trade with Pakistan, once exceeding USD 7 billion, has declined due to security restrictions, but future trade with neighboring countries is expected to improve.

The Ministry of Commerce's representative, Ahmad Bilal Totakhail, also attended the event. Consul General Fida announced that, alongside the Consulate, a representative from the Ministry of Commerce will now be per-

manently available in Dubai to facilitate Afghan traders and businesspeople.

The stage was conducted by the famous TV anchor and businessman, Sherullah, also known as Behroz Mehraabi, who served as the stage secretary.

In his concluding remarks, Haroon Qazi described Balkh province as the "backbone of Afghanistan's economic development." He stated that the New City Housing Project represents a beacon of hope for millions of returning Afghan refugees by offering housing, jobs, and a brighter future. He emphasized that Afghan entrepreneurs should contribute not only to profits but also to rebuilding the nation, creating opportunities for youth, and promoting employment.

Haroon Qazi & Khashmat Stanikzai expressed gratitude to his colleagues, particularly Haji Obaidullah Sader Khaili, Consul General Abdul Rahman Fida, Ahmad Bilal Totakhail, Tawakal Ahmadyar, and all distinguished guests.

The event concluded with a dignified dinner reception.

A German town hoped migration could turn its fortunes around

ALTENA, Germany (Reuters) - A decade ago, as Germany was grappling with an influx of more than a million migrants, the small town of Altena saw an opportunity to reverse years of population and economic decline.

The industrial town in Western Germany made national headlines in 2015 when it volunteered to take in 100 more migrants than required, becoming a model of Chancellor Angela Merkel's pledge: "Wir schaffen das" - "We can do this."

But while there have been benefits for both sides, three current and former town officials told Reuters migration wasn't a panacea.

With the help of residents who mobilized to support the newcomers, many found homes and started contributing to the local economy, they told Reuters. But some moved on to bigger cities, which offer more work and education opportunities.

Others struggled to overcome language and cultural barriers, adding to rising welfare costs in a town with an aging population, officials said.

Now some local residents complain that the number of refugees and asylum seekers is getting too high. Recent election results show growing support for the anti-immigration Alternative for Germany (AfD) party,

fuelled by frustration over rising living costs, strained public finances and crumbling infrastructure.

"The glass is half full and half empty," said Thomas Liebig, a migration researcher who contributed to an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report in 2018 on Altena's efforts to integrate refugees. "Many refugees found jobs, but social cohesion still lags behind."

Nestled amid scenic wooded hills, Altena has been an industrial hub since the middle ages.

The riverside town describes itself as the birthplace of wire production. But local ironworks struggled to stay competitive in recent decades, wiping out a third of its jobs, the former mayor, Andreas Hollstein, told Reuters. Only the heavily automated steel wire sector survived.

By 2015, Altena was one of the fastest dwindling towns in western Germany with a population of around 17,000, just over half what it was in the 1970s, according to the World Bank.

The reduced tax base hurt the town's finances, making it difficult to keep basic amenities open, officials said. Schools closed because there weren't enough students to fill the classrooms.

When Hollstein suggested taking in more refugees and asylum seekers than the town's allotment of 270 in

2015, there was broad support from local council members.

"Taking in families meant we could fill empty housing, reopen classrooms and bring new life to the town," said Anette Wesemann, Altena's integration commissioner. "It was a win-win."

The town had already absorbed waves of migrant workers, including Italians and Turks recruited in the 1960s to staff its factories. So locals were accustomed to living alongside neighbours with different cultures and languages, Hollstein said.

Each refugee family or individual was paired with a local "kuemmerner", or caregiver, to show them the ropes. Many residents volunteered to help, raising donations for care packages, furnishing homes for the new arrivals, accompanying them to medical appointments and helping with paperwork.

Leveraging the high vacancy rate, the town placed newcomers in apartments rather than a shelter. This helped integrate them into neighbourhoods, the OECD report said.

"For the children, we put dolls there," recalled Dorothee Isenbeck, 81, one of the original volunteers. "There was a group of elderly men who decorated the apartments so beautifully, so they felt they were welcome."

Data on the program is

sketchy. Officials said they did not track how many migrants have come since 2015 or how they fared.

But by 2024, roughly half of the 100 additional arrivals that year were still living in Altena, Wesemann said. Most of the rest had moved to bigger cities, while a few Iraqis decided to return home, she said.

Among those who stayed is Humam al-Ghuri, a 34-year-old Iraqi refugee who arrived by bus in October 2015. He said he had no idea what to expect, but the warm welcome eased his fears.

Lasting bonds were forged through the town's integration program. A translator introduced him to Ursula Panke, an 85-year-old retired nurse he refers to as his "omi", or grandmother.

Their friendship began when Gburi helped her set up an art exhibition. "He hung everything so precisely, so carefully," she recalled, smiling.

She became a mentor, encouraging him to try different vocational courses until he found his calling. He now works as a nurse himself at a nearby orthopaedics and trauma clinic.

"In a big city, you're just a number. Here, people know me. Uschi is my family," Gburi said, using Panke's nickname. "Family doesn't mean blood — it's the people who listen, who help, who stand by you."



DHAKA: A worker from Dhaka South City Corporation sprays pesticide to kill mosquitoes in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on Sunday. This year, 27,115 patients have been hospitalized with dengue in Bangladesh, and 105 people have died.

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Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

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Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001
Peshawar Fax: 091-5703687, Post Box No. 573
Email: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com
Lahore Office: 0335-4026284
Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com
Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253
Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com
Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907
Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com
USA and Canada Toll Free Number 1-800-5905747

Global economic crisis & climate change

Diamond-rich Botswana in Africa has run out of medical supplies in its public health system. President Diko Buma has declared a national emergency. The public health systems owe private suppliers \$17.5 million, and it has no money to pay.

The reason for the dire straits is that the US aid for its HIV programme, which is one-third of its national health budget, has been stopped by the Trump Administration as part of its ruthless pruning of public expenditure.

At the other end of the Atlantic Ocean, in oil-producing Venezuela in South America, Venezuelans are facing severe food shortages. Families are unable to buy protein-rich food for the children. They are not even able to buy the bare necessities to keep food on the table. Schools have asked parents not to send children to school if they had not had proper food.

Apart from growing malnutrition, children who have not had a proper meal are developing headaches. There are times when children go off to bed early to escape the pangs of hunger. The prices have gone up, and the American restrictions are affecting the economy.

The slowing global economy and its bleak consequences are showing up in different forms, affecting the daily lives of the people across the countries as can be seen from the examples of Botswana and Venezuela.

Meanwhile, South Africa, which will be hosting the 2025 G20 summit in November, has appointed a commission of experts headed by Nobel Economics Prize winner Joseph Stiglitz and comprising other experts to prepare a report on global inequalities. The report is to be ready by November when leaders of G20 countries meet in November.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, announcing the initiative, said people “see the impacts of rising food and energy prices, of debt, of trade wars, all driving this growing gap between the rich and the rest of the world, underlining progress and economic dynamism. A new oligarchy in our global economy is becoming apparent.”

The world is facing an economic crisis, but it is something that neither advanced economies nor the emerging economies are willing to admit. It seems that an admission that there is an economic crisis would mean an acceptance that the market economy, which has been the reigning ideology for more than four decades, is crumbling. Even the richest economy like the United States is in a panic mode, and President Donald Trump’s feverish tariff measures are a symptom of economic uncertainty. As no one wants to recognize the problem, it is evident that experts and leaders are flailing hands in their bid to find a way out of the economic impasse.

What is needed is for the experts and heads of countries of the world to come together and look for a solution. Intertwined with the economic and unequal wealth crisis is the deteriorating climate issues. The unusually intensive monsoon in India, Pakistan and Nepal has killed more people than ever, and the economic damage it has caused runs into billions of dollars.

There is a connection between economic stability and curbing greenhouse gas emissions. It is the rising global temperatures that is the cause behind the monsoon havoc. It becomes necessary to take mitigatory action with regard to climate change, and the investments in clean energy economies could help revive the stalled growth rates. A green economy is one way of ensuring equitable growth, which will keep the health of the planet as well as that of societies in good shape. But it needs courage and resolve to pursue a new economic path which protects natural resources and helps people to lead healthy and productive lives.

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From defense to disaster: Pak Army serving the nation in all domains

The scale of the 2025 floods, in terms of both human and economic impact, is one of the largest natural disasters in Pakistan’s recent history. Thousands of homes are destroyed, huge areas of farmland are submerged, livestock perished in large numbers, and critical infrastructure such as bridges, power lines, and water systems are collapsed under the force of the water. Amid this national disaster, the Army took the lead not only in immediate emergency relief but also in longer-term rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts. Engineers from the Army Corps of Engineers are dispatched to rebuild roads and restore essential connectivity in areas that had been isolated from the rest of the country. Field hospitals are established in flood-affected areas where civilian health services were non-functional. Medical teams are providing vaccinations, treating waterborne diseases, and offering maternal and child healthcare services to the displaced population. The Army’s logistical capabilities allowed for the smooth distribution of relief goods, preventing hoarding, price gouging, or chaos, which are often seen during such emergencies when civilian management is lacking.

The sincerity of the Pakistan Army in disaster operations lies not just in their operational efficiency, but in their empathetic and people-centered approach. Unlike contractors or outsourced responders, the Army personnel deployed during such operations do not treat this as a job—they treat it as a moral obligation. Repeatedly, pictures and videos have appeared showing soldiers carrying elderly people on their backs, comforting crying children, distributing food with their own hands, and sharing tents with displaced families. This connection with the people, built through decades of service during natural calamities, has created an unmatched level of trust between the Army and the citizens of Pakistan. The 2025 floods are no exception. Across the length and breadth of the country, civilians have welcomed Army units with open arms and have expressed deep gratitude for their presence. Social media is inundated with videos and posts praising the efforts of the soldiers, and countless eyewitnesses have testified to the selflessness and professionalism of the Army’s disaster response teams.

What further emphasizes the Army’s unique role is the contrast with the performance of many civilian institutions during the same disaster. While some provincial and local government officials are absent, slow to react, or caught in administrative confusion, the Army is functioning with clarity and purpose. Political interference, corruption, and bureaucratic delays—long-standing issues in civilian disaster management—are not seen in the Army-led operations. Every unit has a clear command structure, defined responsibilities, and a mission-oriented mindset. Relief supplies are delivered where needed, camps are established without delay, and coordination

with other agencies, including international humanitarian organizations, is carried out smoothly. The Army is not working in isolation but also facilitating the efforts of NGOs and other stakeholders by providing security, transportation, and communication support. This coordination has ensured that aid is not duplicated in some areas while others are neglected, a common issue in disaster zones when civilian oversight is weak.

Beyond the physical rescue and relief work, the moral and psychological support provided by the Army during the recent floods cannot be underestimated. In times of natural disaster, panic and despair can spread as quickly as the waters themselves. The presence of uniformed, disciplined, and courageous

Abdul Basit Alvi

The recent floods have once again revealed the vulnerabilities in Pakistan’s civilian disaster management systems but have also reaffirmed the extraordinary role of the Pakistan Army as the guardian not only of borders but also of the people’s safety and dignity during times of natural catastrophe. From the earliest rescue missions to the ongoing rehabilitation efforts, the Army has led from the front with professionalism, compassion, and an unshakable sense of national duty. Much like the unforgettable response to the 2005 earthquake and the massive floods of the past, the Army’s performance in recent flood has cemented its place in the hearts of the Pakistani people. It is not just a military force—it is a symbol of unity, hope, and service in the face of adversity. As the nation continues to recover and rebuild, the gratitude of the people and the respect for the armed forces grow stronger, reinforcing the timeless bond between the Pakistan Army and the citizens it serves with such honor and dedication.

soldiers in flooded towns and villages has provided a vital sense of order and security. Looting, violence, and social unrest, which often afflict disaster-hit regions, are minimal due to the Army’s strong presence and community engagement. Soldiers didn’t just help physically—they have offered mental comfort and dignity to people who have lost everything. For a nation struggling with economic pressures, social divisions, and political instability, this solidarity is a much-needed source of national unity and resilience.

The Army’s work during the recent floods is also being widely recognized on the international stage. Foreign diplomats, international humanitarian agencies, and global media outlets have praised Pakistan’s disaster response—specifically the role of its military in ensuring swift, effective, and humane action. This not only helps in shaping a positive image of Pakistan globally but also builds

credibility that can facilitate international cooperation and aid in future crises. It proves that the country has institutions capable of delivering under pressure, and among those, the Pakistan Army stands at the forefront.

The recent floods have once again revealed the vulnerabilities in Pakistan’s civilian disaster management systems but have also reaffirmed the extraordinary role of the Pakistan Army as the guardian not only of borders but also of the people’s safety and dignity during times of natural catastrophe. From the earliest rescue missions to the ongoing rehabilitation efforts, the Army has led from the front with professionalism, compassion, and an unshakable sense of national duty. Much like the unforgettable response

Filed Marshal, relief operations are fully underway in the flood-affected regions. He highlighted the immense sacrifices made during these operations, revealing that sons of the nation have been martyred and others injured while serving their fellow citizens in these difficult times. He affirmed that the Army, along with all its officers and personnel, stands firmly beside the people during every crisis. No position on the working boundary has been abandoned, and anti-terror and anti-foreign elements operations continue with full force. He made it clear that no false power or malicious force can create division or weaken the bond between the Army and the nation. Whether it be floods, day or night challenges, times of war or peace, the Pakistan Army remains resolutely with the people.

According to the DG ISPR, specialized flood relief units have been deployed in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Azad Kashmir, including one engineer brigade, nineteen infantry units, and seven engineering units currently active in the field. Army helicopters have so far conducted twenty-six flights as part of ongoing relief efforts. In Gujranwala, six infantry units and two engineering units are on the ground, while in Bahawalpur and Bahawalnagar, four units have been kept on standby to respond as needed. Medical battalions and additional units have also been deployed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to assist in rescue and health services. Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry further noted that Army engineers, working in coordination with the civil administration, have successfully cleared 104 roads, including the reopening of the vital Karakoram Highway, ensuring restored connectivity to previously cut-off areas. A major rescue mission is underway in Kartarpur, where substantial relief efforts are being conducted. So far, around 225 tons of food have been distributed among flood victims, and medical assistance has been extended to over 20,000 people. Air relief operations have also been carried out in the difficult terrains of Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir, where swift Army intervention has brought much-needed aid to those severely impacted by the floods.

In every challenge faced by the nation—be it defending the borders, restoring peace in turbulent times, or reaching out with timely aid during natural disasters—the Pakistan Army has consistently stood as a pillar of strength and resilience. Their unwavering dedication and sacrifices, often made in silence, have earned them not just respect but deep-rooted pride in the hearts of the people. From the frontlines of defense to the frontlines of disaster relief, the Pak Army continues to serve selflessly, embodying the spirit of unity, service, and patriotism. As the nation looks ahead, the unwavering trust of the people in their armed forces remains a powerful testament to the enduring bond between the army and the citizens it protects.

Ehud Olmert did indeed speak very frankly

Yossi Mekelberg

The latest episode of Arab News’ “Frankly Speaking” series of interviews lived up to its name and reputation when interviewer Katie Jensen took on former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, never an easy interviewee but always good value in terms of straight talking.

Olmert, who will celebrate his 80th birthday next month, has in recent years taken on the mantle of the responsible adult of Israeli politics, a kind of a sage at the gate warning against the existential dangers emanating from Benjamin Netanyahu’s long and unbearable tenure as prime minister — even more so since the latter has partnered in power with the most extreme right-wing messianic elements in Israeli politics.

Olmert is challenging to interview but never boring or short of novel ideas, partly because of his own personal and political journey, which lends much weight to what he says, but partly because he is ready to deliver certain home truths that few others in Israeli politics are willing to articulate with the same courage.

This is especially important in these dark days for Israel’s politics and society. His political career has ranged from the heights of serving in government and ascending to the prime minister’s office, as well as the rock bottom of resigning from that office after he was indicted for corruption and given a custodial sentence.

Beyond the characteristic thorny and tenacious exterior of this “sabrah” (a term for a Jewish person born in Israel that is derived from the word for a prickly pear cactus, which is tough on the outside and soft on the inside) there also lies a thoughtful and courageous leader. This is not only because when in power he was prepared to change course whenever he deemed it necessary, even if it meant upsetting his electoral base, but also because with Olmert there is always a learning curve and a readiness to explore new frontiers.

This is something that has been especially significant in his relentless quest for peace with the Palestinians, and his constant search for new partners on both the Israeli and the Palestinian sides, most recently his collaboration with Nasser Al-Kidwa, the former Palestinian foreign minister and head of the Palestinian delegation to the UN.

What Arab News managed, very skillfully, to extract from the interview went beyond consideration of Olmert’s views on the current situation and how to resolve it, to also explore the very limits of discourse in Israel, even for one of the Netanyahu government’s harshest critics.

Firstly, when it was put to him that he supported the idea that Israel’s prime minister should be tried in The Hague for war crimes, he was quick to protest that he would prefer to see Netanyahu stand in front of judges in Israel to answer for his alleged war crimes against the people of Israel, as justice should be done at home.

The second limitation touched on the most sensitive war-related issue for most Israelis: whether or not Israel’s actions in Gaza constitute genocide. Olmert pushed the envelope of the discussion as far as possible in stating, very clearly, that war crimes were being committed in Gaza, but he knew that the very mention of the word genocide might completely discredit him and distract from the need to end the war and embark on peace building. However, the former prime minister was unequivocal in his declaration that he could not “tolerate it and forgive it (the war crimes) because I care for the lives of the Palestinians as for any other human beings.”

Considering the immeasurable suffering that has been inflicted by the Israeli military on the people of Gaza, this expression of empathy seems both obvious and natural, but it has not been

the view of many Israelis since the Oct. 7 attacks. It is, therefore, important for Israelis, and for the wider region, to hear this from a former prime minister, and in particular one whose political roots lie not to the left of the political spectrum or in the peace camp, but one who represented the Likud party in the Knesset for 27 years and was in government for much of that time.

In his transformation, he has moved on from the idea of a “Greater Israel,” of building settlements on occupied Palestinian land, first by supporting disengagement from Gaza and then, during his premiership, presenting Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas with the most far-reaching peace plan offered by any Israeli leader, which unfortunately was never accepted by the Palestinian leadership.

That episode has to this day left Olmert harboring a deep sense of missed opportunity — but not of despair, as much of his efforts now are focused on resurrecting that peace plan, albeit in much more difficult circumstances but at a time when the need for it is also more urgent and acute than ever.

Olmert makes a convincing case for ending the era of the present Israeli government, bringing down the curtain on Netanyahu’s extremely harmful time in office and, with that, hopefully ridding Israeli politics of Kahanist-racist-messianism. Yet there is also a certain historical irony in the bitter rivalry between Olmert and Netanyahu, and the reversal of their roles, that underlines their differing personalities.

Netanyahu, in his opportunism, can take any side of any argument as long as it serves him personally and politically. He first did this when he demanded that Olmert, while prime minister, take responsibility for the failures of the 2006 Lebanon War and resign. Speaking from the Knesset’s podium, in his customary pompous manner, he declared that Olmert’s decision not to resign “was like the captain of the Titanic, had he lived, being given another ship.” Today, leaving Netanyahu at the helm after the colossal failures of Oct. 7 is akin to handing him an entire fleet of ships.

Olmert did not resign in 2006, but when he was investigated for corruption it was the self-righteous Netanyahu who, in 2008, said that “a prime minister who is neck-deep in investigations has no public or moral mandate to make crucial decisions ... the right thing to do is for the government to go home.” Olmert did indeed resign when he was indicted; Netanyahu still does not believe that his own moralistic stance applies to him, and neither does he have the ability to learn from his mistakes and change.

Leaving aside the personal bitterness between these two leaders, it was important that Arab News’ interview gave Olmert a platform on which to speak directly to the people of the region and send the message that what stands between ending the war, and Israel leaving Gaza and potentially embarking on a genuine peace process, is a general election.

He presented an alternative course of action to the brutal and heartless actions of the Netanyahu government against the people of Gaza when he suggested that the international community should be closely involved — with particular emphasis on regional powers — as partners, firstly in mitigating the humanitarian disaster in Gaza, and subsequently by assisting with security in the territory, the resumption of Palestinian governance without any involvement by Hamas, and then the unification of Gaza and the West Bank.

What stood out most of all in this interview was Olmert’s eternal optimism and his conviction that with vision, determination, leadership, consistency, and perseverance, the future for Israelis and Palestinians alike could be so much better than their present.

The rebellion of my daughter in besieged Gaza

Hassan El-Nabih

A few days ago, my 30-year-old daughter Yasmin, who has special needs, walked up to me in our little place at the school shelter. Her steps were gentle, but determined. And I could see her eyes glittering with joy. I listened intently as she was struggling to speak.

“Dad..., I ate...chocolate!” she said triumphantly. My mind started to race, trying to work out what I had heard. Where did Yasmin get chocolate?

For many years, Yasmin has lived in a world that has its own rhythm, its own language of affection and wonder. Unfortunately, when she was just four months old, a severe fever left her with a developmental disability. And at the age of seven, she suffered chronic bronchitis and underwent lung surgery in Egypt, which further affected her health and development.

We tried to provide a comfortable life for Yasmin as much as we could. We equipped her room with a computer, a tablet, colouring books, and toys of all sorts – building blocks, teddies, balloons, and even a swing suspended from the ceiling.

We also consulted specialists who prescribed Yasmin special medication. We organised various indoor and outdoor activities for her. Hide-and-seek was her favourite game, which gave her thrills of excitement.

Fortunately, for years, we were considerably able to manage Yasmin’s condition.

However, in October 2023, an Israeli warplane attacked our beautiful house, turning it into a pile of rubble. Our belongings and resources, including Yasmin’s kingdom (her room), disappeared altogether.

Since then, we have been forcibly displaced multiple times, taking refuge in schools-turned-shelters.

Where we are staying now, Yasmin sleeps on a thin mattress in cramped conditions. There is no privacy, no quiet, no comfort.

Caring for Yasmin at the shelter has been an exhausting and draining experience. She needs help dressing, navigating the toilet queue, walking through the chaotic courtyard. We have

her.

Yasmin is also very kind. She often shares her food with friends, and on different occasions, she insists on preparing gifts for them. During Eid al-Adha last year, we decorated a tray of candies, each with a note reading, “Eid is happier with Yasmin!” She distributed the gifts with pride, lighting up the gloomy atmosphere of the shelter.

Unfortunately, now the situation has only gotten

for all people in Gaza. Everyone I know has grown much thinner, with pale skin and an emaciated body. My wife and I have suffered from spells of dizziness.

Yasmin has been especially vulnerable. She has lost a lot of weight, and her health has deteriorated.

In July, nearly 12,000 Palestinian children under the age of five were officially diagnosed as malnourished.

The lack of nourishment has been a serious problem for all people in Gaza. Everyone I know has grown much thinner, with pale skin and an emaciated body. My wife and I have suffered from spells of dizziness. Yasmin has been especially vulnerable. She has lost a lot of weight, and her health has deteriorated. In July, nearly 12,000 Palestinian children under the age of five were officially diagnosed as malnourished. On August 22, the UN-backed Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) reported that Gaza City is officially experiencing a “man-made famine” and that an immediate, at-scale response is needed. The report marked the first time famine was declared in the Middle East. According to the IPC, more than 500,000 people in the Gaza Strip, roughly a quarter of the population, are either close to or have already reached catastrophic levels of famine. Unless the situation on the ground changes quickly, that number is expected to rise to more than 640,000 by the end of September, while those in emergency-level food insecurity will likely rise to 1.14 million.

struggled to get her even a few toys and colouring pencils. And her medications have been very hard to find.

Yasmin is a good-looking and very sociable girl. Interestingly, people don’t have much difficulty getting used to how her tongue dances differently with words. Sometimes she misbehaves, which causes annoyance. But most people show empathy towards

worse. Israel has tightened its merciless siege on the Gaza Strip, impeding the delivery of basic food supplies, fuel, and medical and sanitation aid. The markets have seen no trace of so many things for months. No vegetables, no fruit, no meat, no fish, no chicken, no eggs, no milk, no sugar, no chocolate!

The lack of nourishment has been a serious problem

On August 22, the UN-backed Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) reported that Gaza City is officially experiencing a “man-made famine” and that an immediate, at-scale response is needed. The report marked the first time famine was declared in the Middle East.

According to the IPC, more than 500,000 people

How Sahel became the center of militant extremism

Hafed Al-Ghwel

and the “coup-proofing” of regimes over any meaningful counterinsurgency efforts.

These deployments are accompanied by sophisticated disinformation networks. In Burkina Faso, for example, eight distinct foreign-influenced campaigns have targeted more than 28 million social media users. Such operations have eroded any residual trust in Western-backed interventions, institutions and democratic norms, entrenching the type of chaos and despair that creates entry points for non-state actors adept at exploiting governance and security vacuums.

Any security dividends that were promised have proven to be a mirage. In Mali, for instance, the Africa Corps contingent has dwindled to an estimated 1,000 personnel, a fraction of the international presence that preceded it. It has been routed in key engagements, such as an ambush in July last year that killed 84 foreign troops near the border with Algeria.

Across the region, far from being contained, militant extremist factions have expanded their control of territory to an estimated 950,000 sq. km, approximately equivalent to the size of Tanzania, and the

attack, making it the deadliest terrorist group in the world. Its operational sophistication is demonstrated by its ability to launch coordinated, multi-stage assaults on high-security targets in national capitals such as Bamako.

This tactical convergence, in which groups across continents adopt standardized drone operations and complex armaments, signals an erosion of the technological and doctrinal advantage once held by state security forces, and creates a level battlefield on which militant groups can contest control over vast territories with increasing effectiveness.

The long-term implications of these shifts are dire. Security vacuums have allowed terrorism to metastasize southward toward coastal West Africa. Benin and Togo have experienced a 250 percent increase in violence linked to Sahelian militant groups over the past two years. JNIM claimed responsibility for attacks that killed 41 people in Togo in 2024, for example.

This expansion threatens to undo decades of development progress. In Burkina Faso, 6,100 schools have closed as a result of insecurity, while in Nigeria’s Borno State, one-third of health facilities

The groups’ brutal tactics have further militarized the environment. Malian and allied foreign forces have been responsible for 82 percent of all civilian fatalities in the past year; a perverse approach to counterterrorism that serves as a potent recruitment tool for the very groups they purport to fight. This is not a security partnership but a predatory enterprise that accelerates the disintegration of the region. The accelerating professionalization of militant violence in the Sahel represents a dangerous new phase in global insurgency, characterized by the external transfer of advanced tactical capabilities.

frequency and audacity of their attacks have increased.

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Moreover, the accelerating professionalization of militant violence in the Sahel represents a dangerous new phase in global insurgency, characterized by the external transfer of advanced tactical capabilities.

This is not an organic evolution but is facilitated by a form of Islamist “outsourcing” in which expertise in drone warfare, precision targeting, and complex logistics is brokered by external actors. For instance, recent reports confirm that Al-Shabab in Somalia, which generates an estimated \$200 million in annual revenue, has received military equipment and training from the Houthis in Yemen, including armed drones and ballistic missiles.

Such knowledge transfers are only a small part of the evolution of dynamics in the Sahel that result in tangible effects on the battlefield. JNIM’s lethality rate, for example, has reached an unprecedented average of 10 fatalities per

have been destroyed, leading to surges in child mortality and preventable diseases.

Furthermore, the political instability is now self-reinforcing: military juntas in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger have formed alliances to insulate themselves from any mechanisms for enforcement of accountability.

The response of the global community so far has been fragmented and ineffective. Western counterterrorism initiatives have prioritized military solutions over governance reforms, neglecting root causes such as poverty, climate change, and ethnic marginalization. Regional partnerships such as the G5 Sahel have collapsed, while UN missions such as the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali have been forced to withdraw, resulting in further destabilization in areas previously under their protection.

The repeated tragedies in the Sahel are testament to the folly of treating militant extremism as a purely military challenge. As non-state actors proliferate and professionalize, and are measured by escalating violence spilling into neighboring regions, the world must recognize that without inclusive governance, sustainable economic development, targeted aid, and community-led security, the Sahel will remain a breeding ground for global terror and a harbinger of devastating conflicts to come.

Myanmar’s election plan a facade for military rule

Dr. Azeem Ibrahim

The ruling junta in Myanmar has announced that the country will hold its first general election since the 2021 coup starting in December 2025. At first glance, this might sound like a step toward normalcy and democracy. But in reality it is nothing of the sort. The generals who seized power four years ago are trying to dress up their rule with a thin democratic veneer. This election will not be free or fair. Instead, it will be a carefully managed spectacle designed to give the junta a sense of legitimacy both at home and abroad, while denying the people of Myanmar any real voice.

The context is stark. Myanmar is still engulfed in civil war. Ethnic armed organizations control vast swathes of territory in Kachin, Shan and Rakhine states. The Arakan Army, the Kachin Independence Army and many others have expanded their hold since the coup. These groups have already declared that they will not allow voting in their areas. Even in zones under military control, widespread resistance continues. For the average citizen, daily life is shaped not by politics but by hunger, displacement and insecurity. To stage an election in the midst of this chaos is to invite further fragmentation and deepen mistrust.

What makes this election even more hollow is the systematic exclusion of the National League for Democracy, the party of Aung San Suu Kyi, which won a landslide in the last

free vote in 2020. The junta has dissolved the party, imprisoned its leaders and silenced its supporters. In its place, the generals have fostered proxy parties loyal to them. The outcome of the 2025 vote is therefore already preordained. Without the National League for Democracy, there is no true contest and no genuine democratic

Even dictators understand the symbolic power of elections. By claiming a mandate from the ballot box, however contrived, the generals seek to undercut the narrative that they are illegitimate usurpers. But the international community must not be fooled. This election will not resolve Myanmar’s crisis. On the contrary, it risks entrenching military rule and prolonging conflict. The danger is that outside powers, weary of the stalemate, may seize on the election as an excuse to re-engage with the junta. That would be a profound mistake. Recognition of a sham vote would betray the millions who have risked everything in the past four years to resist military dictatorship.

mandate.

This is not the first time the Myanmar military has tried to cloak its dominance in an electoral process. Over decades, the Tatmadaw, as the army is known, has perfected the art of controlled democracy. In 2010, it held an election that excluded Suu Kyi and her party. Only in 2015 did the generals allow a somewhat open vote, which resulted in a humiliating defeat for their proxy party. They have no intention of repeating that mistake. The upcoming election will be a return to the 2010 model: a charade of ballots and polling stations without the

essence of choice.

Why, then, does the junta insist on holding this election? Partly it is about international image. The generals know that countries in the region, including some in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, prefer to deal with a government that at least pays lip service to democracy. By staging a managed vote,

the junta hopes to persuade its neighbors to normalize ties, attract investment and ease diplomatic pressure.

Another reason is to shore up domestic legitimacy. Even dictators understand the symbolic power of elections. By claiming a mandate from the ballot box, however contrived, the generals seek to undercut the narrative that they are illegitimate usurpers. But the international community must not be fooled. This election will not resolve Myanmar’s crisis. On the contrary, it risks entrenching military rule and prolonging conflict. The danger is that outside

powers, weary of the stalemate, may seize on the election as an excuse to re-engage with the junta. That would be a profound mistake. Recognition of a sham vote would betray the millions who have risked everything in the past four years to resist military dictatorship.

So, what should be done? First, ASEAN must resist the temptation to endorse this electoral exercise. As the regional bloc most directly affected by Myanmar’s collapse, ASEAN has both the responsibility and the leverage to insist that any credible election can only take place after the end of hostilities and the release of political prisoners.

Second, the wider international community should refuse to send observers or recognize the outcome. Legitimacy must not be conferred on the junta through participation in its charade. Third, more support should be directed to Myanmar’s civil society,

in the Gaza Strip, roughly a quarter of the population, are either close to or have already reached catastrophic levels of famine. Unless the situation on the ground changes quickly, that number is expected to rise to more than 640,000 by the end of September, while those in emergency-level food insecurity will likely rise to 1.14 million.

In addition to the casualties of the ongoing war – more than 62,000 killed and 140,000 injured – more than 315 Palestinians have already died as a result of the forced starvation, half of them children.

At this critical time, Yasmin surprisingly stood before me, carrying the lightness of a secret. With a glowing face, she declared she had eaten chocolate!

Started, I turned to her. “You ate chocolate, Yasmin? Where? Who gave it to you?”

Sensing my confusion, she smiled and her face lit up with more delight. She gently shook her head and explained, “No, no, Dad. I...didn’t eat...chocolate. I said...I dreamed!”

I jumped up and gave Yasmin a big hug, bursting into laughter – laughter that was louder and longer than I had in months. My laughter, however, was laced with extreme sorrow and fatigue.

Amid the horrors of war and widespread famine, Yasmin had a dream of something sweet. And the dream was sweet enough to make her highly delighted. Yasmin, a young woman with special needs, was not aware of the political meaning of her dream. She didn’t know that her dream, where she tasted something unreachable, was an act of rebellion against Israel’s atrocities and defiant hope to live freely in peace and dignity.

the national unity government in exile and ethnic organizations that are seeking a federal democratic future. These are the true representatives of the Myanmar people, not the generals in Naypyitaw.

There is also a humanitarian imperative. Millions of people inside Myanmar are facing displacement, starvation and the collapse of healthcare. Elections under such conditions are meaningless. What the population needs is food, medicine and security, not ballot boxes controlled by the military. International aid must be ramped up and delivered cross-border if necessary. Allowing the junta to use aid as leverage is to perpetuate collective punishment.

The generals believe time is on their side. They calculate that the world will eventually tire of Myanmar’s plight and accept any semblance of order, however illegitimate. It is, therefore, vital that we do not allow a fraudulent election to become that excuse. The international community has been burned before when it accepted managed elections in authoritarian contexts. The result is always the same: more repression, more conflict and greater suffering for ordinary people.

The people of Myanmar deserve better. They deserve a genuine chance to choose their leaders, free from coercion and violence. Until that day comes, any talk of elections is a cruel joke. The world must stand firm in rejecting the junta’s attempt to masquerade dictatorship as democracy.

Elias Abou Samra

Saudi real estate: From speculation to vision enabling

Over the past six months, the Saudi real estate sector has been shaped by a series of new regulatory announcements, setting the stage for the internationalization of what was previously a restricted local market. This evolving landscape reveals a coordinated ecosystem designed to transform Saudi Arabia’s most valued asset class from a haven for speculative investments into a dynamic platform for economic growth.

Focusing on Riyadh, the market’s rapid expansion across all segments is beginning to challenge the city’s competitiveness, largely due to rising living costs driven by a significant

surge in real estate prices. The 2021-2025 compound annual growth rate for residential rental rates has reached 18 percent, while commercial rates have grown by 12 percent. In some districts of Riyadh, property prices have doubled in less than five years.

The flow of foreign direct investment into real estate shows a gradual but delicate increase, underscoring the need for thoughtful policy decisions. To ensure sustainable economic growth, policymakers must balance market openness with measures that protect affordability and attract stable FDI, guiding the sector toward long-term resilience and

inclusive prosperity.

Some notable regulatory interventions include the projected increase in white land tax, the forthcoming foreign ownership law set to take effect in January 2026, and the recent issuance of residential asset-backed securities. These regulations act as interlocking cogwheels within the sector’s evolving machinery, each influencing the other through direct and inverse relationships. For example, the increase in white land tax is designed to encourage more efficient land utilization, prompting owners to develop idle plots rather than hold them for speculative gains.

Meanwhile, the new foreign ownership law is expected to attract fresh international capital, broadening the investor base and injecting liquidity into the market.

Following its announcement, inquiries from international investors rose tremendously, underlining its immediate effect. Combined, these developments are expected to drive demand for asset-backed securities, as both domestic and foreign investors seek robust financing tools to support new projects.

Together, these measures advance the sophistication of the Saudi real estate sector — not by simply raising prices, but by fostering a more transparent, efficient, and globally integrated market.

The swift adoption of new regulations was not a matter of coincidence, but a direct result of close alignment among the nation’s leadership, government ministries, and the private sector.

This unified approach enabled policy decisions to move rapidly from conception to implementation, reducing bureaucratic delays and sending clear, coordinated signals to market participants. As a result, developers are quickly recognizing that the regulatory environment is shifting to prioritize long-term resilience over short-term gains.

This realization, reinforced through roundtable discussions and targeted incentives, led many developers by the second quarter of 2025 to embrace single-digit, sustainable growth as a healthier alternative to the previous boom-and-bust cycles common in emerging markets.

Regulatory clarity also fostered tangible improvements in the real estate landscape. For example, the launch of several joint ventures with international logistics firms in 2025 demonstrated a new openness to cross-border partnerships. Developers also responded to increased competition by investing in advanced building technologies, pursuing green certifications, and enhancing customer service standards. Projects such as the Riyadh Sustainable Living Initiative, which integrated renewable energy and smart infrastructure, illustrated this commitment to raising the quality of products and services.

Positioned within the broader framework of Vision 2030, these market shifts opened new avenues for investment and innovation. The vision’s emphasis on economic diversification catalyzed growth in emerging sectors such as data centers, flexible living accommodations, urban logistics, entertainment, and life sciences. However, these opportunities are accompanied by challenges — navigating talent shortages in specialized segments, managing cross-sector regulatory overlaps, and ensuring infrastructure keeps pace with rapid development. As Vision 2030 continues to unfold, the interplay between regulatory modernization and private sector adaptability will determine how successfully Saudi Arabia transforms its real estate sector into a globally competitive, future-proof asset class.



Need stressed to decentralize administrative functions to ensure improved results

RAWALPINDI (PPI): Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) President Usman Shaukat on Sunday called for decentralized administration for enhanced governance and advancement.

Speaking at a luncheon for the Council of Economic and Energy Journalists (CEEJ), Shaukat referenced Karachi's progress under former mayors Mustafa Kamal and Naimatullah Khan as a model for local control. "Decentralizing administrative functions will ensure improved results," he asserted.

Attendees included RCCI Senior Vice President Khalid Farooq Qazi, Vice President Fahad Barlas, Pakistan Association of Exhibition Industry (PAEI) Founder Chairman Khur-

shid Barlas, CEEJ President Raja Kamran, CEEJ Secretary Kashif Muneer, and prominent journalists and business figures.

Shaukat revealed ongoing visa-on-arrival negotiations between Pakistan and Bangladesh, signaling a positive trend in relations. He recommended granting Bangladesh Most Favored Nation (MFN) status to bolster economic connections. "With India's influence waning in Bangladesh, Pakistan should enhance collaboration," he explained.

Shaukat also mentioned Federal Commerce Minister Jam Kamal's successful trip to Bangladesh, where discussions about joint pharmaceutical ventures, including vaccine development, took place. He underscored the impor-

ance of cross-border alliances to generate substantial foreign exchange for Pakistan.

The RCCI president affirmed the chamber's continued engagement with the government to lower business expenses. "Many of our budgetary suggestions were adopted, and headway is being made on critical matters," he noted. He also praised the media's role in highlighting business obstacles and supporting national interests amidst conventional and cyber warfare.

Khurshid Barlas, speaking at the gathering, suggested Bangladesh be seen as Pakistan's "fifth province" due to shared culture and commerce. He announced a 200-member Pakistani trade delegation will attend a 'Made in Pakistan'

exhibition and business conference in Bangladesh, starting September 23.

"Our bond with Bangladesh is strengthening. They consider us their elder brother; we should reciprocate. We are bringing leading Pakistani businesses to forge enduring partnerships," Barlas stated. He highlighted regional collaboration, especially within SAARC, as crucial for sustained economic expansion.

Barlas also announced an Investment Conference in Karachi on November 22-23, followed by a Youth Tourism Conference. A Business and Investment Conference, involving public and private sector participants, including ministry officials, is also planned to boost investor assurance.



ISLAMABAD: People busy purchasing onion and potatoes from vendors at weekly Sunday Bazaar in Federal Capital.

New MoUs may boost bilateral trade: Malik

LAHORE (APP): SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry former President Iftikhar Ali Malik said on Sunday that in light of recent MoUs, the volume of Pakistan-Bangladesh trade could increase to \$5-7 billion annually within the next five years, up from the current \$1.2 billion.

In a statement, he highlighted renewed optimism that bilateral trade between the two South Asian economies would witness a significant surge in the coming years. He noted that the current trade volume of \$1.2 billion does not reflect the full potential of the two countries. With mutual cooperation, improved connectivity, and reduced trade barriers, the trade volume could realistically reach \$5-7 billion annually within five years.

He emphasized that new MoUs provide a framework to address key bottlenecks such as banking channels, customs facilitation, and logistical hurdles. Enhanced people-to-people contacts, participation in trade fairs, and exchange of business delegations can further build confidence between the business communities of both countries. Promoting joint ventures and investment opportunities in Special Economic Zones would also boost industrial collaboration.

He added that regional integration was another crucial factor. Reviving SAARC economic cooperation and placing renewed focus on intra-regional trade can create a win-win scenario not only for Pakistan and Bangladesh but for the entire South Asian region. By prioritizing economic diplomacy over political differences, both countries could ensure sustainable growth, generate employment, and reduce dependency on extra-regional markets.

Both countries benefit from geographical proximity, a shared cultural heritage, and similar consumer markets, which could serve as a strong foundation for expanding trade in sectors such as textiles, pharmaceuticals, information technology, leather goods, agricultural products, and light engineering. Pakistan can export high-quality cotton, yarn, surgical instruments, and agricultural machinery to Bangladesh, while Bangladesh could expand its market in Pakistan for garments, seafood, jute products, and home textiles, he concluded.

Solar energy set to transform power sector

LAHORE (APP): Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO) Coordinator Saifur Rehman said on Sunday that growing demand for affordable electricity, combined with the high cost of imported fossil fuels, had made renewable energy a viable and sustainable alternative for Pakistan.

Talking to a delegation of industrialists led by Zia Ur Rehman, here, he highlighted solar power as the most promising renewable option, citing Pakistan's geographical advantage of abundant sunlight throughout the year. This resource could be harnessed to reduce reliance on costly thermal generation. He added that several factors were contributing to this positive trend, including government policies such as net metering, tax exemptions on solar panels, and renewable energy projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which encourage households and businesses

to adopt solar solutions. Additionally, the falling global prices of solar technology had made it increasingly affordable.

Saifur Rehman emphasized that growing awareness of climate change and environmental concerns, along with frequent load-shedding and unreliable grid supply, were driving consumers to invest in rooftop solar systems as a

dependable energy source. He said that international financial institutions were supporting Pakistan in developing large-scale solar parks and hybrid renewable projects. Together, these developments indicate that solar energy would play a central role in transforming Pakistan's energy landscape towards a cleaner and sustainable future, he added.

FTO launches new book at MCCI

MULTAN (APP): Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO) Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah emphasized that "tax is the backbone of the economy" during the launch ceremony of his latest book *Mohtasib Ki Diary*, held at the Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI).

The event was attended by a distinguished gathering including Incharge FTO Regional Office Multan Dr. Khalil Ahmad, Legal Advisor FTO Islamabad Almas Ali Jundha, MCCI Vice President Azhar Baloch, Khawaja Muhammad Younis, Dr. Riaz Ranjha, MD National Book Foundation Kamran Jahangir, Naveed Iqbal Chughtai, Younis Ghazi, MCCI Secretary Muhammad Shafiq, along with renowned intellectuals, writers, business leaders, and civil society representatives.

FBR organizes educational session



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: On the directions of Chairman FBR, Rashid Mahmood Langrial, and Member Taxpayers' Services, Ms. Tehmina Aamer, the Taxpayers' Services Wing (TPS) organized an educational session at Askari Bank Limited Learning Center, Islamabad. The initiative aimed at promoting understanding of tax-related procedures and encouraging voluntary tax compliance across the country.

Upon arrival, the FBR

team, comprising Secretary Compliance, Ms. Kiran Zahra, and Second Secretary (Tax Education), Zafar Iqbal Khan, was warmly received by Sabir Mumtaz, Chief HR Officer of Askari Bank, along with other senior staff members.

Following introductory remarks by Secretary Compliance, a detailed presentation on key tax procedures was delivered by Second Secretary (Tax Education). To further facilitate participants, a live demonstration was conducted on the recently introduced simpli-

fied income tax return form, highlighting its user-friendly, digitized features designed to make return filing easier for taxpayers.

Executive staff members from Askari Bank branches located within territorial jurisdiction of Islamabad attended the session in person, while employees from branches across Pakistan joined virtually.

The event concluded with an engaging question-and-answer session, followed by the distribution of souvenirs among participants.

Haji Ghulam Ali extend goodwill gesture to flood victims



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a strong show of solidarity, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam's Provincial Ameer Senator Atta ur Rehman, Senator Atta ul Haq Darwaish, and Former Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali visited flood-hit areas of District Swabi to stand with the victims and provide much-needed support.

During the visit, more than 70 affected families were provided cash assis-

tance as part of a goodwill initiative supported by the Lahore Chamber of Commerce, President Abu Zar Shad, Khawaja Shahzaib Akram, and other members of the business community.

The delegation, accompanied by former provincial ministers Maulana Fazal Ali Haqqani and Amanullah Haqqani, Provincial Finance Secretary Noor-ul-Islam, Tehsil Chairman Muhammad Raheem Jadoon, Swabi Chamber President Fazal Raheem Jado-

on, and district administration officials, assured flood victims that they are not alone in this difficult time.

"Flood victims should not consider themselves abandoned. We all stand by them and will ensure that relief reaches Buner, Swat, and every affected district," said Senator Atta ur Rehman and Senator Atta ul Haq Darwaish.

Former Governor Haji Ghulam Ali emphasized that natural disasters are a test of patience and

resilience:

"We must not lose hope. Humanity demands that we support one another in times of trial. Every capable citizen has a responsibility to step forward and assist flood-affected brothers and sisters."

The delegation highlighted the appeal of JUI Chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman, who had urged citizens and the business community nationwide to support flood victims. They also praised JUI workers for their tireless relief and rehabilitation efforts in affected areas.

Local communities expressed gratitude to the JUI leadership, Ghulam Ali, Lahore Chamber of Commerce, and the broader business community for their solidarity, generosity, and timely assistance.

On this occasion, Provincial Minister for Transport Rangez Khan, Maulana Fazal Baqi Taj Nabi, and Former District Nazim Gharib Shah Jadoon also appreciated the delegation for visiting, consoling families, and extending aid during this hour of grief.

PIAF seeks reforms to expedite export growth

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) has appreciated the four-year extension granted by the United States for Pakistan's seafood exports, while at the same time warning that without urgent reforms the country will not fully benefit from this rare opportunity. The approval reflects global recognition of Pakistan's compliance with marine protection standards but structural flaws such as lack of modern preservation, enforcement of Turtle Excluder Device (TED) rules, and outdated harbour facilities continue to block growth.

PIAF Chairman Faheemur Rehman Saigol, along with Senior Vice Chairman Nasrullah Mughal and Vice Chairman Tahir Manzoor Chaudhary, said the extension under the US Marine Mammal Protection Act

(MMPA) secures Pakistan's access to one of the world's largest seafood markets and provides long-term stability for a sector that employs millions. However, they underlined that Pakistan must now move beyond paperwork and adopt practical measures that will help farmers, exporters and fishermen secure higher returns.

They pointed out that Pakistani seafood currently fetches around \$2 per kilogram in the international market, while the same products could earn many times more if handled, stored and processed according to international standards. For instance, yellowfin tuna preserved at minus 60 degrees Celsius can earn up to \$20 per kilogram, yet due to the absence of cold storage and modern boats, it is sold for just \$1.5.

The PIAF leadership also highlighted that while Pakistan exported \$489.2 million worth of fish and

related products in FY25, the same volume could generate nearly \$600 million next year with improved quality and compliance. They stressed that this opportunity should not be wasted at a time when foreign exchange inflows are critical for the economy. At the same time, they raised concerns that Washington has already banned shrimp and catfish imports from Pakistan since 2017 due to the absence of TED enforcement. Unless these rules are implemented, Pakistan will not regain access to these lucrative markets.

They reminded the government that the US has also warned that seafood trade could be cut before 2029 if compliance is not achieved, which would reverse all recent progress.

PIAF Senior Vice Chairman Nasrullah Mughal said the condition of Karachi Fish Harbour is another

major obstacle, with no upgrades in over a decade. Poor preservation practices and unhygienic handling methods, he noted, keep Pakistan's exports below potential while regional competitors like India earn \$6-8 billion annually from farmed shrimp.

Vice Chairman Tahir Manzoor Chaudhary added that the NOAA approval should be seen as a grace period to overhaul the fisheries sector rather than just a reason for celebration. He urged federal and provincial governments to work jointly with exporters to modernize harbours, enforce conservation standards, and equip fishermen with training and facilities.

PIAF Chairman Faheemur Rehman Saigol said the approval is an encouraging breakthrough but its real value lies in whether Pakistan can turn it into sustained growth.

BMP for expanding credit schemes for small farmers, SMEs in flood-hit areas

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has welcomed the Economic Coordination Committee's (ECC) decision to approve the Risk Coverage Scheme for small farmers and underserved areas, urging the State Bank of Pakistan to notify the scheme without any further delay.

FPCCI former president and BMP Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar said the approval was an important step toward correcting a long-standing imbalance in agricultural credit distribution where the bulk of financing continues to be consumed by large landholders in Punjab and Sindh, leaving millions of small farmers in other

provinces struggling for survival.

Anjum Nisar pointed out that small farmers make up more than 93 percent of the country's agricultural borrowers, yet they receive only 32 percent of total agri-credit disbursements. In contrast, the large farmers, who represent a mere 7 percent of borrowers, corner 68 percent of the lending. He said this disparity not only worsens rural poverty but also deprives the national economy of the full potential of agriculture, which remains the backbone of Pakistan's livelihood and food security.

Quoting figures shared during the ECC meeting, the FPCCI leader said that currently 97 percent of agriculture financing is concentrated in Punjab and Sindh, while only 3 percent

trickles down to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Azad Jammu & Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. He stressed that this imbalance must be corrected, especially as farmers in these underserved areas are already facing multiple shocks, from climate change to poor infrastructure and market access. "If agriculture credit continues to bypass them, the inequality between provinces will only deepen, creating long-term socio-economic instability," he warned.

The BMP Chairman said the ECC had rightly recognized that the proposed scheme should cover not just small and subsistence farmers in Punjab and Sindh but also all farmers in the underserved provinces, since their share

of credit disbursements is already negligible. According to the Finance Division's briefing, the scheme has the potential to bring 750,000 new borrowers into the fold within the next three years. Nisar described this as a positive development but cautioned that the success of the plan will depend on the seriousness with which SBP and commercial banks implement it.

He called upon the government to go one step further and announce parallel credit facilities for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that have been devastated by recent floods. "It is not only the farmers who have lost crops, livestock and assets to the floods," he said, "but also the SMEs in rural and urban centers who form the backbone of

employment generation. Unless the government provides them with special credit windows, concessional financing and risk protection, thousands of businesses will be wiped out, leaving behind unemployment and despair."

Anjum Nisar urged policymakers to adopt a holistic approach, noting that agriculture and SMEs are deeply linked. A large share of SMEs are engaged in agri-processing, transport, inputs, and rural trade, and their collapse would further depress the rural economy. "If we focus only on large industries and ignore the grassroots producers and small businesses, there will be no sustainable recovery. A national growth strategy has to be inclusive," he stressed.

The FPCCI leader also

reminded the government of its responsibility to fully take care of the flood victims, who not only lost their crops but also their homes and livelihoods.

He said relief measures must go beyond temporary food packages and shelters, and should include financial support that enables victims to rebuild their economic base.

"The country cannot afford another cycle of migration, poverty and disease in the flood-affected areas. People need to be rehabilitated in their own communities with access to credit, inputs, and markets," he said.

Mian Anjum Nisar appealed to the ECC, SBP and the Finance Division to design special products that are simple, accessible and tailored to the needs of

small farmers and SMEs. He said collateral-free lending, partial credit guarantees, and subsidized insurance must form part of the package so that the most vulnerable groups are not left at the mercy of informal moneylenders. "Experience shows that without proper risk coverage, commercial banks shy away from extending credit to small borrowers. The newly approved scheme is a good beginning, but it has to be broadened and backed with full political will," he said.

He further said that in the aftermath of floods and natural disasters, Pakistan requires a stronger disaster-resilient financing system where quick disbursement of loans, grants and insurance payouts can prevent economic collapse in vul-

nerable regions. He called on the government to learn from global best practices where targeted credit programs and crop insurance schemes have saved millions from falling into extreme poverty.

The FPCCI's Businessmen Panel is committed to supporting the government in designing such initiatives and will continue to voice the concerns of small farmers, traders and SMEs. Anjum Nisar emphasized that equitable access to credit is not merely a matter of fairness but of national survival. "Agriculture ensures our food security, SMEs generate employment, and together they keep the economic engine running. Ignoring them, especially in times of crisis, will be a grave mistake," he warned.



In brief

Zverev knocked out

NEW YORK (AFP): Third seed Alexander Zverev crashed out in the US Open third round on Saturday after losing to Canadian 25th seed Felix Auger-Aliassime in four sets. Zverev, the 2020 US Open runner-up, claimed the first set and had a set point in the second but came unstuck as Auger-Aliassime won 4-6, 7-6 (9/7), 6-4, 6-4 in 3hr 48min. It is the first time Zverev has failed to reach the second week in New York since 2018. He suffered his earliest Grand Slam exit in six years at Wimbledon last month after losing in round one. Auger-Aliassime's best run at a major came when he reached the semi-finals at Flushing Meadows four years ago. "This feels good. I've been coming here since 2018. I'm still young, it's been a few years but I'm working my way," said the 25-year-old Auger-Aliassime, who beat a top-five player at a Grand Slam for the first time. "The tournament's still going, the job's not done but this means a lot to me." Auger-Aliassime advances to a fourth-round meeting with Russian 15th seed Andrey Rublev on Monday.

Yamaguchi cruises

PARIS (AFP): Akane Yamaguchi beat former world number one Chen Yufei of China 21-9, 21-13 on Sunday to win the women's singles badminton world championship final. The Japanese fifth seed rarely looked troubled on court in Paris and needed just 37 minutes to add a third world title to her gold medals from 2021 and 2022. "I felt the chance to win was very slim (before the tournament). Coming into it as the underdog, winning despite not having results this year, I think that gives it a different kind of value," Yamaguchi said of her 2025 win. While she said she was "delighted" by the victory, Yamaguchi spared a thought for her injured opponent. "Chen Yufei got injured yesterday (Saturday), so it wasn't easy. I hadn't anticipated it, but I suppose this kind of score difference was inevitable given her condition." Chen, a Tokyo 2020 Olympic gold medalist, battled past top seed and reigning champion An Se-young of South Korea in a semi-final win marked by a nasty-looking ankle twist early in the second game. The 27-year-old received treatment on the court Saturday and went immediately to have her ankle examined after the match. In Sunday's final, Chen appeared hampered in her movement and Yamaguchi took full advantage in the opening game. "I think there were moments she (Chen) couldn't react, so I did hit a bit more aggressively," admitted Yamaguchi. The fourth seed dug in to stay with Yamaguchi in the second game until the 28-year-old pulled away after the interval to condemn Chen to a second world silver medal. "It's still quite swollen," Chen said of her ankle. "Since last night I've been undergoing treatment, icing it and so forth. Before taking to the stage just now (to receive her medal), I'd already taken eight painkillers. "I believe it's about respecting myself and respecting my opponents. Though there are (injury) issues, I feel I can still walk and stand on this court. So I want to keep fighting for it," added Chen, who lost her previous world final to Yamaguchi in Tokyo three years ago.



ZANDVOORT: Race winner Oscar Piastri of Australia and McLaren celebrates on the podium during the F1 Grand Prix of Netherlands.

Swiatek struggles into US Open fourth round

NEW YORK (AFP): Iga Swiatek struggled into the last 16 of the US Open on Saturday, recovering from a rocky start to edge past Russia's Anna Kalinskaya. Polish second seed Swiatek -- the pre-tournament betting favourite -- found herself in trouble in the opening set as the 29th-seeded Kalinskaya raced into a 5-1 lead. But Swiatek clawed her way back into the contest to complete a 7-6 (7/2), 6-4 victory on the Arthur Ashe Stadium court. Even Swiatek was at a loss to explain how she turned around her poor start. "Oh my god I don't know -- Anna was playing great, she was playing all these risky balls in," she said. "I just wanted to make less mistakes. I felt

like I was playing good but in the last shot I just couldn't finish it. "I just focused on simple things ... I felt like I had nothing to lose because I was losing pretty bad. So in the end I just went for it because what else can you do?" Swiatek looked out of sorts almost from the outset, struggling to find fluency on serve and making a stream of unforced errors. She went 2-1 down after being broken in the third game, and Kalinskaya soon had Swiatek in trouble again in the fifth. A nervy double-fault at break point from Swiatek handed the Russian a 4-1 lead, which duly became 5-1 when she held in the next game. But serving for the set at 5-2 up, Kalinskaya suddenly froze to let Swiatek back

into the match, squandering four set points before being broken. Swiatek broke again to level it at 5-5 and the momentum appeared to be with the Pole. Yet there was another twist as the two players swapped breaks of serve to set up a tiebreak, which Swiatek won comfortably. The second set opened with both players again trading breaks of serve. The set went with serve until Swiatek seized the initiative in the ninth game to break for a 5-4 lead. A whipped Swiatek forehand set up match point, which the Pole converted when Kalinskaya yanked a return wide. Swiatek will face Russian 13th seed Ekaterina Alexandrova in the fourth round on Monday.

Norris retires as Piastri wins chaotic Dutch GP

ZANDVOORT (Agencies): Lando Norris retired from second place with an oil leak as McLaren team-mate Oscar Piastri took a controlled victory in an incident-strewn Dutch Grand Prix. The Australian's seventh victory in 13 races this season, in which he has been the model of coolness and consistency, extends his championship lead to 34 points. Norris lost second to Max Verstappen on the first lap, but pressured Piastri throughout after reclaiming the place a few laps later. Piastri was always in control and Norris was on course for a comfortable second place only for his car to stop in a cloud of smoke with seven laps to go. The dramatic turn of events at the end of a chaotic race featuring three safety cars and multiple crashes and incidents could be decisive in the private title fight between Piastri and Norris. Red Bull's Verstappen inherited second place, and Norris' retirement elevated French rookie Isack Hadjar, 20, to an outstanding first career podium finish. The key stories from a race full of drama were: A potentially decisive turning point in the title race. A terrible race for Ferrari saw both drivers crash out at Turn Three. A series of controversial incidents and penalty decisions. A huge blow for Norris. Norris sat on the dunes beside the seaside Zandvoort circuit, helmet on, with his head in his hands after climbing out of his stricken McLaren, as he digested the ramifications of his retirement. The Briton had been poised for second place behind Piastri, who had controlled the race consummately from pole position throughout a series of incidents, including briefly threatening rain. That in itself would have been a blow to Norris, who had arrived in the Netherlands after winning three of the past four races. But his second retirement of the year - following crashing out of the Canadian Grand Prix in June after hitting the back of his team-mate's car - has dealt a body blow to his hopes. A 34-point lead is well over one clear victory, and it will be hard work for Norris to claw back that lead on a man who has led the championship since the fifth race of the season in Saudi Arabia and is the model of solidity. Mercedes, which supplies McLaren's engines, said they did not yet know whether the leak was on the car or engine side. McLaren team principal Andrea Stella said it was "unclear" what had caused the failure. Ferrari's day of darkness for competitiveness all weekend and Charles Leclerc and Lewis Hamilton were running fifth and seventh in the first part of the race, Leclerc trying in vain to challenge Hadjar and Hamilton pressuring his former Mercedes team-mate George Russell. Light rain began to fall after about 20 laps and on lap 23 Hamilton got off line through the banked Hugenholtzbocht hairpin.

Int'l cricketers return to Peshawar after 19 years

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar witnessed its biggest cricket carnival in 19 years as the iconic Arbab Niaz (Imran Khan) Cricket Stadium came alive with a historic flood relief match between Peshawar Zalmi XI and Legends XI. The event, jointly organized by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, Directorate General of Sports, and Peshawar Zalmi, drew thousands of cricket lovers from across Peshawar and remote areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, turning the Stadium, once consider a key venue for International Cricket, into a houseful spectacle. The electrifying atmosphere was filled with cheers, chants of "Pakistan Zindabad", and the thrill of seeing cricketing superstars back in action. Fans were treated to a nostalgic display as Shoaib Akhtar and Waqar Younis rolled back the years with their fiery bowling, while the batting brilliance of Babar Azam and Inzamam-ul-Haq delighted the crowd. Despite a rain interruption, ground staff worked tirelessly to prepare the field. Legends XI captain Inzamam-ul-Haq won the toss and invited Zalmi XI to bat first. Led by skipper Babar Azam's 41 and Yasir Hameed's 35, Zalmi set a competitive total of 145. For Legends XI, Shahid Afridi and Abdul Rehman took three wickets each, while Saeed Ajmal and Mohammad Hafeez added two apiece. In reply, Legends XI fought hard but were restricted to 137 runs for six wickets in the allotted overs. Inzamam-ul-Haq entertained fans with an unbeaten 47, while Azhar Mahmood contributed 34. Zalmi XI secured victory by eight runs, capping off a thrilling contest that brought joy to cricket fans after nearly two decades.

The match was attended by PSL COO Salman Naseer, Provincial Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Syed Fakhar Jehan, several provincial ministers, city dignitaries, and a large number of spectators. Strict security arrangements ensured a safe and festive occasion. At the conclusion, Zalmi Chairman Javed Afridi expressed heartfelt gratitude to the KP government, cricket legends, players, and fans for making the event a resounding success. He emphasized that the match not only revived international cricket in Peshawar but also carried a noble purpose of solidarity with flood victims. Provincial Sports Minister Syed Fakhar Jehan hailed the match as a historic milestone, highlighting that after 19 years, the Stadium had once again regained its glory. He announced that Pakistan Super League fixtures will also be scheduled in Peshawar in the future. The proceeds from the match will be dedicated to the rehabilitation of flood victims, making the occasion both a sporting triumph and a humanitarian effort. Peshawar's return to the cricketing map, marked by passion, nostalgia, and unity, was celebrated as one of the most memorable sporting events in the city's history. The devastating floods in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which have claimed more than 400 lives, reflect a wider tragedy across Pakistan as thousands remain displaced and missing. In such testing times, the nation has always found strength in the solidarity of its sports legends, who step forward to raise funds, awareness, and hope. Just as cricketers and athletes have supported relief efforts in past disasters, Pakistan once again looks toward its

heroes to unite the country and stand with flood victims in their hour of need. Arbab Niaz Cricket Stadium, formerly known as Peshawar Club Ground, is located in the heart of Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It was renamed in honor of Arbab Niaz Muhammad, a former provincial minister who played a key role in promoting sports in the region. The stadium was built in the 1980s and became one of Pakistan's recognized international cricket venues. It hosted first match in 1984 between Pakistan and India, while the first One Day International (ODI) was played in 1984 as well. Over the years, the ground has witnessed some historic cricketing moments, including matches featuring legends like Imran Khan, Javed Miandad, Wasim Akram, and Sachin Tendulkar. With a seating capacity of around 20,000 spectators, it was once a bustling center for international cricket in the region. However, due to security concerns and lack of renovations, international matches stopped being played there for nearly two decades. In recent years, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and the provincial government have worked on its renovation, expanding facilities and upgrading seating. The ground is now being revived with hopes of hosting Pakistan Super League (PSL) matches and possibly international cricket once again. Brief Score: Zalmi XI 145 all out 14.1 overs Babar Azam 41 Yasir Hameed 35 Shahid Afridi 3/12 A Rehman 18/3 Legends XI 137/6 Inzamam ul Haq 47 Azhar Mahmood 34 Zalmi win by 8 runs.

Tareen Tornadoes lift cricket league title



F.P. Report

LODHARAN: In the final of the second edition of the Tareen Cricket League, Tareen Tornados defeated Tareen Lions by 9 wickets to clinch the title. The chief guest, Dr. Abdul Saboor, CEO of Lodhran Pilot Project and former President of South Punjab Cricket Association, distributed prizes among the winning captain, the runners-up, and the best players of the match and the tournament. Addressing the closing ceremony, Dr. Abdul Saboor said:

"Cricket is the passion and hope of our youth. Our mission is to ensure that every talented boy and girl, not only from Lodhran but across South Punjab, gets access to quality coaching, proper facilities, and fair opportunities. In line with Ali Khan Tareen's vision, we are striving to bring forward the young talent of the region." Sohail Shehzad (Incharge, Tareen Cricket Academy), Coach Shahid Butt, Media Coordinator Ghazanfar Rehman, and Academy Manager Shiraz Bukhari also encouraged

the players and thanked the distinguished guests for their participation. The closing ceremony of the final match was graced by Sheikh Manawar Nadeem, Sardar Mehboob Khan Baloch, Rao Muhammad Imran, Azam Mehrvui, Usman Maral, Aqeel Siyal, Eshar Siddiqui, Raza Abbas Shah, Dr. Mushtaq, Muneer Khan Baloch, Dr. Rafiq, Ashraf Lail, Noman Manawar, Asif Altaf, Tasawwur Shah, and many others, who applauded the players for their excellent performances.

Nissanka's 122 leads Sri Lanka to 2-0 series sweep

HARARE (Agencies): Where Zimbabwe had faltered two days prior, Sri Lanka followed through in consummate fashion. Set a target of 278 in the second and final ODI in Harare, the visitors tracked it down with five wickets and three deliveries to spare. And with it, they swept the series 2-0. Similar to the first ODI, this too went down to the wire, and like that game on Friday, the chasing side seemed in control right up until the last. But here with wickets in hand, and a deep batting lineup, Sri Lanka held firm and saw the game through. That said, Sri Lanka perhaps made life more difficult for themselves than they needed to. They did not score a boundary in the

final powerplay until the 48th over - two ended up coming off that one, to leave the equation at 12 needed off 12 - but it meant the game was heading for yet another final over finish. In the penultimate over, Charith Asalanka got a boundary after deep mid-wicket had misjudged a skier, but was caught a ball later, having scored a crucial 71 off 61. Then, Kamindu Mendis defied space and time to inside edge an attempted reverse lap sweep for four, off a pinpoint Ngarava yorker to bring the equation down to 6 off 2. After that, the rest was a formality. The scorecard might indicate that the game was closer than it might have been, but with the Lankan chase anchored around Pathum Nissanka's sev-

enth ODI hundred - as he shared successive stands of 48, 20, 78 and 90 with Nuwanidu Fernando, Kusal Mendis, Sadeera Samarawickrama and finally Asalanka - the visitors were always in control. It was in that final stand with Asalanka that Sri Lanka would say they broke the spine of the chase, with their partnership, at a touch over run-a-ball, ensuring the scoring was brisk through the middle overs. Indeed, this period was one of the main points of differentiation between the two sides. Where Zimbabwe scored 139 runs for the loss of four wickets between overs 15-40, Sri Lanka struck 27 more runs and lost one less wicket in the same period.

Man City rocked by Brighton as West Ham ease pressure on Potter



LONDON (AFP): Manchester City blew the lead in a shock 2-1 defeat at Brighton that extended their troubled start to the Premier League season, while Liverpool braced for their blockbuster clash with title rivals Arsenal on Sunday. City striker Erling Haaland marked his 100th Premier League appearance with his 88th goal in the competition since joining from Borussia Dortmund in 2022. But the 25-year-old's third goal this season wasn't enough to help Pep Guardiola's side bounce back from last weekend's 2-0 home defeat against Tottenham. James Milner's second half penalty hauled Brighton level before Brajan Gruda's late strike completed City's collapse. Spain midfielder Rodri made his first league start for City since suffering a serious knee injury against Arsenal in September 2024. But Ballon d'Or holder Rodri, who had also started a Club World Cup match in the summer, was unable to inspire City to their second win of the season. Haaland should have given City an early lead after racing clean through, but he scuffed a tame shot straight at Bart Verbruggen. He also lashed just wide from 18 yards after a flowing City move. The Norway striker missed another chance with a weak header from Rayan Ait-Nouri's cross, allowing Verbruggen the chance to claw it to safety. Haaland persevered and finally pierced the Brighton defence in the 34th minute, stabbing past Verbruggen from close-range after Omar Marmoush prodded the ball into his path. Haaland forced Verbruggen into a miscued clearance just before half-time, but Rodri blazed the chance over. Matheus Nunes handed Brighton a lifeline in the 67th minute. Lewis Dunk shrugged off Bernardo Silva's attempt to mark him and blasted a shot that Nunes blocked with his arm away from his body. Milner sent James Trafford the wrong way with a clinical penalty before copying Diogo Jota's goal celebration in tribute to his former Liverpool team-mate who died in a car crash in July. It was the 39-year-old's first Premier League goal since 2019, making him the second oldest scorer in the competition's history behind Teddy Sheringham, who was 40 when he set the record. City were in disarray and German youngster Gruda made them pay in the 89th minute, breaking into the area before delivering a composed finish to spark wild celebrations as Guardiola looked on in disbelief. Hammers batter Forest In Sunday's other early game, West Ham eased the pressure on boss Graham Potter with a 3-0 win against Nottingham Forest. Potter had faced calls for his sacking after West Ham conceded eight goals in two successive top-flight defeats, then crashed out of the League Cup at Wolves. Former Chelsea and

Brighton boss Potter, who has only been in charge of West Ham since January, may have earned a stay of execution thanks to their late goal spree at the City Ground. England forward Jarrod Bowen curled home from 18 yards in the 84th minute. Lucas Paqueta converted an 88th minute penalty after Crysceno Summerville was fouled by Ibrahim Sangare. Callum Wilson sealed the Hammers' first win this season with a 90th minute header. Forest's first defeat this season came after boss Nuno Espirito Santo criticised the club's transfer policy and admitted his relationship with owner Evangelos Marinakis has suffered. Nuno led Forest into Europe for the first time in 30 years after an impressive seventh place finish last season. Liverpool and Arsenal boast 100 percent records after winning their opening two games of the season, setting the stage for a fascinating duel at Anfield. Arsenal finished as runners-up behind champions Liverpool last term and both clubs have been engaged in an expensive arms race since the end of the season. A host of high-profile signings aimed at tilting the balance of power in the title race have arrived at Anfield and the Emirates Stadium. The likes of Liverpool's Florian Wirtz and Hugo Ekitike and Arsenal's Martin Zubimendi and Viktor Gyokeres have their chance to shine under the spotlight on Sunday.

**In brief****Five outlaws arrested**

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Police have conducted operations in different areas and detained five outlaws for possessing drugs, liquor and illegal weapons. According to police spokesman, Jatli Police arrested drug supplier and recovered 1.6 kg of drugs from his possession. Similarly, Civil Lines Police arrested another supplier with 10 liters of liquor from his custody. While, Cantt Police detained supplier with 5 liters of liquor. Following operation, Naseerabad Police arrested two illegal arm holders and recovered weapons along with ammunition from their possession. Separate cases have been registered against all the accused. Divisional SPs commended police teams and said that those involved in drugs and illegal weapons will not be spared.

Adulterated milk destroyed

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) launched a major crackdown against adulterated milk in Rawalpindi Division, discarding over 37,000 liters of unsafe milk in separate operations. According to the PFA spokesperson, 20,000 liters of contaminated milk was destroyed in Rawalpindi's Katarian area, while 17,000 liters was seized and discarded on Chakwal Talagang Road. Laboratory tests confirmed the addition of vegetable oil and sugar. Cases have been registered against the vehicle owners in Rawalpindi and Chakwal, while three milk carriers are impounded by police for legal action. PFA reiterated that milk carriers are being checked daily across the division to prevent the supply of unsafe milk. The PFA underlined that adulteration of milk considered a basic necessity of life is a criminal offense. Citizens have been urged to report violations via the official helpline 1223.

Police seize illegal arms

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police, Kohsar police station team, arrested an accused and recovered an illegal 9mm pistol along with 15 live rounds during a successful operation. An official told on Sunday that the action was carried out in line with the vision of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi and the special directions of senior officers to ensure strict crackdown against criminal elements. He said the operation was conducted on the orders of SP/SDPO City Zone and supervised by SDPO Kohsar Circle. SHO Kohsar Police Station Mian Khurram Shehzad, along with Investigating Officer ASI Khushhaal Jappa, led the police team which arrested accused Muhammad Zulfiqar Ahmed, son of Khurshid Ahmed, resident of Club Road, Majestic Beaconet, Islamabad. During search, the police recovered a 9mm pistol with 15 live rounds from the accused. A case (FIR No. 948/25, dated 29.08.2025) was registered under AO 13/20/65 at PS Kohsar. An official added that Capital Police is taking every possible step to ensure the safety of citizens' lives and property, adding that strict zero-tolerance policy is being enforced against those involved in possessing illegal weapons.

Iran, Pakistan pledge stronger ties, vow to implement presidential visit agreements

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan, Dr Reza Amiri Moghadam, has provided a comprehensive briefing on the current status of bilateral relations and the efforts undertaken to further enhance the strong and friendly ties between the two neighboring and brotherly countries during his recent meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister, Seyyed Abbas Araghchi.

Taking to his official social media account 'X' on Sunday, he said the special emphasis was placed on the progress made following the recent

visit of the President of Iran, Dr Masoud Pezeshkian to Pakistan.

According to Dr Moghadam, Foreign Minister Araghchi expressed appreciation for the warm and gracious hospitality extended by the government and people of Pakistan to President Pezeshkian during his visit.

He conveyed satisfaction with the fruitful and constructive discussions held with senior Pakistani officials and reaffirmed Iran's firm commitment to the comprehensive development of bilateral relations. He emphasized that this commit-

ment aligns with Iran's policy of good neighborliness and includes active follow-up and implementation of the agreements reached during the presidential visit.

Minister Araghchi also highlighted the shared positions and active cooperation between Iran and Pakistan in numerous regional and international forums. He underscored the importance of continued high-level consultations between both sides to safeguard mutual interests and to contribute meaningfully to regional peace, security, and stability.



ISLAMABAD: People cross a water stream on stones in Saidpur Village after rainfall. —INP Photo

Eid Milad-un-Nabi celebrations begin

ISLAMABAD (APP): As the month of Rabi ul Awal commences, Eid Milad-un-Nabi celebrations have started with great fervor and enthusiasm across Pakistan.

The birth anniversary of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is being celebrated with great zeal, as people decorate their homes, mosques, and streets with lights and banners. In major cities like Lahore, Karachi, and Islamabad, the celebrations have already begun, with people gathering in large numbers to participate in milad mehfls and other events.

These gatherings are filled with the recitation of naats and Quranic verses, creating a spiritual atmosphere that resonates with the message of love and compassion. Fatima, a resident of Islamabad, said, "I love celebrating Eid Milad-un-Nabi because it reminds me of the Prophet's teachings and the importance of kindness and generosity".

She said that they decorate their homes, participate

in milad mehfls, and distribute sweets among our neighbors and the poor, as it's a time to come together and reflect on our values. "By engaging in acts of charity and kindness, we can embody the Prophet's teachings and create a more compassionate society", she stated. A participant in a milad mehfil, Rabiya, said, "Eid Milad-un-Nabi is not just a celebration; it's an opportunity for us to come together and make a positive impact in our communities".

She added that they gather to remember the Prophet's life and teachings, and to learn from his example as it's a time for them to reflect on their actions and strive to be better individuals. She further stated that Eid Milad-un-Nabi is a special occasion for them to reconnect with their faith and community. As the celebrations continue, people are also taking to the streets to participate in processions and rallies.

These events are marked by the chanting of

slogans and the recitation of naats, creating a sense of unity and solidarity among the participants.

The government has taken various measures to ensure the smooth conduct of these celebrations, including security arrangements and the organization of public events. As the celebrations progress, people are also engaging in acts of charity and kindness, reflecting the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)'s teachings on compassion and generosity.

Many are distributing food and clothing to the poor, while others are visiting hospitals and orphanages to spread joy and happiness.

As the month-long celebrations continue, people across Pakistan are coming together to honor and promote a culture of peace, love, and compassion.

The festivities are a testament to the enduring impact of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)'s teachings and the strong bonds of community that exist in Pakistan.

ITP, CTO Hamza roll out facilitation van schedule for citizens

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police have issued the schedule of the ITP Facilitation Vans — to operate from September 1 to September 6, 2025 — to provide driving license, traffic information, and related services at the citizens' doorsteps, under the supervision of Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Hamza.

An ITP official told APP on Sunday that the facilitation vans will cover different areas of the federal capital during the six-day schedule, working between 08:30 am and 04:30 pm daily, except Saturday when the service will conclude at 03:00 pm.

According to the schedule, van GAG-709 will be stationed at DHA Phase-II Gate No. 4 on September 1, at E-9 PAF Complex on September 2, Media Town Press Club on September 3, F-10 Markaz near Bolan Gate on September 4, B-17 Multi Garden Office on September 5, and at G-11 near Askari Bank on September 6.

Similarly, van GAC-656 will provide services at R-Block Pak Secretariat on September 1, G-9 Awami Trade Center on September 2, I-10 Markaz near D-Watson on September 3, D-12 Markaz on September 4, District Administration Office G-11 on September 5, and Bhara Kahu Simli Dam Road on September 6.

CTO Hamza said the initiative is aimed at providing maximum ease to citizens by bringing services closer to their localities.

He urged residents to avail themselves of these mobile facilities and cooperate with the Islamabad Traffic Police by following traffic rules.

Four day anti-polio drive in Rawalpindi district from Monday

RAWALPINDI (APP): The four-day anti-polio immunization drive in Rawalpindi district will start on Monday to mark a significant stride toward eradicating polio and boosting routine vaccinations across eight tehsils. Setting an overall target of 1,05,775 children, the drive will be rendered through a force of 5,188 teams.

According to the data received by APP, 225 Union Council Medical Officers (UCMOs), 765 Area In-Charges (AICs), 4,731 mobile teams, 263 fixed teams and 194 transit teams will take part to maximize

the target achievement.

The campaign will be conducted in Gujar Khan, Kahuta, Kallar Syedan, Kotli Sattian, Murree, Rawalpindi Cantt, Rawalpindi Rural, and Taxila Rural. CEO Health Authority, Dr. Ehsan Ghani expressed his confidence for achieving the target with the dedicated health workforce.

"The high deployment of mobile teams will bridge up gaps in rural areas, but sustaining this momentum requires addressing systemic challenges like education and access," he said

while urging the citizens to cooperate with the health workers.

Dr. Ghani also urged the media, religious scholars and social influencers to motivate the masses for vaccinating children.

The health authority has consistently monitoring the situation. CEO Health informed that two districts of Punjab, including Rawalpindi, have been moved from the red zone to the yellow zone due to their excellent performance in the anti-polio campaign, which is an honor for the district.

Minister appeals for flood strategy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Board of Investment Qaiser Ahmad Shaikh, on Sunday, called for a joint long-term plan to address floods that destroy millions of acres of farmland and crops, urging everyone to learn from this year and improve future strategies.

While speaking with a state news channel, Qaiser Shaikh praised the Punjab government's swift efforts in ensuring the safety of people during the ongoing floods. He further described his own recent visit to Chiniot, where rescue efforts are underway to evacuate residents and shift livestock to safety amid severe flooding.

He highlighted the coordinated operations by local authorities to secure the affected population and

protect animals from rising waters, emphasizing the importance of these immediate actions to save lives.

However, the minister expressed grave concern about the extensive damage to farmers' livelihoods and the destruction of crops across millions of acres of farmland. He noted that while evacuation and rescue are critical, the long-term impact on agriculture could be devastating for the local economy and food supply.

"The losses sustained by our farmers are significant, and it is vital that we prioritize measures to support them in recovering from this disaster," he said.

Minister Shaikh also stressed the urgent need for a comprehensive, joint plan to address future flood risks

and prevent such widespread devastation. Calling for collaboration among government bodies, communities and experts, he said, "We must learn from this experience and develop sustainable strategies to protect our farmers and agricultural lands from recurring flood damage."

He underlined that only through a united national effort can the country build resilience against future crises. Responding a query, he mentioned that most affected families are currently staying with relatives in safer cities, which has helped manage the displacement. The minister also highlighted the distribution of rice and animal feed to support those affected.

ICT Police seal illegal spas, sheesha cafés

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police carried out a major late-night operation against illegal spa centers and sheesha cafés in the Civic Center of a private housing society, Phase IV, sealing nine establishments and taking dozens of individuals into custody.

An official told APP on Sunday that the raid was supervised by SP Sihala Zone Captain (retd) Khurram Ashraf, while SHOs Fawaz Khalid (Loi Bher), Mian Zulfiqar (Sihala) and Alamgir Khan (Koral) led their respective teams on the ground. The operation commenced at 12:15 a.m.

He said that nine spas were inspected, including Sun Light Spa, Golden

Spa, SK Spa, Mind Relax Spa, Life Relax Spa, Serena Spa, Black Spa and AJ Spa. During the raids, a total of 69 people — 45 women and 24 men — were taken into custody.

He added that eight separate cases are being registered against the suspects on charges of involvement in immoral activities. A women's police station team also participated in the action, ensuring proper procedure during the arrests.

The police spokesperson said the crackdown was launched in response to multiple public complaints that such spas and cafés were being used as covers for unlawful and harmful practices, including drug use and "sheesha culture." He added that

the ICT Police is enforcing a strict zero-tolerance policy against such establishments.

Bilal Shabbir, a private company employee and resident of the society, told APP that he appealed to the higher authorities to ensure these centers are permanently shut down through legal means. Retired professor Irshad, another resident, echoed the demand, stressing that decisive measures were necessary to safeguard the community.

Another resident, Advocate Rai Usman, told APP that only by prosecuting those involved under strong legal provisions and securing exemplary punishments could this menace be effectively curtailed.

Drowned by delay: Pakistan's flood catastrophes expose global climate injustice, broken promises

ISLAMABAD (APP): As monsoon waters surged across Pakistan in 2025, the country was engulfed in one of its worst flood crises in recent history. Over 830 lives have been lost, almost two million people displaced, and millions more affected. Swollen rivers, relentless rains, and glacial melt have submerged entire communities, destroyed homes, and devastated livelihoods. This catastrophe, erupting in the shadow of unmet climate pledges, lays bare the chasm between global rhetoric and reality. Pakistan, though contributing little to global emissions, continues to bear the brunt of a climate crisis it did not cause.

Provinces such as Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have witnessed the heaviest casualties, particularly in flood-prone districts. Over 1.6 million people have been evacuated in Punjab alone. In total, more than 2,300 villages have been submerged. Many families have been forced to leave their homes with little warning, carrying only what they could salvage. Makeshift shelters and overcrowded relief camps are now home to those who have lost everything.

Pakistan's 2022 flood: A crisis left unresolved

In 2022, floods caused an estimated USD 30 billion in damages and economic losses. Over 1,700 people lost their lives, nearly 8 million were displaced, and the agriculture sector suffered damages worth approximately USD 5 billion. The floods also reduced Pakistan's GDP by 2.2% in

FY22 and triggered outbreaks of malaria and other waterborne diseases. Despite international pledges exceeding \$10 billion at the 2023 Geneva conference aimed at recovery and reconstruction, only about 20% of these funds have been disbursed, stalling critical relief efforts and leaving millions in urgent need.

The 2025 floods have only worsened an already dire situation. According to the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), recent heavy rains and swelling rivers in Punjab alone have submerged nearly 1,700 villages across districts including Kasur, Okara, Pakpattan, and Multan. More than 1.6 million people have been affected, with at least 17 lives lost and over 265,000 residents evacuated alongside 150,000 cattle. Hundreds of relief and veterinary camps have been set up, yet the scale of destruction is overwhelming.

Destruction of property, livelihoods, and the economy

The physical damage from the floods is staggering. Over 5,000 houses have been destroyed or severely damaged. Tens of thousands of hectares of vital crops such as cotton, rice, and wheat have been wiped out, while over 5,450 livestock have perished. In Punjab, at least 1,600 villages remain submerged, disrupting infrastructure, cutting off roads, and contaminating water supplies. Farmers face not only the loss of this season's harvest but long-term damage to soil fertility and



irrigation systems.

The agricultural sector, a backbone of Pakistan's economy, reels under this blow. Food inflation has begun to rise sharply, and the agriculture growth target for FY26 is now unlikely to be met. This threatens the country's GDP and deepens food insecurity, with ripple effects felt even in urban centers where staple prices are soaring.

The human cost: children and communities at risk

Children are among the most vulnerable victims. Many have died from roof collapses and drowning, while thousands more face malnutrition, disease, and disrupted education. Schools have closed in dozens of dis-

tricts, compounding trauma and threatening future generations. Families displaced repeatedly live in makeshift shelters with limited access to healthcare and sanitation, increasing risks of waterborne illnesses.

Stories from affected communities put a human face on this crisis. A mother from Kasur, displaced twice within a year, asked, "How many times do we need to evacuate now?" In southern Punjab, a resident looking at the ruins of her home lamented, "The water left nothing." These personal tragedies echo the ongoing national calamity.

Towards resilience: Early warning and community action
Amidst the devastation, local

innovations and community vigilance offer hope. In Gilgit-Baltistan, a timely warning from shepherds reportedly saved over 300 lives during recent floods, highlighting the critical role of local knowledge and swift communication. Experts stress that resilience depends on impact-based, multi-hazard early warning systems that combine technology with community engagement.

Dr. Zainab Naem, an environmental scientist, recommends a shift from hazard-based to impact-based risk management, emphasizing risk knowledge, early warnings, community preparedness, and anticipatory financing. She advocates for policies such as no-build zones on

flood plains, urban drainage upgrades with green infrastructure, nature-based watershed management, and climate-indexed insurance schemes. Equally vital is community involvement in maintaining risk registers, conducting evacuation drills, and operating localized rain and river monitoring systems.

A call for global accountability and urgent action

Pakistan's recurring flood catastrophes, from the devastating 2022 deluge causing \$30 billion in damages and millions displaced, to the worsening crisis in 2025, are stark reminders of the consequences of global inaction. Despite international pledges exceeding \$10 billion at the 2023 Geneva conference, only a fraction has materialized, leaving millions trapped in a cycle of vulnerability. Experts emphasize that true resilience requires shifting from reactive, hazard-based approaches to proactive, impact-driven strategies, backed by timely funding, community-led early warning systems, and sustainable climate adaptation.

The lives lost and livelihoods destroyed are not just Pakistan's tragedy; they are a consequence of broken promises by the world's biggest emitters. The global community must urgently fulfill its obligations, transforming pledges into action and reparations, to prevent further human suffering and uphold climate justice for those who bear the greatest burden yet contribute least to the crisis.

Wizard held, woman rescued

AIBAK (Pajhwok): A man has been arrested on the charge of witchcraft in Kholom district and a shackled woman rescued from house confinement in Dar-e-Souf Payeen district of Samangan. “A person in Kholom district used special magic tools to secretly and sometimes openly practice illegal magic and sorcery, making false and deceptive promises to solve people’s problems and charging them huge sums of money”, the statement said.

Refugees situation discussed

KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Abdul Rahman Rashid, Deputy Minister of Refugees and Repatriation, met with Alauddin Devlet Olgar, Chairman of the Turkish-Afghan Business Association, along with several Turkish businessmen, to discuss the situation of Afghan refugees in Turkey. Rashid urged for the voluntary, safe, and dignified return of Afghan refugees to their homeland. He highlighted the importance of addressing the legal challenges many refugees face while residing in Turkey.

Kabul praises Beijing’s move to link Afghanistan with CPEC

KABUL (TOLNews): The Islamic Emirate welcomes China’s agreement to include Afghanistan in the Pakistan–China Economic Corridor (CPEC) project.

While there are many challenges in economic and trade relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Deputy Prime Minister of Pakistan recently expressed hope about joint projects between the two countries. He said that with China’s support, trade and transit relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan will improve rapidly.

Ishaq Dar, Pakistan’s Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, stated that China has agreed in principle to include Afghanistan in CPEC.

He said this agreement is part of trilateral discussions between Islamabad, Kabul, and Beijing, the details of which are currently being finalized. Regarding this, Ishaq Dar said: “In the bilateral meeting held in China on May 20, I requested China to include Afghanistan in this project. We had proposed two specific projects: one was the Pakistan–Afghanistan–Uzbekistan railway line, and the other the Peshawar–Kabul highway, to which the Chinese side basically agreed.”

Afghanistan’s Ministry of Economy has also praised China’s initiative to connect Afghanistan to the economic corridor, stressing that this will contribute to the country’s economic

development.

Abdul Latif Nazari, Deputy Minister of Economy, said: “China’s initiative to connect Afghanistan with this project is a beneficial step for Afghanistan. We believe that through joint efforts we can ensure regional economic growth and development.”

Meanwhile, economic experts say that if Pakistan fulfills its trade and economic commitments with Afghanistan, the existing problems between the two countries will be resolved. Otherwise, regional projects such as CPEC, Afghan Transit, and others will not have any significant impact on improving bilateral relations.

Economic affairs analyst Mir Shakir Yaqubi said: “If

Pakistan fulfills its commitments, relations will expand through these projects. But no matter how many major projects and agreements there are, if Pakistan’s intentions are not genuine, changes will inevitably occur.”

Currently, alongside Afghanistan’s planned connection with CPEC, other joint projects such as the Afghan Transit transport project, CASA-1000 energy project, TAPI and TAP projects have also been practically launched. According to economic experts, the implementation of these projects will significantly strengthen economic ties between Afghanistan, Pakistan, and neighboring countries.

Work launched on water supply projects

FEROZKOH (Pajhwok): Construction work has been initiated on six water supply networks at a cost of 40 million afghanis in Ghor province, an official announced on Sunday.

Once completed, 1,400 families will gain access to potable water.

Zabiullah Ghawiszada, spokesperson for the Rural Rehabilitation and Development Department, told Pajhwok Afghan News: “These water supply networks are being established in Tulak, Saghar and Dawlatyar districts of the province.”

Funded by WB, the projects would be carried out under the supervision of the Department of Rural Rehabilitation and Development with technical assistance from the Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR), he said. He added the projects would cost 40,474,576 afghanis.

According to him, the schemes will provide 1,400 families with access to clean drinking water besides creating job opportunities for dozens of local residents.

Residents of these districts welcomed the launch of the projects and expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Ghor Rural Rehabilitation and Development Department and partner organisations.

Inayatullah, a resident of Dawlatyar district, said: “For years we struggled with a shortage of drinking water. We are happy that with the start of this project, there is now hope of having access to safe water in our villages. We are grateful to all institutions that supported this initiative.”

Photo on ID card for women optional

KABUL (Pajhwok): The National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA) says the Central Bureau of Investigation deems women’s photos on identity cards as a religious practice and optional based on strict necessity.

Mohammad Halim Rafi, spokesman for NSIA, told Pajhwok Afghan News the authority distributes identity cards to men and women across the country without any discrimination, and according to existing policies, placing photographs on the identity card is a necessary requirement for accurate identification.

He said when citizens travel to other countries, the countries have specific standards for having a photo and consider it necessary to have a photo on ID card.

“Regarding this issue, especially regarding the inclusion of a female image on the ID card, the NSIA sought guidance from the position of the Commander of the Faithful, may God protect him, and sent the issue to the Central Dar ul-Iftah for a final decision. According to Dar ul-Iftah’s decision No. 1075, the inclusion of a female image on the ID card is considered a religious act and optional based on dire necessity”, Rafi added.

Four years since last US soldier exits Afghanistan

KABUL (Pajhwok): The deputy spokesman of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan says the fourth anniversary of the withdrawal of the last US soldier from Afghanistan proved the country cannot be conquered and every occupier’s fate is a shameful defeat.

The United States launched its invasion of Afghanistan on October 7, 2001.

Together with NATO forces, it fought in Afghanistan for almost two decades before entering peace talks with the IEA in Qatar.

These talks culminated in the signing of an agreement in February 2020, under which all foreign troops were to withdraw from Afghanistan. The last US soldier departed from Kabul airport on August 31, 2021.

In an audio message, Hamdullah Fitrat, IEA deputy spokesman, said: “The 31st of August is a proud and highly significant day in Afghanistan’s history. It marks the tangible result of 20 years of jihad and sacrifice by the Afghan mujahid nation, which ultimately led to the withdrawal of all American and NATO forces from Afghanistan.”

He said the day demonstrated that Afghanistan’s land and people were “unconquerable” and Afghans were willing to sacrifice their lives and wealth for freedom.

Fitrat added: “It has also been proven that every occupier, no matter how



powerful or equipped with modern weaponry, has faced strong resistance and jihad from the Afghan mujahid people and in the end, their force, resources and technology have been defeated by the strength of faith.”

According to him, such days convey an important message to future generations of Afghans, as long as they remain united and willing to make sacrifices for their country’s freedom, the destiny of every occupier will be nothing but a humiliating defeat.

Farmers all praise for drip irrigation system

S H I B E R G H A N (Pajhwok): About 500 greenhouses have been equipped with the drip irrigation systems in northern Jawzjan province so far this year, with farmers saying their yields have increased manifold.

The climate is changing rapidly; global warming is causing droughts in some areas and storms, heavy rainfall, and floods in others.

What is drip irrigation system?

Agricultural experts explain in this system, water is delivered directly to the roots of plants and trees through pipes and drippers, and with a small amount of water, large areas of land can be irrigated and better yields can be obtained.

Jawzjan farmers say yields boost, water saved

Amanullah, a 37-year-old farmer from Baba Ali village of Shibergan city, claimed with a smile: “Our land used to remain thirsty due to lack of irrigation water, and yields were low, but since we activated the drip system, this year’s yields have almost doubled”.

Amanullah, who has been active in agriculture for more than 28 years, equipped 20 acres of his land with a drip irrigation system this year and is very pleased with the results.

“The drip system has made it very easy for us. We were able to irrigate our lands and make them greener by using less water. Earlier, we faced severe water shortages, and crops would dry up or destroyed. This year, we cultivated wheat, sesame, watermelon and cantaloupe on these lands, we even sold some of the products in Shibergan market, which brought us good profits”.

He advised other farmers to use modern irrigation systems to prevent water waste, and asked the government and aid agencies to provide farmers with advanced agricultural equipment and machinery to pave the way for a more increase in yields.

Abdul Ghaffar, another farmer from Ate Khawaja village, has a similar experience. He said: “At first, we thought this system was expensive and complicated, but now we see that water consumption has decreased and our work has become easier. We are hopeful for the future.”

He has equipped his ten acres of land with a drip irrigation system and cultivated wheat, watermelon, cantaloupe, eggplant, and okra, he added.

He expressed satisfaction with the increase of yields and increased sales of his products in the market, and urged the government to provide farmers with improved seeds and chemical fertilizers in a timely manner so that they could witness greater progress and quality in agriculture in the coming years.

“I am very satisfied with this year’s harvest. This system has not only saved water consumption, but the quality of the products has also improved”. Shah Murad, another farmer who irrigates his 15 acres of land through a drip system, said.

Like other farmers, he is demanding that the government and relevant institutions provide them with modern agricultural equipment and machinery so that they can produce more and better quality products in less time.

“If modern facilities and equipment are made available to us, agriculture in the country will flourish and people’s lives would improve”.

Expert: Modern irrigation boosts yields, cuts water use

Mohammad Rasool Sardash, an agricultural expert, explained that implementing drip irrigation and modern agricultural methods is an effective way to increase

yields and reduce water consumption.

“If farmers use these systems, they could produce more and better quality crops with less water consumption”, he added.

According to him, these methods also provide the basis for the production of fresh and diverse products, even in conditions of drought and water shortage, and bring the country closer to self-sufficiency in the agricultural sector.

He suggested that Agriculture and Livestock Department should expand its programs in coordination with donor institutions in the field of promoting this system and educating farmers.

500 greenhouses equipped with drip irrigation in Jawzjan: Official

Rustam Karimi, head of agricultural Department, told Pajhwok Afghan News that due to the continuous droughts and the reduction of water resources in the province, farmers in the province have suffered the most in recent years.

In coordination with partner institutions, they began implementing and promoting the drip irrigation system at the village, district and provincial levels, he added.

Karimi claimed this year, 500 greenhouses were equipped with drip irrigation systems. This measure reduced water consumption, prevented waste, and at the same time increased the production and quality of agricultural products.

He noted he had undertaken extensive programs to raise awareness and educate farmers so they could become more familiar with addressing water scarcity problems and managing water resources. This is despite the fact that in Afghanistan most agricultural land is still irrigated using traditional methods, and only a small number of people use drip irrigation systems.

Farah’s Bala Balok district gets administrative building

FARAH CITY (Pajhwok): Construction work on the administrative building of Bala Balok district has begun in western Farah province of Afghanistan.

The Governor spokesman Maulvi Abdul Malik Osama said the building would cost nearly 25 million (24,889,712) afghanis.

He said the three-storey building would have 35 office rooms and meeting rooms, and its construction would be completed in six months.

Local residents, welcoming the project, said the district had been deprived of education,



health, governance, and other services due to the past wars.

Haji Sheikh Ahmad, a resident, said with implementation of such projects,

people’s hope for the government’s attention to the district would increase.

Kandahar dairy plants process 120,000 liters of milk daily

KANDAHAR CITY (Pajhwok): A dairy processing factory officials in southern Kandahar province say they collect tens of thousands of liters of milk from livestock farmers every day, but in order to further increase the value of livestock farmers’ products, duty on imported powdered milk should be increased.

Kandahar is one of the provinces where people meet their living needs mainly through agriculture and livestock.

Nik Mohammad, a resident of Manara area of Arghandab district, who takes his cows’ milk to a dairy processing factory daily, explained that the milk was the only source of income for his family.

“My family looks forward to the money from this milk. Factories in Kandahar have given value to our milk. The economy of many poor people is based on this milk”.

According to Bakht Mohammad, a resident of the Jiwalahor area, he has

two cows at home and takes the milk to a dairy factory daily.

“This milk is purchased from us at a reasonable price. Before these dairy factories, our milk had no value; because there was a lot of it and people would buy it at very low prices in dairy shops”.

“I take milk to daily the center every morning. I maintain cows and meet other household needs. Previously, I took milk to village shops, which bought it at a very low price, but now I am happy that I earn a lot of money from selling milk”: Amena, a resident of Kalachi area of Dand district, said. She takes milk to the factory daily with her eight-year-old son and makes a living from the money she earns.

Hayat Masoom, operations manager of Milko factory, claimed currently they collect 55,000 liters of milk from 6,500 farmers daily against more than 1.5 million afghanis.

“Daily, we collect 55,000 liters of milk, a

small part of this milk is also collected from some districts of Helmand, we are trying to increase the amount of milk even more. Currently, our factory has 38 types of dairy products from this milk, products that were previously mostly imported from foreign countries”.

Masoom added that things are not the same now. Earlier, people would buy cows but were unable to see the milk sold. Now, cow milk is very valuable. In fact, many people in Helmand after shunning cultivating opium have bought cows to make a steady profit.

“Some organizations, in coordination with us, have provided cows to poor families, which has yielded very good results. Now these families have a good income from milk”.

Masoom called the import of dried milk a serious problem for farmers, saying dried or powdered milk was still imported into the country in large quantities because its price was

lower than fresh milk and many dairy shops used it.

He emphasized that if the imported milk was banned or taxes on it increased, the milk from farmers’ cows will become even more valuable.

“Currently, 12,000 liters of milk is obtained from large and small cattle farms in the province every day, most of which is processed in dairy factories, Agriculture and Livestock spokesman Mohammad Hanif Haqmal explained.

According to Haqmal, the operation of the factories has greatly helped the people, as there has been a demand for milk and all the goods that were previously imported from foreign countries are now produced here in good quality.

“There are currently 650 large and small farms in Kandahar, as well as thousands of families who keep one or two cows. These families make a living from the milk of these cows, and factories play a major role in processing this milk”.

Quality of ice produced in Kabul: Public concerns, review by MoPH

KABUL (Pajhwok): During hot summers, most families and shopkeepers in Kabul use ice, but concerns have arisen about its quality and safety. Officials say many ice production factories in the capital use rusted molds and substandard equipment.

Health experts warn that if rust detaches from molds and mixes with ice, its consumption can lead to various infectious and contagious diseases.

Ice is widely used daily in beverages, food storage, health centers, restaurants, shops and homes.

Standards for ice production

A standard ice production factory must ensure the safety and quality of its product by following strict health, technical, and environmental guidelines. Key measures include installing purification and filtration systems for incoming water. Machines, molds, tanks and walls should be

made of rust-resistant materials such as stainless steel, be thermally insulated and easy to clean.

Staff should wear clean work clothes, gloves, caps and masks to prevent direct contact between ice and unsanitary surfaces.

Eyewitness report

The yards of both factories visited were dusty and disorganized. Water storage tanks and interior walls were made of cement and appeared poorly maintained. Workers’ clothing was unclean and lacked proper uniforms. In one factory, molds and some workers’ clothing had rusted away.

Eng. Syed Nemat Hossain, Capacity Building and Public Awareness Specialist in Food Science at the Drug and Food Authority (DFA) of the Ministry of Public Health, said the Food Safety Risk Analysis and Surveillance Department reviewed 15 active ice factories in Kabul

over the past year and published their findings.

According to him, most ice factories do not meet the required standards and continue to use rusted molds, posing health risks.

He added, “Laboratory results confirm the presence of heavy metals in some of their water, which, if ingested, can pose serious health hazards.”

Rust in the ice industry: A public health threat

The DFA shared a copy of a report (Analysis 16 – “Potential Harms and Damages from Using Rusted Iron Molds in the Ice Industry”) with Pajhwok.

The report states that rust in sensitive industries—especially ice production, water purification, and food and pharmaceutical sectors—can have serious consequences.

Iron rust not only damages industrial equipment but its toxic particles can also enter air and water. These substances may contaminate drinking water, ice, and food, causing digestive and microbial illnesses.

The report further notes that under certain conditions, rust can combine with hazardous substances such as lead, arsenic, or nitrates to form toxic and carcinogenic compounds. If ingested through contaminated water or ice, these compounds can cause severe illnesses.

It said: “Studies show that the chronic accumulation of metallic oxides in the body may lead to neurological and cognitive disorders, kidney problems, damage to the liver and digestive system and an increased risk of cancer.”

Meanwhile, Dr. Syed Farid Shah Rafiye, an internal medicine specialist at Wazir Mohammad Akbar Khan Hospital, told Pajhwok that if rust separates from ice molds and mixes with ice, it may enter the body through consumption and cause various

infectious and contagious diseases.

He said that if rust combines with certain hazardous metals that were sometimes present in containers – such as lead or similar substances – it could pose even greater health risks and may even be life-threatening.

He added: “We have at times encountered patients in the hospital who, after consuming ice—particularly ice produced in rusted molds—have suffered from digestive problems and infectious diseases.”

MoPH recommendations for improving hygiene standards in ice factories

Safiullah Alamyar, a food analysis and surveillance expert at MoPH, said during a visit to ice factories: “We recommended to ice factories that they install water purification machines, replace their molds, wear proper uniforms and factory footwear

and strictly observe hygiene inside the factory.”

He emphasised that metal equipment in humid environments must be regularly inspected and that water and ice should be routinely tested to ensure they are free from metallic particles.

Consumers’ views on factory-produced ice

Ahmad Basir, a lemonade seller in Khair Khana area of Kabul, said: “I am not satisfied with this ice because the water is salty. If the water were sweet, it would be better. When I put the ice in my thermos, it leaves sediment at the bottom.”

He added: “Although I use this ice, I am not sure it is hygienic, as factory owners do not properly observe cleanliness.”

He called on ice producers to use clean, fresh water and to strictly maintain hygiene.

Similarly, Nazir Ahmad, a shopkeeper in Shahr-i

Naw area of Kabul, said they consume four blocks of ice daily, supplied by a company, but he was not confident about its hygiene.

He added: “When we look at their moulds, they are not in good condition. They do not observe hygiene. The moulds are very rusty and not cleaned properly. They also don’t use clean water. With frequent power cuts, most families are now using ice at home, which creates problems. People fall sick. The unhygienic nature of the ice is more noticeable in drinking water at home.”

He demanded stricter monitoring of ice factories and urged producers to use clean water and take cleanliness seriously.

Responses from ice producers

The head of one ice factory in Kabul told Pajhwok: “Salt water must be applied to the moulds so that the

outside does not freeze, but the inside does. Because of the salt, no matter what we do, the outside of the mould becomes rusty. It is impossible to prevent rust. However, we pay a lot of attention to cleanliness.”

He added that if their moulds become rusty, they replace them and do not allow rust to contaminate the ice.

He continued: “MoPH told us to focus on factory cleanliness, install filters, and prevent the moulds from rusting, because it harms people’s health.”

Another ice producer in Kabul said their moulds did not rust, but admitted they had not been using the water filter that was installed.

He added that going forward, they would activate it and put it to use.

He said that last year MoPH had also given them recommendations and they replaced their rusted moulds accordingly.

Sindh prepared to deal with floods: Murad

F.P. Report

SUKKUR/GUDDU: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, addressing the media at both Sukkur and Guddu barrages, said the provincial government's foremost priority is to protect human lives and livestock, followed by safeguarding the province's three major barrages.

"We have devised a comprehensive strategy. First, we will save people and cattle, then ensure the safety of Guddu, Sukkur, and Kotri barrages," he said.

He was accompanied by provincial Ministers - Sharjeel Memon, Nasir Shah, Jam Khan Shoro, while Mukesh Chawla joined him at Guddu and Mohammad Bux Khan Mahar at Qadirpur-Ghotki.

Mr Shah explained that water levels in Ravi and Trimmu rivers were rising and were being closely monitored, as inflows from Trimmu would reach Sindh in about five days via Panjnad. "By tonight, Trimmu may touch its

highest point, which will give us a clear estimate of how much water Sindh will receive," he said.

The Chief Minister said mapping had already been completed to identify vulnerable villages. "We know exactly which areas will be affected at different water levels - 500,000 to 700,000 cusecs, 700,000 to 900,000, or even beyond. If inflows cross 900,000 cusecs, over 200,000 people may be impacted," he warned.

Murad Shah noted that Sindh's terrain poses greater risks than Punjab's. "In Punjab, designated breaches allow water to return quickly to the river. But Sindh lies below river level, so once water spreads, it does not recede easily," he explained.

On the embankments, he highlighted six sensitive locations on the Right Bank of the Indus. "KK Bund is particularly vulnerable, while on the Left Bank, Shank Bund is structurally weak and may not withstand 800,000 to 900,000 cusecs. Still, our

top priority is to protect it," he stressed.

Preparations for a "super flood," defined as inflows of 900,000 cusecs or more, are underway. The CM said 948 relief camps have been set up, mobile health units are functional, and PDMA has established medical camps with essential medicines, including anti-snakebite vaccines. "Pakistan Navy, Army and Rangers are fully coordinating with us. Around 192 rescue boats are already deployed in katcha areas," he added.

Mr Shah assured that cooked food would be provided at relief camps and houses destroyed in katcha would later be rebuilt on higher ground. "Our utmost effort will be to minimise human losses," he emphasised.

Recalling past floods, Murad Shah said the Guddu Barrage had passed 1.1 million cusecs in 2010. "This time, even 900,000 to 1 million cusecs would be extremely challenging. On August 24, 550,000 cusecs had already flowed through Guddu, which

touched embankments and damaged crops in some areas. If inflows remain limited, losses will be manageable, but crops may still not survive," he observed.

The CM said all ministers, MPAs, and officials have been deployed on flood emergency duties, while security arrangements are being ensured with the help of the Corps Commander and DG Rangers. He added that Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari is in constant contact, President Asif Ali Zardari has been issuing directions, and provincial party president Nisar Khuhro has mobilised workers.

"Our leadership, party, and provincial government are united in saving people. I request the media to highlight shortcomings but avoid spreading fear. Sindh is fully alert, our preparations are complete, and our priority is to protect people, livestock, and barrages," Shah concluded.

Earlier, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali

Shah visited the Guddu and Sukkur barrages to review water flows, embankment conditions, and ongoing rehabilitation projects.

Guddu: At Guddu Barrage, Minister Irrigation Jam Khan Shoro and Secretary Irrigation Zareef Khero told the chief minister that the rehabilitation and modernisation project, launched in 2017, has achieved 72.6 per cent physical and 78.6 per cent financial progress. The project, being executed by China's New Era Development Group, is now expected to be completed by March 2026. Mr Shah directed that the project must be finished within the revised timeline without compromising on quality.

Sukkur Barrages: During his visit to Sukkur Barrage, Murad Shah reviewed the Sindh Barrages Improvement Project (SBIP), funded jointly by the Sindh government and the World Bank. The CM was told that the work on the proj-

ect was progressing as planned and is scheduled for completion by June 2027.

The Chief Minister termed the rehabilitation of barrages a "historic milestone" for Sindh's agriculture and economy, stressing that timely completion would ensure sustainable irrigation, better flood management, and protection of millions of families.

Visit to embankments: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah inspected the Kashmore-Kandhkot (KK) Bund and Qadirpur Shank Bund to review measures for their protection against the River Indus.

At KK Bund, the Secretary Irrigation briefed the CM that the river has been attacking the structure since 1995. After the 2010 super flood, studs and spurs were installed, with seven new structures completed in 2021 between miles 11 and 18. However, the river is now threatening the downstream side of mile 18. Emergency measures,

including stone dumping, stockpiling, and 24/7 monitoring, are in place.

In Qadirpur, Ghotki, the CM inspected the Shank Bund, a sensitive structure protecting 5,000 acres of katcha land and the Qadirpur Loop Bund. The bund has remained vulnerable for decades, with a major breach recorded in 2022, when a thunderstorm widened it to 550 feet. Remote sensing maps prepared on the CM's instructions showed 739 acres out of 4,029 acres were flooded.

Murad Ali Shah directed the Irrigation Department to intensify monitoring and reinforcement works, stressing that KK and Qadirpur bunds are critical to protecting Sindh's people, agriculture, and economy. PDMA: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah was briefed by the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Minister M a k h d o o m Mahboobzaman and DG Slaman Shah on flood preparedness at Guddu and

Sukkur barrages, where water flow may cross 900,000 cusecs.

According to the briefing, 15 districts, 167 UCs and 1,651 villages could be affected in case of a super flood, endangering over 1.63 million people (273,148 families). To deal with the threat, 948 relief camps have been established across vulnerable areas.

In flood-prone zones between Guddu and Sukkur barrages, the at-risk population includes 101,343 people in Ghotki, 194,569 in Sukkur, 224,900 in Kashmore and 264,542 in Shikarpur. Relief camps have also been set up in Larkana and Sukkur divisions.

The Chief Minister directed officials to ensure full support for affected communities, provision of essential items in camps and close coordination with citizens. "I have assigned ministers to supervise relief and rehabilitation works, and I am personally monitoring the situation," Murad Ali Shah said.

Punjab floods: 33 dead, thousands rescued, risk rising in next 24 hours

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Director General of Punjab Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Irfan Ali Kathia said on Sunday Punjab is currently experiencing one of the worst floods in its history.

At Head Balloki, the River Ravi is reaching peak levels, and the risk could increase further in the next 24 hours. So far, 33 deaths have been recorded due to the floods in Punjab.

During a briefing on the flood situation, DG Kathia said that the main flood stream of the Ravi is passing through Head Balloki, which may submerge more villages in Khanewal, Okara, and surrounding

areas. Water flow is also increasing in villages across Okara, Sahiwal, Kamalia, Khanewal, and Kabirwala. By tomorrow, 135,000 cusecs of water is expected to reach Pakpattan, Bahawalnagar, and Vehari.

He added that the flow of the Sutlej River has decreased, with 154,000 cusecs of water present at Head Sulemanki and 100,000 cusecs in the Bahawalpur region. At present, a stream of 260,000 cusecs is passing through Kasur.

According to him, water levels are receding in the Sutlej River at Kasur, but more villages may still be affected. The flood stream is expected to impact Bahawalnagar and Bahawalpur as well.

At Trimmu Headworks, water inflow has increased by 100,000 cusecs. By tomorrow, 135,000 cusecs of water is expected at Head Islam. At Head Sulemanki, water levels are projected to reach 175,000 cusecs by this evening, marking peak flood conditions there.

DG Kathia further stated that so far, more than 700,000 people have been rescued. Boats have also been arranged to rescue livestock, which are now available in all districts. In the next 5-6 days, once the water recedes, rescue operations will accelerate. The spell of heavy rain across Punjab, including Lahore, is expected to continue until September 2.

PM appreciates modern technology use in China for disaster management

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday visited National Earthquake Simulation Center at Tianjin University and appreciated the use of modern technology in China for disaster management.

The prime minister observed that the modern technology and methods being used in China would prove extremely beneficial for facing the natural disasters in Pakistan.

"By benefiting from the Chinese expertise in this regard, Pakistan will be able to adopt effective precautionary measures and strategies for facing the natural disasters in future," PM Office Media Wing in a press release quoted the prime minister as saying.

He said that projects such as the International Medical Center and the China-Pakistan Joint Lab for disaster management in Pakistan should be further strengthened and

the partnership between the two countries in this regard should be enhanced.

The prime minister, on the occasion, noted that at the national-level efforts were afoot to face the recent flood situation in Pakistan.

He said additional relief convoys were dispatched today by the federal government for the flood-affected families in Narowal, Sialkot, Wazirabad, Hafizabad, Chiniot, and Jhang.

These convoys would be handed over to the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), he added.

The prime minister directed the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) for complete coordination with the Punjab government in view of the current flood situation and to provide full support to the provincial disaster management authorities. He reiterated that

the relief operations for flood-affected families would continue.

At the National Earthquake Simulation Center, the prime minister was briefed on disaster management and rescue technologies, including newly developed medical rescue vehicles.

He was also given a briefing on the modern technologies developed for precautionary measures against natural disasters.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was informed that different projects in this regard existed under China-Pakistan cooperation while on others work was in progress.

These projects included the China-Pakistan Joint Lab for Disaster and Emergency Medicine created under the Belt and Road Initiative, the International Medical Cooperation Center, China-Pakistan Friendship Hospital and other similar initiatives, it was added.

Trump moves forward on plans for a Department of War, WSJ reports

WASHINGTON (Reuters): The Trump administration is advancing plans to rename the Department of Defense as the Department of War, the Wall Street Journal reported on Saturday, citing a White House official, after US President Donald Trump raised the prospect on Monday.

Restoring the Department of War name for the government's largest department would likely require congressional action, but the White House is exploring alternative methods to implement the change, the report said.

Republican Representative Greg Steube of Florida filed an amendment to the annual defense policy bill that would change the name of the

department, indicating some Republican support in Congress for the change.

The White House gave no details, but underscored Trump's comments this week emphasizing the US military's offensive capabilities.

"As President Trump said, our military should be focused on offense – not just defense – which is why he has prioritized warfighters at the Pentagon instead of DEI and woke ideology. Stay tuned!" said White House spokeswoman Anna Kelly, using the initials DEI to refer to programs aimed at increasing diversity, equity and inclusion.

Trump raised the idea of rebranding the Defense Department as the "Department of War"

while speaking with reporters in the Oval Office on Monday, saying it "just sounded to me better."

"It used to be called the Department of War and it had a stronger sound," Trump said. "We want defense, but we want offense too ... As Department of War we won everything, we won everything and I think we're going to have to go back to that."

The War Department became the Department of Defense through a gradual process, beginning with the National Security Act of 1947, which unified the Army, Navy, and Air Force under a single organization called the National Military Establishment.

An amendment to the

law passed in 1949 officially introduced the name "Department of Defense," establishing the structure in place today.

Trump and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth have been working to promote a more aggressive image of the military while making a spate of other changes, including purging top military leaders whose views have been seen as being at odds with Trump.

The Trump administration has also sought to bar transgender individuals from joining the US military and remove all who are currently serving. The Pentagon says transgender people are medically unfit, something civil rights activists say is untrue and constitutes illegal discrimination.

Local activists said the attack struck several neighborhoods in the city's west near the airport, which RSF forces have sought to capture.

The RSF, which evolved from the Janjaweed Arab militias accused of genocide in Darfur in the early 2000s, is seeking to wrest full control of the region from the army after being pushed out of the capital Khartoum earlier this year.

Seven dead, 71 wounded as Sudan's RSF shells besieged city

KHARTOUM (AFP): Shelling by Sudan's Rapid Support Forces killed at least seven people and wounded 71 others in El-Fasher, a medical source said Sunday, as the paramilitary group launched its fiercest offensive yet on the besieged city.

El-Fasher, the last major city in the vast western Darfur region still under army control, has become the most violent front line in the war between the Sudanese army and the RSF,

which erupted in April 2023.

In recent weeks, paramilitary forces have escalated their long-running siege, launching fierce artillery barrages and ground incursions into densely populated neighborhoods, the city's airport and the famine-hit Abu Shouk displacement camp.

The few hospitals still operational have been repeatedly bombarded and the local police headquarters captured by the RSF.

The medical source, who requested anonymity for safety reasons, said the true toll from Saturday's attack was "likely higher," as many injured had been unable to reach the hospital due to the intensity of the RSF's strikes.

Among the wounded, mostly suffering from shrapnel injuries, 22 were reported to be in a critical condition, according to the source, who was reached via satellite Internet to bypass a com-



SUKKUR: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah reviewing real-time water flow at Guddu and Sukkur barrages on a digital screen.

Steps taken amid flood threat: Sharjeel

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport and Mass Transit Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the Sindh government has taken emergency measures in view of the threat of a possible superflood. He stated that the Chief Minister of Sindh has personally inspected sensitive locations, including Guddu and Sukkur Barrages, where a flow of up to nine lakh cusecs of water is expected in the event of a superflood.

He emphasized that the government's top priority is the safety of human lives, livestock, and barrages. In a statement, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the district administration, PDMA, Pakistan Navy, and Pakistan Army are actively engaged in evacuation and relief operations, while 192 boats have been deployed in the Kachha areas to ensure timely evacuation.

He said that a survey of all Kachha areas has been completed, and maps detailing the population, houses, and livestock have been provided to the district administration. Arrangements have been made to shift thousands of families to safe locations, government schools, buildings, and tent villages. Food, clean water, and healthcare facilities are being provided at relief camps.

He added that the Sindh Chief Minister has directed authorities at all sensitive dams to speed up flood-fighting efforts and respond immediately to any emergency. Machinery, stones, and staff have been deployed at KK embankments, Shaheen embankment, Qadirpur, Rawanti, and other vulnerable sites, with officers maintaining round-the-clock surveillance.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that this is not only a test of the government or the administration but a challenge for all of us. He said that President Asif Ali Zardari and Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari are personally monitoring the situation, while party workers have been instructed to assist the affected people.

Russian attack on Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia

KYIV (Reuters): Russia launched a sweeping attack on Ukraine which killed one person, injured at least 24 others, and damaged infrastructure and residential buildings, authorities said on Saturday.

Three children were among the 24 wounded in the southeastern city of Zaporizhzhia, its Regional Governor Ivan Fedorov said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reported impacts on 14 regions by the attack, which used over 500 drones and 45 missiles.

Diplomatic efforts to end Russia's full-scale invasion have so far yielded little, even after U.S.

President Donald Trump met separately with Russian and Ukrainian leaders earlier this month.

On Friday, Zelenskyy brought up Trump's self-imposed deadline for deciding on new measures against Russia if President Vladimir Putin fails to commit to a one-on-one meeting with the Ukrainian leader.

"Two weeks will be on Monday. And we will remind everybody," he said. Russia has said there is no agenda for a potential summit between Putin and Zelenskyy.

"It is absolutely clear that Moscow used the time meant for preparing a leaders-level meeting to organize new massive attacks,"

Zelenskyy said on Saturday, calling for sanctions on Russian banking and energy sectors.

The air force recorded five missile and 24 drone hits at 7 locations with debris falling on 21 sites, according to the statement on the Telegram messaging app.

The attack on Zaporizhzhia cut power to 25,000 residents, Fedorov said. The local energy facility said the attack damaged its equipment and that repairs were underway.

As of early Saturday, Ukrainian state-owned railway Ukrzaliznytsia said it had repaired the damage to its infrastructure in the Kyiv region.

Biggest attempt yet to break Israeli blockade of Gaza

Flotilla leaves Barcelona

BARCELONA (AP): A flotilla of ships departed from Barcelona to the Gaza Strip Sunday with humanitarian aid and activists on board in the largest attempt yet to break the long Israeli blockade of the Palestinian territory by sea.

This comes as Israel has stepped up its offensive on Gaza City, limiting the deliveries of food and basic supplies in the north of the Palestinian territory. Food experts warned earlier this month that the city was in famine and that half a million people across the strip were facing catastrophic levels of hunger.

The Global Sumud Flotilla is carrying food, water and medicine. Activists on board demanded safe passage to deliver the much-needed aid and the opening of a humanitarian sea corridor, according to a statement. The almost 23-month war has killed more than 63,000 people, with at least 332 Palestinians dying of malnutrition, including 124 children, according to the Gaza Health Ministry.

The maritime convoy of about 20 boats and delega-

tions from 44 countries is claimed to be the largest attempt to date to break the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip by sea, which has now lasted 18 years. They will be joined by more ships from ports in Italy and Tunisia in the coming days, on the route from the western end of the Mediterranean to the Gaza Strip, organizers said.

Thousands of supporters flocked to the Barcelona pier, some of them wearing kaffiyehs and chanting "Free Palestine!" and "Boycott Israel!" to send off a wide variety of boats, flying Palestinian flags, from rundown old luxury yachts to tiny wooden sailboats and industrial-looking vessels. One of them, the Sirus, is more than 100 years old.

Around 70 boats are expected to take part in the final leg of the journey, flotilla spokesperson Saif Abukeshke told Spanish public television after the departure.

The fleet could reach Gaza around Sept. 14 or 15, he added.

"The story here is about Palestine. The story here is

how people are being deliberately deprived of the very basic means to survive," said Swedish activist Greta Thunberg at a news conference. She is one of the most recognizable figures on the expedition, formed by hundreds of activists, politicians such as the former mayor of Barcelona, Ada Colau, and journalists.

Ships carrying tons of humanitarian aid departed from the Italian city of Genoa and will join the expedition in the coming days.

It is not the first time Thunberg has attempted to reach Gaza waters this year. She was deported by Israel in June when the ship she was traveling on with 11 other people, the Madleen, was stopped by the Israeli military.

"It has been very clear that Israel has been continuously violating international law by either attacking, unlawfully intercepting the boats in international waters, and continuously preventing the humanitarian aid from coming in," said Thunberg in an interview with The Associated Press on Saturday.