

Earthquake shakes KP
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A 5.3 magnitude earthquake struck parts of KP on Wednesday, sending tremors as far as Gilgit-Baltistan, the National Seismic Monitoring Centre reported. The tremor was experienced in Peshawar, Swat, Malakand, Swabi, and Mansehra, along with neighboring regions. Gahkuch city in Gilgit-Baltistan's Ghizer district also recorded the quake.

The Frontier Post

25 dead in Kabul mishap

KABUL (Pajhwok): At least 25 people have been killed and 27 others injured when a 580-type passenger bus overturned in the Arghandi area of Kabul, the Ministry of Interior said on Wednesday. Mufti Abdul Matin Qane, spokesman for the MoI, told Pajhwok Afghan News that the accident occurred around 2:00 a.m. on Tuesday, when the bus veered off the road near Bredagi Square in Arghandi and overturned due to driver negligence.

200,000 evacuated as Indian water release triggers floods in Pakistan

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Federal authorities say nearly 210,000 people have been safely evacuated from flood-affected regions across Pakistan with no casualties reported. Speaking to the media, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) chairman Lt Gen Malik said large-scale rescue efforts are being carried out in close coordination with the Pakistan Army, Rangers, Rescue 1122, Provincial Disaster Management Authorities (PDMAs), and other agencies, with evacuees relocated to relief camps where they are receiving medical care, food, and other essential services.



He said the NDMA has issued early warnings for a new spell of rainfall expected between August 29 and September 9, particularly in the catchment zones of the flooded areas, adding that local administrations, NGOs, and other stakeholders have been alerted to take precautionary measures to minimise potential losses. The chairman said the water flow at Panjnad is expected to surge between 600,000 to 700,000 cusecs in the coming days and the

NDMA is actively sharing early warning information with the Sindh PDMA and other relevant authorities to ensure timely preparedness. Pressure levels at key downstream points such as Kotri and Guddu are also being monitored closely, while evacuation from flood-affected areas along the Sutlej River will continue as water levels rise. Army formations are released 200,000 cusecs of water into the River Ravi as a result of which it is in extremely high flood level, prompting alerts in low-lying areas of Shahdara. At Jassar, the River Ravi is in exceptionally high flood with a water flow of 229,700 cusecs. The river has put the Lahore to Islamabad section – M-2 – of Motorway in threat. In Narowal, floodwaters from the River Ravi have entered the Kartarpur Corridor, raising concerns of serious damage to the Sikh religious site. The gurdwara premises have been submerged under 5 to 7 feet of water. Narowal Road and the Shakargarh highway have been closed to traffic due to flood.

A major breach has occurred in the protective embankment of River Ravi near Bhiko Chak in Shakargarh, resulting in the submergence of several villages. Evacuations are underway as floodwaters inundated a vast area. In village Jarmian Jhande, near Shakargarh, 21 people trapped in their houses by rising waters, were successfully rescued. The water flow in the River Ravi continues to rise steadily. In response to the worsening situation, Civil Defence has issued a high alert and sirens have been sounded in the area. Meanwhile, the River Sutlej is also in high flood. At Head Ganda Singh, the water flow has reached 245,000 cusecs. In Bahawalnagar, the rising water levels have cut off ground access to several villages.

Two soldiers martyred during flood relief work

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Relief operations by the Pakistan Army in flood-affected regions are continuing on the directives of Field Marshal Asim Munir.

The announcement was made by Director General ISPR, Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, during a press conference in Islamabad, where he was joined by Minister for Information Attaullah Tarar and the Chairman of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). He stated that so far, the army has rescued more than 28,000 people from severely impacted areas. The army, he said, stands firmly with the people in their time of crisis. Lieutenant General Chaudhry confirmed that during these rescue operations, two Pakistan Army soldiers embraced martyrdom and two others sustained injuries. He noted that the soldiers were actively engaged in difficult terrain and harsh weather conditions when the incident occurred. In addition to rescue work, the army has played a critical role in restoring infrastructure. Three major bridges damaged by the floods in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit have already been repaired and reopened.

In Azad Kashmir, army battalions remain engaged in rehabilitation activities, ensuring vital road connections and supply routes are maintained. Army engineers, working alongside district administrations, have also cleared several roads to reconnect isolated communities.



ISLAMABAD: President of Asian Development Bank, Mr. Masato Kanda called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

PM lauds ADB's longstanding partnership with Pakistan

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday appreciated Asian Development Bank's (ADB) longstanding partnership with Pakistan and said that ADB had always been a reliable partner in the country's journey towards development and prosperity.

He noted that it was highly encouraging that ADB was interested in partnering on several major projects in Pakistan, which could prove as revolutionary for the country's economic progress. President of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Masato Kanda, along with his delegation, met the prime minister at the PM's House, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The prime minister further said that Pakistan and ADB could further their cooperation in the fields of railways, public transport, and minerals sectors that would significantly benefit Pakistan's economy. He also briefed the ADB delegation on the reforms initiated by the incumbent government which included increasing tax revenues, reforms in the energy sector, improving fiscal stability, measures against the devastating effects of climate change, reduction in the untargeted subsidies, and expansion of social security.

The meeting was attended by Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema, Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb, Minister for Power Division Sardar Awaiz Ahmad Leghari, Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi, Minister of State for Finance and Railways Bilal Azhar Kayani and other relevant senior officials. The ADB president acknowledged Pakistan's longstanding association with the institution as a founding member.

He appreciated the comprehensive reforms undertaken by the government of Pakistan and reaffirmed Bank's continued support for the country. He reiterated ADB's commitment to strengthening cooperation with Pakistan in infrastructure development, climate change, and institutional reforms.

MoU between Pak, Belarus paves way for export of skilled Pakistani workers: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif expressed his satisfaction that as a result of the consensus reached during his visit to Belarus, a memorandum of Pakistan and reaffirmed Bank's continued support for the country. He reiterated ADB's commitment to strengthening cooperation with Pakistan in infrastructure development, climate change, and institutional reforms.

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CM chairs high-level meeting on flood preparedness

F.P. Report

KARACHI: A high-level meeting was held at the Chief Minister's House in Karachi under the chairmanship of Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah to review flood preparedness across the province.

Senior Minister of Sindh and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit, Sharjeel Inam Memon, stated that the meeting issued instructions for immediate action in the province, taking into account the recent devastation caused by floods in Punjab and the latest warnings from the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD).

According to the press release, the Chief Minister warned that very high flood levels are expected at the Guddu and Sukkur locations of the Indus River on 4th and 5th September. All relevant authorities have been instructed to remain alert and ensure full implementation of the Provincial Monsoon Contingency Plan 2025.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon stated that the Chief Minister directed divisional commissioners, deputy commissioners, the PDMA, and relevant departments to remain on 24-hour alert, take immediate measures to protect embankments and vulnerable communities, and ensure the availability of essential arrangements, including tents, ration bags, boats, medicines, and machinery.

The press release also stated that the Chief Minister assigned various ministers and members of the provincial assembly to the right and left banks of the Indus River to directly monitor the condition of embankments and high-risk areas.

According to the statement, the health department was instructed to immediately deploy medical teams and carry



Sindh appoints ministers as flood focal persons amid rising Indus river risks

F.P. Report

KARACHI: In view of flood concerns in Sindh, the Sindh government has appointed provincial ministers as focal persons. The notification was issued after approval from the Sindh Chief Minister.

Due to the ongoing flood situation in Punjab, the Sindh government has designated ministers to monitor and assess potential risks in districts along the Indus River.

According to the order issued by the Chief Minister's Secretariat, the appointed ministers will oversee the right and left banks of the river within their respective jurisdictions.

For the area from Guddu to Sukkur, Excise and Taxation Minister Mukesh Kumar Chawla has been appointed as the focal person for the right bank, while Agriculture, Sports and Youth Affairs Minister Sardar Muhammad Baksh Mehwar will oversee the left bank.

For the area from Sukkur to Kotri, Industries and Commerce Minister Jam Ikramullah Khan Dharejo will oversee the right bank, while Energy and Planning Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah will oversee the left bank.

Below Kotri, Religious Affairs, Zakat and Ushr Minister Riaz

Hussain Shah Shirazi has been appointed as the focal person for the right bank, while Livestock and Fisheries Minister Muhammad Ali Malkani will oversee the left bank.

The notification also directed all Members of the Provincial Assembly (MPAs) from districts along the Indus River to remain in their constituencies for the next week and maintain close coordination with the designated focal persons. The appointed ministers have been instructed to work with the Sindh Irrigation Department to assess flood risks and involve MPAs in the protection and monitoring of river embankments.

out preventive vaccination campaigns against waterborne diseases. The KMC, local bodies, and rescue officials were directed to ensure emergency evacua-

tions, provide heavy machinery, and arrange safe shelters.

In the statement, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said the Chief Minister stressed

that protecting people's lives and property is the top priority, and all institutions must maintain full coordination with the NDMA and federal authorities.

Solarization of 37 railway stations completes

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Railways has completed solarization of 37 railway stations, which will help lower the Pakistan Railways reliance on conventional power and save Rs 163.52 million in electricity expenses.

According to the documents available with Wealth Pakistan, out of 37 railway stations already shifted to solar power, nine have been solarized in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and 28 in Punjab.

The solarized stations in Punjab are Hassanabdal, Nur, Taxila, Chaklala, Domeli, Basralla, Raiwind, Lahore Cantt, Walton, Kala Shah Kaku, Kot Radha Kishan, Okara City, Okara Cantt, Changa Manga, Chak Jhumra, Sangla Hill, Dural Ehsan, Kot Lakhpata, Gujranwala, Gujrat, Rukarpur, Jhama, Shorkot, Rajpoot Nagar, Sher Shah, Galewala and Jan Muhammad Wala.

The solarized railway stations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are Kundian, Peshawar City, Nowshera, Attock City, Jand, Basal, Pabbi, Daud Khel and Jahangir Road. The government had launched a plan for solarization of 155 railway stations across the country to save millions of rupees spent on the electricity cost. The Pakistan

Railways had projected a cost of Rs450 million for solarization of 155 targeted railway stations across the country. As per documents, solarization of another 42 stations will be completed by December this year.

In Punjab, solarization of 23 stations in Multan region and nine in Rawalpindi is in progress, with an estimated cost of Rs 43.83 million and Rs26.809 million, respectively. The solarization of stations in these two regions will help the Pakistan Railways save Rs40.4 million. Likewise, solarization of 10 railway stations in Balochistan at an estimated cost of Rs13.396 million will save Rs 9.18 million annually in terms of electricity cost.

Financial evaluation of bids for solarization of 76 railway stations — 61 stations in Sindh and 15 in Balochistan — is in process. The estimated cost of solarizing these stations is Rs183.23 million and Rs15 million, respectively. The government will save Rs113.86 million annually in terms of electricity bills.

A senior official of Pakistan Railways told Wealth Pakistan that the government has especially

focused on the infrastructure and other related developments in the last three years, testifying to its seriousness about modernizing the railways department and reducing its expenses. He explained that it was an example of the government's seriousness about the matter that the Asian Development Bank (ADB) had recently agreed to fund the upgradation of a 500-km railway line from Karachi to Rohri. The official said the Punjab government's willingness for the upgradation and dualization of railway tracks in the province is another positive step, which will strengthen the railways department.

The official said the Main Line-1 (ML-1) project is also another major focus of the government. The track — a primary rail corridor from Karachi to Peshawar — will enhance transport efficiency, reduce travel time, and facilitate freight and passenger movement, particularly as part of Pakistan's strategy with Central Asia. He said rationalization of funds by the Punjab government for Rawalpindi-Lahore fast train project also signifies its commitment to development of the railways department.

Saudi GACA team visits Multan airport

F.P. Report

MULTAN: A six-member team from the General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA), Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, led by Mr. Majed Abdul Rahman A. Alwahaibi visited Multan International Airport (MIAP). The team was accompanied by Director Security PCAA, Air Cdre (R) Mr. Shahid Qadir.

The delegation was welcomed by Chief Operating Officer / Airport Manager, Mr. Anwar Zia, along with sectional heads of the Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA). An introductory meeting was held, followed by an extensive tour of airport facilities, including the terminal building, cargo, ramp, catering services, and flight operations.

The purpose of the visit was to review aviation security and operational procedures, covering passenger and baggage screening, aircraft security mechanisms, cargo operations, catering protocols, airline procedures, and ground handling agency functions.

The Pakistan Airports Authority remains committed to strengthening international cooperation and upholding the highest standards of aviation security and service delivery.

possible future flood situations and other matters. President Asif Ali Zardari wants national consensus and is striving for the country's integrity and prosperity. Demands for new provinces are not possible without the approval of the concerned assemblies under the Constitution, and the Sindh Assembly will not grant such approval.

Answering another question, he said that if any faults are found during rain or construction on the section of Shahrah-e-Bhutto that is not yet open to the public, they will be fixed. Shahrah-e-Bhutto is a public-private partnership project, and under the agreement, the company will be responsible for its maintenance for the next 25 years. No money from the public exchequer is being spent on this. Some elements are deliberately running campaigns against the PPP Sindh government. On yet another question, Sharjeel Inam Memon said he has issued clear instructions to complete the Red Line BRT corridor project by December to provide relief to the public. He added that Khursheed Shah is a valuable asset of the Pakistan Peoples Party. "We all pray for his health, and his condition is now better than before."

Aleem Khan reviews flood situation in Shahdara

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan on Wednesday reviewed the flood situation in Shahdara and directed the administration to ensure maximum relief facilities for citizens affected by the rising water level in River Ravi.

Talking to the media after receiving a comprehensive briefing from the district administration and rescue officials, the minister said the situation in Shahdara was critical, as the area was the first to come under threat whenever the River Ravi experienced flooding.

He said that unlike the past, population density in the riverbed had increased significantly, with many makeshift houses and informal settlements built on locations where habitation should not have existed.

He said the local administration had already evacuated settlements established

inside the riverbed and shifted nomadic families whose huts and temporary shelters were at risk.

However, he added that some nearby localities had not been evacuated but residents had been placed on high alert to move immediately if required.

Abdul Aleem Khan said the night ahead was particularly critical and the administration was monitoring the water situation on an hourly basis, with reports being shared regularly with the Prime Minister. He added that resources had been mobilized and protective measures reinforced to minimize potential losses.

The minister said that floods in the Ravi come again and again, so long-term steps were needed to reduce the risk. He pointed out that the Ravi Urban Development Authority (RUDA) had designed a protective embankment and stressed that work on the

proposed road-cum-dyke should be completed quickly, as it would help protect nearby communities.

He also emphasized that many new societies and residential schemes had been developed close to the riverbanks, which increased vulnerability in times of flooding. "We cannot dictate the path of a river. Its natural course can change anytime, therefore settlements and constructions near the Ravi must be carefully regulated," he remarked.

The federal minister reiterated that the government and local administration were fully alert and making every effort to protect lives and property. "This is a natural disaster, and we must face it collectively and wisely. The administration is on the ground, people are being alerted, and those residing in unsafe areas must cooperate by moving to safer locations," he added.

DC reviews flood preparedness, assures relief facilities

LAHORE (APP): Deputy Commissioner Lahore Syed Musa Raza said on Wednesday that all necessary arrangements had been finalized to deal with any possible flood situation in the district.

He expressed these views during his visit to Theme Park, Chuhng, where he inspected flood protection measures along with officers of Rescue 1122 and other relevant departments. Assistant Commissioner Raiwind Zohaib Mumtaz and senior officials of departments concerned were also present on the occasion.

Briefing the Deputy Commissioner, it was informed that all relief camps equipped with food, clean drinking water and medical facilities, had been made fully operational. It was further informed that evacuation of residents from red-alert areas had already been completed, while representatives of all departments were active in the field and on high alert.

The Deputy Commissioner directed officials to ensure uninterrupted supply of essential facilities at the relief camps and maintain round-the-clock monitoring of protective embankments along River Ravi. He stressed that coordination among all departments was vital to deal with any

emergency situation.

"Protection of life and property of citizens is our foremost priority," he said and added that the district administration was fully prepared to respond to any eventuality, and advance measures had been finalized to minimize the potential losses.

Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner Syed Musa Raza also inspected flood protection measures at Sagianwala Bypass and Shahdara Distributary Canal and said the district administration had completed all arrangements to tackle any possible flood. Relief camps were functional, evacuations from vulnerable areas completed, and all departments placed on high alert to safeguard citizens, he added.

Earlier, the DC was briefed that the water level in River Ravi was rising and pressure had increased at Jassar, while a discharge of 135,000 cusecs was expected to enter the river.

He was apprised that 10 relief camps had been established at Karol War, Arzi Janjua, Jia Musa and other locations to provide food, medical aid and essential facilities to the affected people.

It was further informed that Old Shahdara Bridge, New Shahdara Bridge and Sagian Bridge were among the possible flood passages.

Governor for adopting AI for transformational public governance

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan, on Wednesday stressed the need for adopting Artificial Intelligence (AI) to promote innovation, transparency and efficiency in public service sectors across the country.

Addressing the closing session of the third annual Public Policy Conference, on 'Artificial Intelligence in Public Policy and Governance,' organised by the National Institute of Public Policy (NIPP), here at the NSPP, the governor termed that AI a game-changing force in governance and policy implementation, especially in combating climate change and reforming administrative systems.

"Artificial Intelligence has revolutionized every aspect of modern life. We must harness this technology to bring efficiency, transparency and innovation to our public institutions," he said.

Governor Saleem Haider called for enhanced investment in AI research and development. "If we are to compete globally, we must invest in develop-

ing our AI capabilities," he added. The governor urged civil servants to serve with compassion and professionalism, stating that bureaucracy must rebuild public trust through character and conduct.

He shared recent initiatives to improve public accessibility to governance, including opening the Governor House to citizens and directing staff to maintain courteous interactions with visitors.

Sardar Saleem Haider remarked that politicians were the most scrutinized segment of society and emphasised distinguishing between individuals and broader political narratives.

The Governor concluded by emphasizing the need for close collaboration between the public sector and academic institutions to develop an effective national AI strategy aligned with Pakistan's socio-economic needs.

Senior officials, scholars and AI experts attended the session, including NSPP Rector Dr Muhammad Jamil Afaqi and Dean NSPP Dr Naveed Elahi.

Mohtasib summons officials over Red Zone congestion

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Taking cognizance of the congestion caused by long queues of the vehicles in the Red Zone, the Wafaqi Mohtasib, Mr. Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi has summoned the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner Islamabad alongwith DG (Environment) on Friday, 29 August, 2025 to his office in this regard.

According to the details, the Environment Division, for the past few weeks, has been conducting an exercise to check whether the vehicles plying in the capital are environment friendly or not through a technical process being carried out at the D-Chowk, Islamabad, commencing in the morning and continuing till late in the afternoon. A number of concerned citizens have approached the Wafaqi Mohtasib Office in this connection, saying that the activity is causing great inconvenience to them and their families. Responding to these complaints, the Wafaqi Mohtasib has initiated the action.

The process itself has raised questions like why has a sensitive place like the Red Zone been chosen for the inspection of vehicles and placement of environmental stickers on them and whether any awareness campaign has preceded this activity. He has also enquired why the organization concerned has selected only one point in the entire federal metropolis for this purpose thereby causing huge congestion in the adjoining areas.

ANF arrests 6 smugglers

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), conducting 6 operations across the country, recovered as many as 248 kilograms of drugs worth more than Rs 336.8 million and arrested 6 suspects, including 2 Afghan nationals, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Wednesday.

He informed that 990 narcotic pills were recovered from a British citizen of Afghan origin who was going to the UK at Jinnah International Airport Karachi. As much as 800 grams of ice were recovered from a parcel sent to Qatar at a courier office located in Upper Mall, Lahore.

Similarly, 3.6 kg of hashish was recovered from an Afghan national near the Sohrab Goth Bus Terminal in Karachi. During another operation, 2.4 kg of hashish was recovered from a vehicle near the Motorway Toll Plaza in Islamabad, and 2 suspects were arrested. As many as 700 grams of ice were recovered from the luggage of 2 suspects near Niazi Adda, Lahore.

In another operation, 240 kg of heroin hidden for smuggling was recovered in Killi Daman Chaman. Cases have been registered against the arrested suspects under the Narcotics Control Act, and further investigations are underway.

Yellow Line BRT project progressing rapidly: Sharjeel

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Senior Minister and Provincial Minister for Information, Transport, and Mass Transit Sharjeel Inam Memon said that construction work on the Jam Sadiq Bridge, an important part of the Yellow Line BRT, is progressing rapidly and will be completed ahead of schedule. Separate lanes have been built on the bridge for pedestrians and cyclists. One corridor of the bridge will be reserved for the BRT, while the rest will remain open for regular traffic. After this bridge is completed, the old Jam Sadiq Bridge will be demolished and replaced with a new one of the same design.

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon visited the Jam Sadiq Bridge in Karachi to review the construction work. He was accompanied by Transport Secretary Asad Zamin and Yellow Line BRT Project Director Zameer Abbasi. The Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon was given a detailed briefing on the ongoing construction activities.

Speaking to the media, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that work is also underway on the depots of the Yellow Line BRT. Once completed, this project will provide modern facilities to the people of Karachi. Supported by the World Bank, the project will significantly improve the



city's transport system and help reduce traffic problems. He added that work on the central corridor of the Red Line BRT is also moving at a fast pace. Next month, double-decker buses will be introduced in the city, along with a large number of electric buses. Furthermore, the distribution of free pink scooters for women will begin by the end of this month or early next month. Women are being provided free training and driving licenses, while working women and students will receive electric scooters.

Sharjeel Inam Memon said the Sindh government is actively working to provide facilities to the people. The Pink Scooter Scheme aims to empower women, and such initiatives in the Transport Department have never been taken before.

He added that Chairman

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is currently in Larkana, distributing property rights certificates to thousands of women. Under the "Apni Zameen, Apna Chhat" program, houses are also being built for women. Following Bilawal Bhutto's instructions, land is being distributed to landless individuals. He said Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is completing the largest project in world history, something never seen before.

Sharjeel Inam Memon further said that yesterday a high-level World Bank delegation met the Sindh Chief Minister at the CM House to discuss the Sindh Peoples Housing Scheme. The delegation expressed satisfaction over the work on the Yellow Line BRT. He said the Sindh government, under Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's guidance, is work-

ing with full dedication. To help people overcome the energy crisis, free solar panels are being distributed. The Pakistan Peoples Party is a people's party and is taking public interest initiatives in every sector.

In response to a question, the Senior Minister said that the recent floods in Punjab have created a serious situation, and people are facing difficulties. If the Punjab government needs any assistance, the Sindh government is ready to help. He added that if a flood situation arises in Sindh, the government is fully prepared.

He said that after the recent rains in Karachi, citizens faced difficulties for a few hours, but some specific media houses launched an exaggerated campaign. These same outlets are not showing the same attitude toward the floods in Punjab. He said that instead of politicizing natural disasters, people should be informed of the facts, such as the time it takes for water to recede, but assured that the government and administration are fully present.

On another question, he said cabinet changes are the prerogative of the Chief Minister, and there is nothing wrong with that. There is always room for improvement, and new people should be given opportunities. He said that during his meeting with President Asif Ali Zardari, discussions were held on

CS chairs meeting on good governance roadmap reforms

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A high-level meeting chaired by Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shahab Ali Shah was held in Peshawar to review the progress, timelines, and implementation of reforms under the Good Governance Roadmap in the Local Government Department, Peshawar Development Authority (PDA), Tourism Department, and Health Department.

The meeting was informed that a Good Governance Roadmap Dashboard is being launched from today to track progress and monitor the implementation of reforms across departments.

Local Government Department reported that out of its planned reforms, 12 have been completed while 149 remain on track. Initiatives include the beautification of 10 public parks, establishment of a new bus terminal in Peshawar, improvement of fruit markets and slaughterhouses, and various projects under the Annual Development Programme

(ADP) to address issues of contaminated water. A special cleanliness drive targeting stormwater drains has also been carried out over the past three weeks.

The Peshawar Development Authority (PDA) informed the meeting that 93 percent of work on allied structures of the new bus stand has been completed. The PDA is implementing the Peshawar Beautification Plan, traffic management measures around BRT stations, and fast-track provision of facilities at 10 public parks. It has also launched a Visitor Management System to maintain contact with applicants regarding public service delivery. Furthermore, PDA announced that digitization of plot files in Hayatabad will be completed by February 2026, and all payment systems are being digitized for public convenience. An Enforcement Directorate is also being established under PDA.

The Tourism Department reported that work is ongoing on 9 out of its 17 key reforms. Emergency rescue ambu-

lances are being deployed at tourist sites in Thandiani, Changla Gali, Shogran, Battakundi, Thal, Besar, Malam Jabba, Brier, and Rambur. In addition, the Tourism Emergency Helpline (1422) is being linked to a mobile app for better accessibility. Rest areas are being set up at entry points of nine tourist destinations, while a comprehensive solid waste management program starting as a pilot project in Galiyat-is also underway. Other initiatives include a sewage management system at five tourism sites, restoration of five heritage sites with audio guides, establishment of a tourism statistics dashboard, and land-use and master planning of tourist destinations.

On the Health Department's immunization roadmap, the meeting was informed that the target is to achieve 90 percent immunization coverage of children in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by 2027. An application for tracking vaccinators' performance is under development and will be completed in two months, while a special

Peshawar Action Plan is being launched to improve immunization coverage. Out of the Health Department's reform agenda, 53 initiatives have been completed while 29 are on track. The department is outsourcing services in 72 hospitals and health facilities to improve service delivery, with listings already finalized. Bajaur Nursing College has been approved for outsourcing by the Board, while the Independent Monitoring Unit has been extended to the merged districts for monitoring health facilities. The Health Sector Reform Unit has prepared its first draft for restructuring, and policy guidelines for performance evaluation of Medical Teaching Institutes (MTIs) have also been finalized.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah emphasized that secretaries and heads of departments must personally review the progress of roadmap initiatives, adding that these reforms represent a major milestone in improving public service delivery across the province.



PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister on Information, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif receiving a shield during his visit to Peshawar Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industries.

Economic and business growth top priority: Barrister Saif

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister on Information, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif, visited the Peshawar Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industries. On this occasion, Group Leader Malik Mehr Elahi, Chamber President Shakeel Ahmed Khan Sarraf, Senior Vice President Haji Talah Muhammad, Vice President Zohaib Arif, and Spokesperson of Tanzeem-e-Tajirran Shehzad Ahmed Siddiqui warmly welcomed him. Chamber officials, representatives from various markets of Peshawar, and a large number of traders also participated.

Malik Mehr Elahi and Shakeel Ahmed Sarraf briefed the Advisor on the problems faced by the trader community, stating that under the guise of anti-encroachment drives, the properties and businesses

of traders had been damaged. They highlighted that the shops located at Shahi Katha are being declared illegal, despite the fact that these shops have existed since the British era, with registry documents dating back to before the creation of Pakistan. Only 200 shops belong to the Metropolitan Corporation, from whose rents salaries and pensions of employees are paid. Demolition of the Shahi Katha shops will force 5,500 families into starvation. The traders emphasized that they do not object to operations against encroachments but strongly object to the procedure adopted.

Speaking on traffic issues, it was noted that traffic jams persist on major city roads despite the presence of traffic wardens, as the wardens are more focused on issuing fines rather than ensuring smooth traffic flow. Traders also expressed concerns over

the excessive taxes being collected by various provincial departments, particularly criticizing the new sanitation tax imposed by the Labor Department and WSSP, calling it a burden on both traders and the public. They stressed that reforms in the taxation system are inevitable so that businesses and ordinary citizens are not directly affected.

The traders requested the Advisor to raise their concerns with the Federal Government, drawing attention to the sugar crisis, the imposition of taxes in FATA and PATA, and the issue of prolonged power outages, which are severely affecting not only business activities but also industrial production.

After listening attentively, Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif assured the trader community that their issues would be resolved. He stated that he would instruct the relevant departmental

secretaries to immediately address the traders' reservations and problems. He also announced that a delegation of the Peshawar Chamber would be facilitated to meet the Chief Minister so that small traders could directly present their proposals and play their role in the improvement of the provincial economy.

Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif remarked that in any country, when traders prosper, the nation prospers. The trader community is the backbone of the national economy, and if they are harmed, the economy weakens. He reiterated that the top priority of the provincial government is to ensure the growth of business and the economy in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

At the end of the ceremony, the officials of the Peshawar Chamber expressed gratitude to the Advisor and presented him with a commemorative shield.



To ensure financial sustainability of public sector varsities KP-BOIT, UET Peshawar sign MoU



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a landmark initiative aimed at strengthening the financial sustainability of higher education institutions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment & Trade (KP-BOIT) and the University of Engineering & Technology (UET), Peshawar have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for

the period 2025-2028. The agreement provides a framework for mutual cooperation to effectively utilize unutilized and underutilized assets of UET Peshawar, enabling the University to move towards financial self-sustainability.

In this connection, the formal agreement ceremony was held here at KP-BOIT in Peshawar and CEO board/Secretary Industries, Commerce

and Technical Education Masood Ahmad and Vice Chancellor University of Engineering and Technology Peshawar, Prof. Dr. Sadiq Khattak inked the agreement.

The MoU also envisions promoting innovation, enterprise development, and alignment with the province's economic and investment priorities.

According to KP-BOIT Director Business Facilitation Iqbal Sarwar,

this development follows the directives of the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, who during the Higher Education sector's departmental review meeting, had instructed that "KP-BOIT and the Higher Education Department (HED) may develop business models for financial sustainability of public sector universities, initially focusing on those facing financial constraints, while taking into consideration their existing movable and immovable assets/resources."

Acknowledging the MoU as a practical step towards fulfilling this vision, Vice Chairman KP-BOIT Hassan Masood Kunwar and Secretary Industries, Commerce and Technical Education/ (CEO) KP-BOIT Masood Ahmad appreciated the dedicated efforts of the KP-BOIT team and reaffirmed their commitment to supporting UET Peshawar.

They stressed the importance of a long-term action plan to ensure sustainable institutional growth and financial independence of public universities in the province.

Afridi, Younis, Babar to feature in charity match

F.P. Report



PESHAWAR: The Directorate General of Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has unveiled the list of potential players who are expected to participate in the much-anticipated charity cricket match titled "Sports for Service" for the rehabilitation of flood-affected people.

The friendly fixture will be played between Peshawar Zalmi and Legends XI on Saturday, August 30, at Imran Khan Cricket Stadium, Peshawar.

According to details shared by Director Sports Operations Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Jamshed Baloch, a total of 29 cricketers are likely to take part in the match.

The star-studded lineup includes former national team captains Shahid Afridi, Younis Khan, Azhar Mahmood, as well as renowned players like Wahab Riaz, Mohammad Hafeez, Kamran Akmal, Babar Azam, Sohaib Maqsood, Yasir Shah, Umaid Asif, Maaz Sadaqat, Salman Khan, Salman, Israrullah, Azhar Ali, Imran Farhat, Humayun Farhat, Ihsanullah, Imran Senior, Nazar Ahmed, Azmat Burki, Waqar Ahmed, Moazzam Khan, Abbas Ali, Usman Chattha, Sajjad Ibrahim, Sadiq Afridi, Abdul Rauf and Mohammad Haroon.

Mr. Baloch further informed that a comprehensive entry plan for spectators has been finalized. General ticket holders will be able to access the stadium through the three gates designated on the Faqirabad side, while women and families will be facilitated through the Gymkhana Cricket Ground gate.

KPEZDMC board finance committee reviews operations

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The 16th meeting of the Board Finance Committee of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company (KPEZDMC) was held at the company's head office in Peshawar under the chairmanship of Fazle Muqeem.

The session was attended by committee members including Arshad Ustarana, Arbab Khudad, a representative of the Finance Department,

Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Officializing Chief Executive Officer Aaadil KPEZDMC, Salahuddin.

The Head of Finance, KPEZDMC, presented a detailed briefing on the company's overall financial position, routine operations and budgetary matters.

On the occasion, CEO KPEZDMC, Aaadil Salahuddin, also shared his insights, highlighting the company's efforts to enhance financial discipline, ensure transparency

and align fiscal policies with the provincial government's industrial development agenda.

Members of the committee shared valuable recommendations to further strengthen the financial management of the organization. The committee reaffirmed its commitment to financial prudence, transparency, and efficient resource management to support KPEZDMC's role as the government's key executing arm for the establishment and management of industrial zones across the province.

Youth Affairs Directorate releases Annual Report

PESHAWAR (APP): The Directorate of Youth Affairs Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has unveiled its Annual Performance and Financial Evaluation Report for the year 2024-25, reflecting significant progress in promoting youth empowerment, entrepreneurship, and socio-economic uplift across the province.

The report highlights that the department, under the leadership of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Syed Fakhar Jehan, through the Youth Development Package, undertook a series of targeted initiatives focusing on youth welfare, skills enhancement, entrepreneurship support and student facilitation.

During the year, under the Annual Development Programme (ADP), more than 3,500 young people were trained in startup boot camps, vocational courses, IT skills and e-commerce certifications at a cost of Rs. 8.5 million.

Career and behavioral counseling workshops worth Rs. 7.2 million benefited around 12,000 youth, while summer camps organized in universities and youth hostels with an allocation of Rs. 3 million provided learning and recreational opportunities to over 1,100 participants.

Similarly, the Youth Talent Hunt strategy helped polish the creative

skills of 5,000 young men and women with funds of nearly Rs. 4.9 million, whereas internship programs specifically designed for youth of the merged districts supported 400 beneficiaries with Rs. 5.5 million.

In addition, scholarships and financial assistance worth Rs. 6.5 million were provided to 48 deserving youth.

Altogether, the ADP portfolio accounted for an expenditure of Rs. 35.58 million on 154 activities, directly benefitting 22,048 young people across the province.

Parallel to the ADP, the Accelerated Implementation Programme (AIP) also played a crucial role in advancing youth initiatives.

Through AIP, nearly 2,500 youth received training in startup development, vocational and technical skills at a cost of Rs. 3.88 million, while summer camps worth Rs. 1.46 million were arranged for 700 youth.

Career and behavioral counseling activities worth Rs. 4.1 million benefited another 7,100 young participants, and the Youth Talent Hunt initiative engaged 1,800 youth with a financial outlay of Rs. 3.99 million.

Furthermore, 400 youth from merged districts took part in internship programs financed with Rs. 1.08 million. Overall, the AIP con-

tributed Rs. 14.53 million to 58 activities, reaching 12,500 beneficiaries.

The flagship Ehsaas Nojawan Programme emerged as another key pillar of youth empowerment during the year. Under the Bank of Khyber's Large Loan Scheme, Rs. 500 million was earmarked and fully released.

A total of 13,275 applications were received, leading to the approval of 210 loans worth Rs. 552 million, out of which 142 loans amounting to Rs. 415 million were disbursed.

Similarly, under the Akhuwat Small Loan Package, Rs. 600 million was allocated and fully utilized. Out of 5,931 applicants, 3,699 were sanctioned loans and a total of Rs. 602.65 million was distributed, while Rs. 42.88 million was also recovered during the period.

The Directorate underlined that youth development remains a cornerstone of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's agenda. Backed by the leadership of Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur and the patronage of Provincial Minister Syed Fakhar Jehan, the Youth Affairs sector continues to steer forward with energy and commitment, striving for the socio-economic uplift, capacity development and long-term prosperity of the younger generation.

Transparency in energy project finances top priority: Secretary

PESHAWAR (APP): Secretary Energy and Power, Muhammad Zubair Khan, has said that transparency in the financial affairs of energy projects and the merit-based utilization of development funds are among the top priorities of the provincial government.

He directed all officers, especially field staff working on ongoing projects, to keep the department informed about all expenditures and financial matters on a regular basis.

He warned that any corruption or negligence detected in project finances would result in strict action against the

responsible officials. Monitoring of all ongoing schemes has been tightened in light of the Chief Secretary's directives.

He expressed these views while presiding over a meeting with senior officials of the Energy Department and its attached organizations under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Good Governance Roadmap here on Wednesday.

The meeting was attended by Additional Secretary Admin Shoaib Khan, Additional Secretary Power Anwar Khan Sherani, Chief Executive PEDO Engineer Habibullah Shah, Senior Chief

Planning Officer Syed Zahir Shah Kazmi and senior officers.

During the briefing, the CEO of PEDO informed that the recently completed Koto Hydropower Project and Jabori Hydropower Project are now in the process of selling electricity under a direct supply model in collaboration with KPEZDMC. For this purpose, PEDO has already appointed an economic expert.

These projects are expected to generate billions of rupees in annual revenue for the province. The meeting was further informed that work is in full swing on 72 projects under the second

phase of mini-micro hydel stations. The Secretary of Energy, however, strictly directed the officials to finalize a transparent mechanism for the repayment of foreign-funded loans for these projects.

He also instructed that the institutions keep the department fully informed about the financial matters of the Gabral Kalam and Madian power projects in Swat, which are being implemented with the cooperation of the World Bank. Moreover, the Secretary directed PEDO's CEO to ensure the timely and quality completion of all energy projects within the given timelines.



In brief

Meeting on road repair held F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: Deputy Commissioner Lakki Marwat has said that the use of TST (Triple Surface Treatment) procedure in future road construction, repair and maintenance works will not be tolerated. While inspecting the ongoing repair work on Tajazai-Lakki road near Dallokhel Phattak, he said that the relevant officials should ensure construction of carpeted roads in future. He said that the quality construction in road projects could be ensured by proper asphalt mix, besides it would also make roads durable, safe, smooth and with a comfortable surface. Assistant Commissioner also accompanied him. The portion of road is being repaired under the supervision of Pakhtunkhwa Highway Authority (PkHA). The deputy commissioner directed the concerned authorities and the contractor to complete the project on time and as per the prescribed standards so that the public could benefit from it for a long time.

Privatization of schools opposed F.P. Report

WANA: Strong public outrage has erupted in South Waziristan after the provincial government decided to hand over several schools and colleges to private bodies. Public representatives and local political leaders have condemned the move, terming it injustice and exploitation of students and the community. Reacting to the decision, Tehsil Chairman of Sarokai, Shah Faisal Ghazi, convened an emergency meeting and declared the privatization of educational institutions as "unbearable and unacceptable." In a statement issued on social media, Shah Faisal Ghazi stressed that education is the fundamental right of every citizen, and governments across the world provide free education. "Unfortunately, the provincial government is relinquishing its constitutional and moral responsibility by transferring institutions to private bodies," he said. The Tehsil Mayor warned that such a policy would close the doors of opportunity for poor and underprivileged students, vowing that it would not be accepted under any circumstances. He announced that a key meeting would be held today with the district administration, MPA committee members, education department officials, and other elected representatives to discuss the possible consequences of privatization and chalk out a strategy to resist it.

Wana faces garbage disposal crisis F.P. Report

WANA: Once considered the bustling commercial hub of Lower South Waziristan, Wana bazaar is now facing a severe sanitation and infrastructure crisis. Heaps of garbage, choked drains and broken roads have made life miserable for shopkeepers, residents and visitors alike. With every spell of rain, the situation worsens as roads turn into ponds of stagnant water. In the vegetable market, piles of rotting waste emit a foul stench, raising serious concerns over public health. Locals say the sanitation system has completely collapsed. Yaseen, a shopkeeper in Ashraf Market, alleged that resources meant for Wana's development were ruthlessly plundered. He said foreign aid and government funds were wasted by inexperienced staff, leaving no effective drainage system in place and causing business to suffer badly due to stagnant water on main roads.

Graveyard turns into hotspot for narcotics trafficking

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: The historic graveyard (Bara Qabristan) situated along the railway line in Hafizabad has fallen into alarming disrepute, having transformed into a notorious hotspot for drug abuse and narcotics trafficking. The shocking development has triggered outrage among residents, who say the sanctity of the graveyard is being trampled daily while law enforcement remains apathetic. Eyewitness accounts reveal a disturbing picture: addicts gather in large numbers inside the graveyard throughout the day and night, sitting on graves and openly consuming drugs. More distressingly, the menace is no longer confined to men alone, women too have been spotted not only using narcotics but also actively selling them within the cemetery.

Residents report that the scene has grown increasingly horrifying. Addicts can be seen injecting themselves with harmful substances while seated on

gravestones, with some collapsing unconscious after consuming crystal meth (ice). Many are left sprawled across graves for hours, turning the resting place of the dead into a den of disgrace.

"The sanctity of this graveyard has been lost. What was once a sacred place of prayer and remembrance has become a haven for drug users," lamented one local resident, who demanded anonymity out of fear of reprisal from drug dealers.

The desecration of the site has not only offended religious sentiments but also posed serious social and security risks for nearby neighborhoods. Families visiting graves complain of harassment and an atmosphere of fear, discouraging them from offering 'Fatiha' or attending burials in peace.

Despite the escalating problem, citizens accuse the Hafizabad City Police of negligence, saying they have failed to curb the illicit activities. Locals allege that drug peddlers operate

with impunity, emboldened by the lack of consistent crackdowns or visible policing inside the graveyard.

In response, angry residents recently staged a protest, demanding swift and decisive intervention. They appealed directly to the Regional Police Officer (RPO) Gujranwala, urging him to launch a special operation to cleanse the graveyard of drug addicts and to arrest those selling narcotics in the vicinity.

"The police must act with an iron hand. Without strict enforcement, the graveyard will remain a hub for criminals, and the respect due to our deceased will continue to be violated," a protester declared.

Citizens are calling for long-term solutions, including permanent deployment of police patrols, strict surveillance, and community-level cooperation to restore the sanctity of graveyard. Until then, they warn, the graveyard will continue to symbolize the authorities' failure to protect both the living and the dead.

Tareen to provide Rs20m for flood victims

F.P. Report

LODHRAIN: Jahangir Khan Tareen has announced relief assistance of over PKR 20 million for the flood-affected people of Lodhran. He has directed his team to immediately begin on-ground relief operations in the affected areas.

In his statement, Jahangir Tareen said, "I will not leave our flood-affected brothers and sisters

alone. Every possible effort will be made for their rehabilitation. Natural disasters demand national unity, and in this difficult time, we must all come together to support our fellow citizens."

As part of the relief efforts, machinery will be dispatched to help communities strengthen embankments and control water flow. Essential food supplies and other necessities will also be distributed

among the affected families.

A relief operation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, under the directions of Jahangir Khan Tareen, is already underway, where he earlier announced PKR 50 million in assistance for the flood victims of the province. The relief operation in Lodhran will be carried out in collaboration with the Lodhran District administration and Rescue 1122.

Police arrests three robbers in Mardan

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Police claimed to have arrested three dangerous suspects allegedly involved in a series of organized robberies in different parts of Mardan district.

Speaking to journalists, SP Investigation said that police had conducted a major operation against the robbers-gang after lots of complaints and reports were filed to police about the increasing incidents of robberies in different areas of the district.

On the occasion he shared details, stating that the arrested individuals included Muhammad Saleem, Shaukat, and Rozi Rehman, who were involved in breaking into homes in the city and sur-

rounding areas, holding residents' hostage, and committing looting. He also claimed that police had recovered 595,000 rupees in cash, a laptop, two pistols, a shotgun, and other valuable items from the suspects' possession.

According to SP Investigation, these individuals were part of a well-organized robbery gang, and efforts are ongoing to locate and apprehend their other accomplices. Special teams have been formed for this purpose.

Commissioner issued directives for anti-polio vaccination: Commissioner Mardan Division Nisar Ahmad has directed that all children under the age of five must be administered polio drops during the upcoming anti-polio cam-

paign starting from September 1. He instructed the police and relevant departments to ensure fool-proof security arrangements for polio teams to ensure the campaign runs smoothly and without disruption.

He issued these directives while presiding over a meeting held at the Commissioner's Office in Mardan to review preparations for the four-day anti-polio campaign. The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioner Mardan Wasif Rahman, Additional Deputy Commissioners of Swabi and Mardan, officials from the Health, Police, and Education Departments, as well as representatives of the World Health Organization (WHO).

Two persons including woman killed in separate incidents

F.P. Report

SHAHADKOT: Almost two persons including a woman were killed in separate incidents in Qambar Shahdaktot, on Wednesday.

According to details, a young man from Shahdaktot, Sarang Chandio, was killed in firing by unknown gunmen on Rahooja bypass

road in Qambar city area, while his cousin Abdul Rasool Chandio was seriously injured in the firing. On the spot speaking to the media, the injured youth said that the gunmen riding on motorcycle opened fire on us, during which my young cousin was killed. He further said that two years ago, the girl of the opponents had left home and

we had come to Qambar court in connection with this case, when the opponents opened fire on our car when we returned to the village.

In the second incident, a domestic dispute broke out between the women, during which a 30-year-old woman, Seema Zai Abdul Haq Depar, was stabbed to death on the spot.



GUJRANWALA: Flood victims with their belongings at a relief camp after destruction due to medium level flash flood in Chenab River.

Nazim rejects imposition of tax Syed Waliullah Shah

NEWSHERA: The Nazim Village Council Zando Banda, UC Pir Sabaq, Javed Khan has strongly rejected the provincial government's decision to impose tax on farmers and shopkeepers to pay the salaries of daily-wage employees in village councils.

The Nazim Javed Khan stated that he will not accept any decision that goes against the interests of the people. He emphasized that he is not in favor of burdening the poor with taxes to save his position. If pressured, he is ready to resign but will not collect a single rupee in taxes from these farmers and shopkeepers.

He criticized the provincial government, pointing out that village councils are not provided with funds for basic amenities like sanitation. He questioned the logic behind attempting to collect taxes from people who are not being provided with government services.

Javed Khan demanded that the government provide direct funding to village councils so that employee salaries and public issues can be addressed without imposing any additional burden on the people. He stressed that the government should provide facilities to the poor instead of taxing them.

DC directs to repair of water supply F.P. Report

TANK: Deputy Commissioner Tank held 'Kuli Katcheri' at the DC office to address the pressing issue of water scarcity in the district. The event was attended by district administration officials, TMA authorities, XEN Public Health, and a large number of citizens, on Wednesday.

During the 'Kuli Katcheri', citizens highlighted several key issues, including the lack of clean drinking water, damaged water supply lines, closure of tube wells due to power outages, and unfair distribution of water.

Addressing the gathering, DC Tanveer Khattak emphasized that resolving public issues is his top priority. He assured the attendees that immediate measures would be taken to alleviate the water shortage. The DC directed the TMA and water management authorities to repair damaged tube wells and restore water lines promptly to provide relief to the public.

JI vows movement against outsourcing of public institutions

Haleem Asad

LOWER DIR: Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) Tehsil Samarbagh on Wednesday convened an emergency meeting of its Khidmat-i-Khalq Committee to discuss what it described as "serious public issues" facing the people of Jandol.

The meeting was addressed by local JI leaders Dr Sarbiland Khan, Syed Mohammad Shah and others, who strongly criticized the government's reported plans to privatise and outsource public hospitals, colleges and schools.

They said the proposed move was an "anti-people decision" that would not only jeopardise the educational future of children belonging to poor and middle-class families but also adversely affect health-care services for the general public.

The committee made it clear that JI would "never accept" the privatisation of public institutions, calling them a trust of the people. "It is the government's duty to improve these institutions rather than handing them over to private mafias," the participants noted. At the conclusion of the meeting, the JI Samarbagh chapter announced that it would launch a sustained movement against the government's policies and continue its struggle until public issues were resolved.

University of Malaaknd allocates special seats for flood-hit students: The 24th special meeting of the Academic Council of the University of Malakand was held on Wednesday with Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Rashid Ahmad in the chair.

The council members offered prayers for the victims of recent floods and lauded the university employees who took part in relief efforts. They also appreciated the allocation of special seats for students affected by the calamity.

During the meeting, recommendations from different faculties and departments were reviewed and approved in line with academic and legal requirements. Speaking on the occasion, the vice chancellor said the university regularly updates its curriculum to meet modern needs, praising the faculty for their role in introducing new ideas and innovations. The session was attended by Registrar Hayatullah Yousafzai, deans, heads of departments, professors, and elected members, according to a press release issued by the university's PRO, Mairaj ul Hamid Nasri.

Seminar to train marriage registrars

Meeting on flood at Ravi held

F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: A special meeting of the District Emergency Board was convened to review preparations in view of the possible high-level flood in River Ravi, on Wednesday.

The meeting was chaired by Deputy Commissioner and District Police Officer. The session was attended by ADC (Revenue), Assistant Commissioner Munawar Hussain Kamalana Sial,

District Emergency Officer and heads of Irrigation, Agriculture, Livestock, Social Welfare, Education, Health, Highways, SNGPL, WAPDA, Traffic Police, and other relevant departments.

According to the district administration, 48 villages of Kamalia and Pir Mahal tehsils are being evacuated, while five relief camps and a control room have been established to monitor the situation round-the-clock. The Irrigation Department

informed the meeting that floodwater from Balloki Headworks will reach Head Sadhna within 24 hours.

Deputy Commissioner Sandhu said that, as per the chief minister's directives, all arrangements have been put in place to protect lives and property. Residents of the river belt and nearby settlements have been urged to immediately move to safer locations along with their livestock and extend full cooperation with the administration.

Hospitality and tourism in Pakistan

Dr. Nadeem Iqbal

PAKISTAN, with its stunning landscapes, rich history, and vibrant culture, holds immense potential for hospitality and tourism. From the snow-capped peaks of Gilgit-Baltistan to the ancient ruins of Taxila and Mohenjodaro, Pakistan offers a treasure trove for tourists. Globally, tourism is a powerhouse industry. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, 1.4 billion international tourists traveled in 2024, nearly recovering to pre-COVID levels, generating \$1.9 trillion in revenue, an 11% increase from 2023.

Tourism creates millions of jobs and drives foreign exchange earnings worldwide. Pakistan, with its natural beauty and cultural heritage, can tap into this global trend to boost its economy,

leveraging its unique attractions to attract visitors and showcase its potential on the world stage.

In Pakistan, tourism's contribution to the economy is significant but underutilized. The World Travel and Tourism Council reports that in 2022, tourism accounted for 5.9% of Pakistan's GDP and supported 4.2 million jobs, with tourist spending reaching \$16 billion. Projections suggest this could grow to \$30 billion by 2033. Domestic tourism has surged post-COVID, with over 1.2 million visitors to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa alone in 2021-2022. Tourism generates foreign exchange, supports local businesses like hotels and restaurants, and creates jobs in rural areas. However, Pakistan's tourism share lags behind regional peers like Sri Lanka (12% of GDP) and Nepal (8%), highlighting the need for strate-

gic development to unlock its full potential.

Enhancing tourism in Pakistan requires targeted efforts. Improving infrastructure, such as roads, hotels, and transport, is critical. Initiatives supported by the World Bank in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa focus on eco-friendly tourism development. Strengthening security is essential to ensure tourist safety, a key factor in attracting visitors. Digital marketing through social media and an efficient e-visa system, expanded to over 50 countries in 2024, can draw more tourists. Diversifying tourism offerings—eco-tourism, adventure tourism, and religious tourism—can broaden appeal. Engaging local communities through homestays and local guides promotes sustainable tourism. Government policies, like the Tourism Coordination Board, are vital for coordinated growth.

Tourism significantly strengthens Pakistan's economy. In 2019, it generated \$1.1 billion in foreign exchange and supported 3.8 million jobs. It boosts local businesses, such as hotels, restaurants, and handicraft shops, reducing poverty in rural areas like Swat and Gilgit-Baltistan. Infrastructure development for tourism benefits other sectors, while cultural exchanges enhance Pakistan's global image, attracting investment. Pakistan's 101st rank in the 2024 Travel and Tourism Development Index indicates room for improvement, but the potential for economic growth through tourism is undeniable.

Independence Day on 14 August is a vibrant celebration that can open doors for tourism. Nationwide events, including flag-hoisting ceremonies, parades, fireworks, and cultural programs in cities like

Islamabad, Lahore, and Karachi, showcase Pakistan's unity and heritage. Landmarks like Minar-e-Pakistan and Fort Bala Hisar draw visitors during these festivities, promoting historical tourism. These celebrations, amplified by digital campaigns and visa relaxations, attract both domestic and international tourists, boosting local economies. 14 August serves as a platform to highlight Pakistan's beauty and hospitality, inviting the world to explore its treasures.

The BS Fintech and E-Commerce program at the National Skills University (NSU) Islamabad supports tourism through digital innovation. This four-year program equips students with skills in online booking systems, digital marketing, and fintech, enhancing hospitality services. Practical training and industry partnerships, such as with finan-

cial institutions, prepare students to digitize tourism operations. The program enables earning while learning, as students can undertake freelancing or e-commerce projects, fostering financial independence. By aligning with global digital trends, NSU's graduates strengthen Pakistan's tourism sector, contributing to economic growth.

Hospitality and tourism are key to Pakistan's economic prosperity. By aligning with global tourism trends, improving infrastructure, and leveraging Independence Day celebrations, Pakistan can enhance its tourism industry. This growth will drive foreign exchange, employment, and cultural exchange, strengthening the economy and showcasing Pakistan's potential on 14 August and beyond.

The writer is Professor at National Skills University Islamabad Pakistan.



Macron gives ‘full support’ to embattled PM

PARIS (AFP): President Emmanuel Macron on Wednesday gave his "full support" to France's embattled prime minister, who has called a confidence vote that could see his government collapse next month.

Prime Minister Francois Bayrou said he would request the confidence vote in a bitterly divided parliament on September 8, as he tries to garner enough support for his plan to slash spending. But the main opposition parties said they would not back the prime minister's plan, with the far-right urging Macron to call new parliamentary elections and the hard-left saying the president himself must go.

Macron, now on his sixth prime minister since taking office in 2017, chaired a meeting of his cabinet on Wednesday. The president has given his "full support" to Bayrou's initiative, spokeswoman Sophie Primas told reporters after the meeting. Macron also called on France's political parties "to act responsibly", Primas added. The French president is weighing his options as he seeks to contain the looming political crisis.

If the government falls after the September 8 vote, he could appoint a new prime minister, dissolve parliament again or resign. Macron gambled on snap polls last summer in a bid to head off the far-right and bolster his authority, but the move backfired and left a deadlocked parliament. Even some members of Macron's camp now believe calling new elections might be the only solution.

"No one wants it, but it is inevitable," a senior member of the presidential team told AFP on condition of anonymity. The president has said he wants to avoid dissolving parliament again but has also suggested he could not rule out the option. One of Macron's former prime ministers, Gabriel Attal, said he would do everything to help the current government to remain in power.

"The problem does not lie with the French, but with the Assembly itself,"

Attal told France Inter on Wednesday, referring to France's lower house of parliament. "In almost all the European countries around us, they have assemblies with fragmented forces. And yet they manage to work together and find solutions." The government has been facing discontent from the left and the right, with critics accusing the authorities of failing to take decisive action on issues like the spiralling cost of living, immigration and crime.

Separately, a broad anti-government campaign dubbed "Bloquons tout" ("Let's block everything") has acted as a lightning rod for other criticisms including a lack of action on the environment. The movement has been backed by the left has urged a nationwide shutdown on September 10. Bayrou has vowed to "fight like a dog" to stay in power and is expected to discuss the vote of confidence on television on Wednesday evening.

Bayrou told France's rival political forces they had a dozen days to "say whether they are on the side of chaos or responsibility". After years of overspending, France is on notice to control its public deficit and cut its sprawling debt, as required under EU rules. Bayrou's government and economic analysts have warned that France's debt is unsustainable, particularly as interest rate rises push up the cost of borrowing.

Bayrou said he wanted to save about 44 billion euros (\$51 billion) with measures that include reducing the number of public holidays and placing a freeze on spending increases. In mid-July, he presented 2026 budget proposals but the measures have proved deeply unpopular. Political jockeying is heating up ahead of the presidential election in 2027, when Macron's second term is set to end, and the far-right senses a real chance to come to power. "There is only one way out of this political impasse we find ourselves in, and that is to return to the polls," Jordan Bardella, head of the far-right National Rally party, told TF1.

Majority of French want new elections

PARIS (Reuters): A majority of French people want new parliamentary and presidential elections, opinion polls showed on Wednesday, with Prime Minister Francois Bayrou's minority government looking likely to collapse next month.

Two thirds of people surveyed in two of the three polls also wanted President Emmanuel Macron to resign, and the far-right National Rally (RN) got the most backing to lead the next government in one poll, although not a majority. The polling points to a deepening of the uncertainty and dissatisfaction with politics in a country that has had only minority cabinets and fragmented parliaments since Macron's re-election in 2022.

Bayrou's surprise announcement on Monday that he will seek a confidence vote on September 8 over his 2026 budget plans has thrown France back into crisis, prompting a steep selloff in its stocks and bonds. The main opposition parties said they would vote against him, meaning the government is all but certain to fall. If the government falls, Macron could name a new prime minister immediately or call a snap parliamentary election. Some opposition figures have said he should resign.

Macron said last week he does not want a snap election, and has ruled out resigning. Macron lost his

previous prime minister, Michel Barnier, to a no-confidence vote over the budget in late 2024, after Barnier had been in office just three months following a previous snap election. But a vast majority of French people want parliament dissolved for another election, separate surveys by Ifop, Elabe and Toluna Harris Interactive pollsters showed. The surveys showed from 56% to 69% of those polled want snap parliamentary elections.

The Elabe poll for BFM TV showed 67% wanted Macron to resign if Bayrou loses the confidence vote. The Ifop poll for LCI showed a similar result. The Toluna Harris Interactive poll for RTL showed 41% would want the RN to lead the next government - the highest score for any party but without a majority. Some 59% were against having an RN prime minister. The second-highest score, at 38%, would be for the next prime minister to not be a career politician.

Not all the polls asked the same questions in their surveys. "We want to stress that, in any case, both scenarios (ie new PM or snap elections) would likely mean a prolonged period of uncertainty," Morgan Stanley analysts wrote in a note. There is no guarantee, under either scenario, that any new prime minister would be able to pass the budget.

Bayrou has proposed a 44 billion euro budget

squeeze, as he tries to tame a deficit that hit 5.8% of gross domestic product last year, nearly double the official EU limit of 3%. He wants to scrap two public holidays and freeze most public spending. Opposition parties say they agree with Bayrou's assessment that France's deficit and debt are too high, but they disagree with his proposals on how to tackle this. The left wants more of the effort to rely on the wealthy and the far right wants to target migration policies. "And we suspect that the closer we get to the March 2026 local elections, the more complicated it will be to reach a compromise in parliament," Morgan Stanley said, pointing towards each group pushing their own agenda as they seek to build support among voters.

Then a political outsider, Macron was first elected in 2017 on promises to break the right-left divide and modernise the euro zone's second-biggest economy with growth-friendly tax cuts and reforms. Successive crises - from the protests, COVID-19 and runaway inflation - have shown he has failed to change the country's overspending habit.

More protests have been called for September 10, two days after the confidence vote, by various groups with disparate aims on social media and backed by leftist parties and some unions.

Thailand grants some Myanmar refugees right to legal work

BANGKOK (Reuters): Thailand will give legal employment rights to thousands of Myanmar refugees now living in camps along the border between the two countries, the government said on Wednesday, a move that won the praise of the United Nations' refugee agency.

The policy change will grant the right to legal work in Thailand to around 80,000 refugees, many of whom have been living in the camps for more than 40 years, the government said. Among the eligible Myanmar refugees living in nine temporary shelters along the Thai-Myanmar border since 1984, 42,601 are of working age, it said.

The decision could also help solve a potential migrant labour shortage in Thailand following an armed border conflict with Cambodia, which led to an exodus of Cambodian workers. Around 520,000 Cambodians - about 12% of the total workforce - were employed in Thailand before the fighting erupted in July, according to official Labor Ministry data.

As of July 25, Thailand also employed nearly 3 million Myanmar workers, the ministry said Friday. It has previously said that migrant labour is critical in sectors like construction, agriculture and services. Government spokesperson Jirayu Hongsud said on Wednesday that the Thai cabinet backed a Labor Ministry proposal to allow long-staying refugees from Myanmar living in Thailand to work, a move that officials say will bolster the economy. The UN Refugee Agency described the policy as a "strategic investment" that would unlock the potential of refugees, enabling them to support their families and also spur local demand and job opportunities.

The agency added in a statement on Wednesday that the expansion in employment could lift GDP and strengthen economic resilience. It would also reduce reliance on humanitarian aid among the refugees, nearly half of whom were born in the camps. "With this policy shift, Thailand transforms hosting refugees into an engine of growth - for refugees, for host communities and for the nation as a whole," said Tammi Sharpe, the UN agency's representative in Thailand, in the statement. The policy could also set an example to other countries in the face of aid cuts for millions of displaced people around the world, the agency said.

Heavy rain falls in parts of Southeast Asia

Heavy rain falls in parts of Southeast Asia

HANOI, Vietnam (AP): Heavy rain fell in parts of Southeast Asia after a tropical storm made landfall in Vietnam, flooding streets in the capital, blowing away billboards and knocking down power poles and trees.

In Hanoi, people tried to push motorbikes through water that was ankle-deep or higher as cars and buses slowly moved along flooded city streets. Vietnam's state media said the remnants of Typhoon Kajiki were now a tropical depression over Laos. Heavy rain was also forecast in Thailand, and people were told to be vigilant to possible flooding. Vietnam's government had planned to evacuate nearly 600,000 people in the provinces of Thanh Hoa, Quang Tri, Hue and Danang, where more than 152,000 homes were in high-risk areas. More than 16,500 soldiers and 107,000 paramilitary personnel were assisting with evacuations or were on standby for search and rescue, state media said.

Two airports in Thanh Hoa and Quang Binh provinces were still closed after flights were halted. The national weather agency said Kajiki made landfall in central Vietnam with maximum sustained winds of 117 kph (73 mph). The torrential rain triggered flash flood and landslide alerts. The storm blew away billboards and the roofs of buildings, uprooted trees and knocked down electric poles, state media VTV reported. It hit during high tides that caused coastal flooding in Nghe An and Ha Tinh provinces.

South Korea to ban mobile phones in school classrooms

SEOUL (Reuters): South Korea passed a bill on Wednesday to ban the use of mobile phones and other digital devices in school classrooms nationwide, as concern grows about the impact of heavy social media use among the young.

The ban, which will take effect from March next year, makes South Korea the latest country to restrict the use of smartphones and social media among minors. Australia recently widened its pioneering ban on social media for teenagers. A ban on mobile phones in Dutch schools has improved focus among students, a study found in July.

Surveys show South Korea is among the world's most digitally connected countries, with 99% of South Koreans online and 98% owning a smartphone, according to the US-based Pew Research Center, the highest rate among the 27 countries it examined in 2022 and 2023. The legislation imposing the ban garnered bipartisan support in Wednesday's parliamentary vote.

"Our youth's addiction to social media is at a serious level now," said Cho Jung-hun, a lawmaker from the



opposition People Power Party and a sponsor of the bill. "Our kids, their eyes are red every morning. They are on Instagram until 2 or 3 a.m.," Cho told parliament. About 37% of middle- and high-school students say social media affects their daily lives, while 22% feel anxious if they cannot access their social media accounts, a survey by the Education Ministry found last year.

Many schools in South Korea already have their own restrictions for smartphone use, which the bill now formalises. Digital devices will still be permitted for students with disabilities or for educational purposes. Some youth advocacy groups have opposed the smartphone ban, saying it would violate children's human rights.

Venezuela sends troops to Colombia border

CARACAS: Venezuela has announced the deployment of 15,000 troops to its border with Colombia to fight drug trafficking, as the United States was reported to have sent two additional navy ships to the southern Caribbean as part of an operation against Latin American drug cartels.

Venezuelan Minister of the Popular Power for Interior Diosdado Cabello announced that Caracas would deploy 15,000 troops to bolster security in Zulia and Tachira states, which border Colombia. "Here, we do fight drug trafficking; here, we do fight drug cartels on all fronts," the minister said, while also announcing the seizure of 53 tonnes of drugs so far this year.

Cabello said the increased security on the border with Colombia, to "combat criminal groups", would also involve aircraft, drones and riverine security, according to local media outlet Noticias Venezolonia, as he called on Colombian authorities to do the same to "ensure peace along the entire axis". The reinforcement of Venezuelan troops

on the Colombian border comes after the Trump administration accused Venezuela's left-wing president, Nicolas Maduro, of being involved in cocaine trafficking and working with drug cartels. Officials in Washington, DC, have accused both Maduro and Cabello of working with the Cartel de los Soles ("Cartel of the Suns") drug trafficking organisation, which Washington has designated a terrorist group. The accusations were made as the US announced last week that it had doubled a reward to \$50m for the capture of Maduro on drug charges. The US earlier this year increased a reward for Cabello's arrest or prosecution from \$10m to \$25m.

Maduro has accused the US of attempting to foment regime change in Venezuela, and launched a nationwide drive to sign up thousands of militia members to strengthen national security in the country amid the threats from Washington. "I am confident that we will overcome this test that life has imposed on us, this imperi-

alist threat to the peace of the continent and to our country," Maduro was quoted as saying in local media. The Reuters news agency also reported that the USS Lake Erie, a guided missile cruiser, and the USS Newport News, a nuclear-powered fast attack submarine, will arrive in the southern Caribbean by early next week.

Citing two sources briefed on the deployment, Reuters said the missile cruiser and attack submarine would join the US amphibious squadron that was due to arrive off the coast of Venezuela. The squadron includes the USS San Antonio, USS Iwo Jima and USS Fort Lauderdale, and is said to be carrying 4,500 US service members, including 2,200 Marines, according to reports. Trump has made the targeting of Latin American drug cartels a central focus of his administration, and has designated Mexico's Sinaloa Cartel and other drug gangs, including Venezuelan criminal group Tren de Aragua, as global terrorist organisations. — Aljazeera

US judge temporarily blocks deportation

WASHINGTON (AFP): A federal judge temporarily blocked the deportation to Uganda of a Salvadoran man at the center of a row over US President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown.

Kilmar Abrego Garcia, who was wrongly deported to El Salvador in March and then sent back to the United States, was arrested in Baltimore by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said on X.

Abrego Garcia, 30, who was released last week from a jail in Tennessee, where he is facing human smuggling charges, and allowed to go home to Maryland pending trial, "will be processed for removal to Uganda," the Department of Homeland Security said.

Lawyers for Abrego Garcia immediately filed a lawsuit contesting his deportation and District Judge Paula Xinis temporarily blocked his removal from the country while she holds further hearings on his case. Abrego Garcia was required to check in with ICE in Baltimore as one of

the conditions of his release.

Simon Sandoval-Moshenberg, one of Abrego Garcia's lawyers, told a crowd of supporters outside the ICE field office that his client was immediately taken into custody when he turned up for the appointment. "Shame, shame," chanted the protestors, who were holding signs reading "Free Kilmar" and "Remove Trump." The attempt to deport Abrego Garcia to Uganda adds a new twist to a saga that became a test case for Trump's sprawling crackdown on illegal immigration -- and, critics say, his trampling of the law.

Abrego Garcia had been living in the United States under protected legal status since 2019, when a judge ruled he should not be deported because he could be harmed in his home country. Then he became one of more than 200 people sent to El Salvador's CECOT mega-prison in March as part of Trump's crackdown on undocumented migrants. But Justice Department lawyers admitted that the Salvadoran had been wrongly deported due to an "administrative error." He

was returned to US soil only to be detained again in Tennessee on human smuggling charges. Abrego Garcia denies any wrongdoing, while the Trump administration alleges he is a violent MS-13 gang member involved in smuggling of other undocumented migrants. When it became clear that Abrego Garcia would be released the following day, government officials made him a plea offer: remain in custody, plead guilty to human smuggling and be deported to Costa Rica.

He declined the offer. "That they're holding Costa Rica as a carrot and using Uganda as a stick to try to coerce him to plead guilty to a crime is such clear evidence that they're weaponizing the immigration system in a manner that is completely unconstitutional," Sandoval-Moshenberg said. The case has become emblematic of Trump's crackdown on illegal migration. Right-wing supporters praise the Republican president's toughness, but legal scholars and human rights advocates have blasted what they say is a haphazard rush to deport people without even a court hearing, in violation of basic US law.

US envoy cuts short Lebanon visit

BERIUT (AFP): Lebanese state media said US envoy Tom Barrack cut short a visit to the south on Wednesday amid protests in two planned stops against US pressure to disarm Hezbollah. The official National News Agency (NNA) reported that Barrack arrived by helicopter at a Lebanese army barracks in Marjayoun near the border, with soldiers deploying in the area.

The news agency later reported that the envoy had cancelled planned stops in nearby Khiam, which was pummelled by Israel during its latest hostilities with Hezbollah, and in the coastal city of Tyre. A spokesperson told AFP the US embassy did not comment on officials' schedules for security reasons. An AFP correspondent in Khiam saw a group of residents, some waving Hezbollah flags or holding pictures of fighters killed in the conflict, demonstrating against Barrack.

Some were standing on a Star of David that had been drawn on the road in blue, near the words in Arabic "America is the great Satan", and "Barak is animal" written in English. The last was a reference to comments by the US envoy at a Beirut press conference which sparked an outcry in Lebanon. Barak told journalists to "act civilised", adding: "The moment that this starts becoming chaotic, like animalistic, we're gone."

Bilal Kashmar, an official from the southern municipalities union, said dozens of people had demonstrated in Tyre on Wednesday against Barak's expected visit and Washington's "biased policies". Under heavy US pressure and amid fears of expanded Israeli military action, Lebanon's government tasked the army this month with drawing up a plan to disarm Hezbollah by year end. The Iran-backed group, which enjoys strong support in the south, was left badly weakened by more than a year of hostilities, including two months of open war, with Israel that largely ended with a November ceasefire.

Fellow US envoy Morgan Ortagus said in Beirut that the Lebanese government needed to implement its decision to disarm Hezbollah, adding that Israel would respond in kind. Hezbollah insists that Israel must complete its withdrawal from Lebanon and halt its continuing strikes before the future of the group's weapons can be discussed.

Judge orders redrawing of Utah's congressional map

WASHINGTON (Reuters): A Utah judge ruled that the state must redraw its congressional map ahead of the 2026 US midterm elections, saying Utah's Republican-controlled legislature had overstepped in overruling an earlier ballot measure passed by voters against drawing districts to favor any party.

"Plaintiffs have proven, as a matter of law, that the Legislature unconstitutionally repealed Proposition 4, and enacted SB 200, in violation of the people's fundamental right to reform redistricting in Utah and to prohibit partisan gerrymandering," Third District Court Judge Dianna Gibson said in the ruling. A 2018

ballot proposition had created an independent redistricting commission to recommend congressional maps. The current map in Utah was adopted in 2021. The judge ruled that the state legislature overstepped when it repealed and replaced the 2018 ballot initiative.

The US is witnessing a nationwide scramble for advantage in the 2026 elections. President Donald Trump is asking several Republican-led states to redraw their congressional maps ahead of next year's midterm elections in an effort to retain control of the House of Representatives. Democrats have made an effort to rework California's congres-

sional maps in response to Texas Republicans pushing through new congressional maps in that state to give themselves more seats in Congress. Attorneys for the Utah Legislature had indicated that if Gibson did not rule in their favor, they would appeal to the Utah Supreme Court and possibly the US Supreme Court, the Utah News Dispatch reported. The Democratic National Committee welcomed ruling. Before the 2021 maps were adopted, one of Utah's four US House seats was competitive for Democrats and currently Republicans consistently dominate all four, according to the Utah News Dispatch.

BERLIN (AFP): The German cabinet on Wednesday signed off steps to boost recruitment for the country's armed forces and strengthen military readiness in the face of high tensions between NATO and Russia.

Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said the drive aims to attract volunteers to the Bundeswehr, but the proposal also includes provisions for compulsory service in case numbers fall short in coming years. From January 1 next year, a questionnaire will be sent to all young German men and women to assess their interest in serving, including questions on their level of fitness, skills and interests.

While men are required to complete it, it will be voluntary for women, according to a draft law that must still be passed by parliament. Starting on July 1, 2027, all 18-year-old German men will also

be required to undergo a mandatory medical examination, even if they do not opt for voluntary military service.

Merz stressed that "Russia is -- and will remain for a long time to come -- the greatest threat to freedom, peace and stability in Europe". He reiterated his goal that Germany, the EU's most populous nation, "must have the largest conventional army on the European side of NATO". Conscription was officially suspended in Germany in 2011 under then chancellor Angela Merkel.

Merz has made boosting Germany's threadbare military a key priority given the threat from Russia and US President Donald Trump's questioning of the traditional American security umbrella for Europe. There are currently around 182,000 soldiers in the Bundeswehr plus

49,000 reservists. Pistorius is aiming for at least 260,000 troops and a total of 200,000 operational reservists.

The recruitment drive has featured social media campaigns and includes promises of a salary of at least 2,300 euros (2,660 dollars) a month plus free healthcare and other perks such as help with gaining a driving licence. Merz's cabinet exceptionally met on Wednesday at the defence ministry, in a surveillance-proofed room dubbed "the submarine".

Outside the building, arriving ministers were greeted by a small group of protesters warning against a reintroduction of military conscription. The cabinet also formally approved the formation of a new national security council and steps to better protect the armed forces against cyberattacks, sabotage and other threats.

The Frontier Post

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Illinois moves the goalposts on reading, math and science

THE return of school has us focused on education, and with that in mind we believe it's worth weighing in on two major changes in the way the state of Illinois measures proficiency in reading, math and science. First, the scores needed to be considered "proficient" are going down for math and reading.

For high schoolers, these scores come from the preACT and the ACT, a test with scores ranging from 1 at the low end to 36 on the high end. Previously, the state used SAT scores to measure high school proficiency, with proficiency standards above the national average.

Now, scoring an 18 in English language arts and a 19 in math on the ACT will count as "proficient" for high school juniors. To put that in perspective: an 18 is below the national average ACT score of 19 — and far below what selective universities such as the University of Illinois expect, where most freshmen scored between 30 and 34.

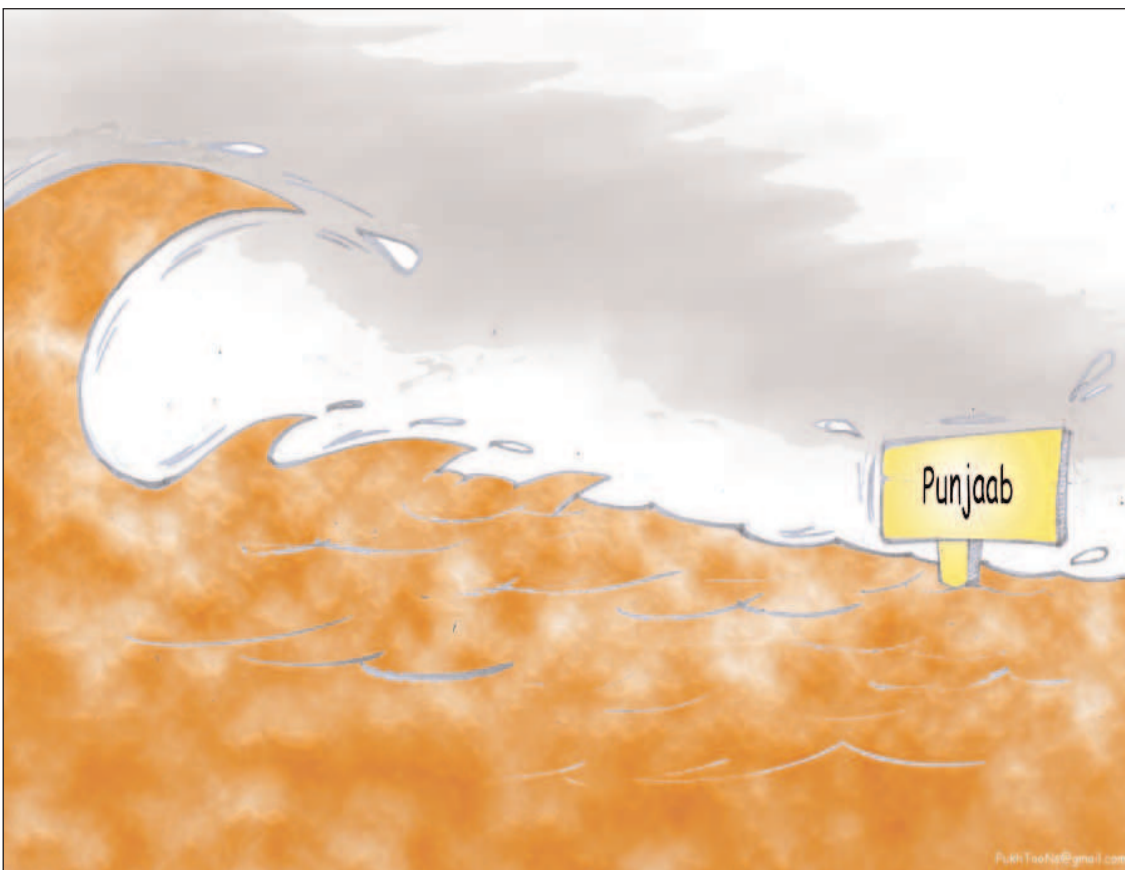
For students in lower grades, the same trend holds true — proficiency scores based on the Illinois Assessment of Readiness for English and math went down, while science went up slightly. Second, it's about to become a lot more difficult to understand how students are doing. Education reporter Becky Vevea of Chalkbeat hit the nail on the head when she wrote that, "Comparisons to achievement in past years, including to pre-pandemic performance, now will be difficult due to the shifting benchmarks."

Yes. And while state officials make the case that this was a necessary change, we wonder cynically whether this move was about obfuscating continued declines. The Illinois State Board of Education spun the move this way: "Illinois right-sizes assessment performance levels to give families and educators more accurate data on student success." But the state's attempt to "right-size" expectations comes against the backdrop of already troubling results. In 2024, just 30% of fourth graders across Illinois were proficient in reading, according to the Nation's Report Card.

No matter the reason, the reality is we're not going to be able to easily measure how well kids are reading and doing math compared with previous school years. That's a problem when proficiency isn't where it needs to be. We're cheering for students and teachers across Illinois this school year. We know life in the classroom is tough for kids and adults alike, and the process of learning is hard work. But it's worth it — the rewards of being able to read and enjoy great books and perform challenging calculations on your own are great. This knowledge gives kids power and agency, two things they'll need after graduation. Now is not the time to move the goalposts on test scores. It's time to get serious about what these scores are telling us — essentially, that many of our kids need our help. Lowering expectations also won't inspire better outcomes. On the contrary, it risks misleading parents and denying the very students who need help the support they deserve. Under these lowered thresholds, more kids will be considered proficient in reading and math than last year. That's good for administrators who want to pad their own grades. But it doesn't serve anyone else. The point of the tests isn't just to pass by any means necessary, even if that means making it easier to do so. The point is to be honest with parents and the people tasked with running our schools about how the system is doing.

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The Frontier Post will not be responsible for the comments in the articles and letters. The Frontier Post requests the writers of articles and letters to please make sure that they write their email addresses and mention the names of the cities, towns, districts or tehsil of their residences at the bottom of their articles and letters.



Echoes of Hitler's mindset in Modi's India

Abdul Basit Alvi

ADOLF Hitler, who served as the leader of the Nazi Party and Chancellor of Germany from 1933 to 1945, is universally regarded as one of history's most abhorrent figures. His infamous regime was defined by an iron-fisted authoritarian grip, widespread systemic violence, a relentless and fanatical pursuit of racial purity, and a pervasive, all-encompassing totalitarian control. The horrific acts committed under his direct leadership were far from accidental consequences of war or simple governmental missteps; instead, they were the calculated and deliberate implementation of a virulent ideology deeply rooted in extreme racism, fervent anti-semitism, and an unshakable, yet utterly false, belief in Aryan supremacy. This destructive ideology was meticulously cultivated and disseminated, laying the groundwork for unprecedented human suffering.

Among Hitler's most enduring and chilling legacies is the Holocaust, a meticulously planned, state-sponsored, and industrial-scale genocide that systematically orchestrated the murder of an estimated six million Jews. This atrocity was not a sudden explosion of violence but was meticulously preceded by years of escalating antisemitic rhetoric and discriminatory policies designed to progressively strip Jewish people of their rights and systematically marginalize them from German society. A stark example of this incremental dehumanization was the enactment of the Nuremberg Laws of 1935. These laws served as a foundational legal framework, stripping Jews of their German citizenship and explicitly prohibiting marriages or sexual relations between Jews and individuals classified as "Aryans."

Jewish individuals were then progressively and relentlessly removed from schools, professions, and public life, while their businesses were boycotted or forcibly seized, crippling their livelihoods. By the late 1930s, violence against Jews had become disturbingly normalized and even publicly sanctioned, culminating in the horrific events of Kristallnacht, or "the Night of Broken Glass," in November 1938. This state-orchestrated pogrom witnessed thousands of Jewish businesses, homes, and synagogues destroyed in a wave of terror, and tragically, over 30,000 Jewish men were arrested and subsequently sent to concentration camps, marking a significant escalation of persecution. With the outbreak of World War II in 1939, Hitler's genocidal ambitions expanded dramatically beyond Germany's borders. Jews from across Europe were rounded up, forcibly deported, and confined to overcrowded ghettos under appalling and inhumane conditions, where starvation and disease

were rampant. Ultimately, the Nazi regime implemented the "Final Solution," a chilling euphemism for the organized, systematic extermination of the entire Jewish population.

This horrific plan involved the rapid construction of dedicated extermination camps such as Auschwitz, Treblinka, Sobibor, and Belzec, designed solely for mass murder. Victims were transported to these sites in cramped cattle cars and then murdered en masse in gas chambers, their bodies subsequently incinerated in vast crematoria. Those who were not immediately killed upon arrival were subjected to brutal forced labor, agonizing medical experiments, deliberate starvation, and severe beatings, enduring unimaginable suffering before their inevitable demise.

Since Narendra Modi rose to power, first as the Chief Minister of Gujarat and subsequently as India's Prime Minister in 2014, his tenure has been shadowed by a growing number of serious allegations of human rights abuses, particularly targeting religious minorities and the populace of Jammu & Kashmir. Many critics, including a range of credible international bodies and human rights organizations, have accused him of either actively fostering or tacitly tolerating policies and actions that systematically marginalize vulnerable communities and progressively undermine established democratic institutions within India.

The accusations against Modi's tenure are often traced back to the 2002 Gujarat riots, which stand as one of the deadliest and most controversial outbreaks of communal violence in India's recent history. Triggered by the tragic burning of a train in Godhra that killed 59 Hindu pilgrims, this event unleashed an immediate and devastating wave of anti-Muslim pogroms across Gujarat. The brutality escalated with alarming speed and ferocity: houses, mosques, and businesses belonging to Muslims were systematically torched; mass rapes and murders occurred, with numerous credible reports indicating that local police often stood idly by, allowing the violence to unfold, or, even more disturbingly, actively participated through deliberate inaction or complicity. Investigations conducted by reputable organizations such as Human Rights Watch and others revealed that mobs utilized sophisticated computer-generated lists to specifically target Muslim properties, suggesting a disturbing degree of premeditation and organized planning rather than spontaneous anger. Many survivors recounted harrowing personal experiences where local police not only failed to intervene but in some instances allegedly joined the rioters or even opened fire on Muslims seeking sanctuary, turning protec-

tors into aggressors.

Sworn testimony from police officers, such as Rahul Sharma of Bhavnagar, further exposed allegations that officials attempting to intervene to uphold law and order were swiftly transferred or punished by the state government, indicating potential political interference. Meanwhile, investigative reports and commissions, including the Nanavati-Shah commission and Amnesty International, highlighted concerns about how senior officials, including then-Chief Minister Modi, allegedly ordered police to "go slow" against the rioters and strategically moved key officers out of active duty to facilitate mob violence. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), under Justice J.S. Verma, vehemently condemned the Gujarat government for its comprehensive failure to protect its citizens and ensure justice for victims, labeling it a "grave failure." Although courts later cleared Modi of direct legal charges due to insufficient evidence, his critics firmly contend that the probes themselves were compromised and that the actual perpetrators of the violence largely remained unpunished, undermining faith in the justice system. As a result, thousands of survivors remain displaced to this day, struggling with a profound lack of compensation and resettlement assistance, while poverty and sectarian segregation became deeply entrenched in the aftermath of the riots, creating lasting social divisions.

Within India's complex federal structure, the controversial revocation of Article 370 and the subsequent reorganization of Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) in August 2019 marked a highly significant and widely criticized turning point. Following these actions, the government imposed a sweeping communications blackout effectively jamming internet services, phone lines, and television broadcasts and enforced strict curfews across the entire region, isolating the population. Nearly 4,000 political figures, including former chief ministers, local politicians, and journalists, were detained en masse under draconian preventive laws such as the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and the Jammu & Kashmir Public Safety Act, severely curtailing political dissent. Human rights organizations have extensively reported the widespread use of pellet guns to suppress protests, resulting in thousands being maimed or blinded, with many suffering permanent disabilities.

Additionally, countless documented cases of torture, extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, nighttime raids, and secret detentions have been reported, with many victims tragically never resurfacing, raising grave concerns about accountability. Cultural suppression in IIOJK has also reportedly deepened: bookstores were raided, over 650 Islamic books were confiscated, independent media outlets were forcibly shut down, and foreign journalists were banned from accessing the region. Kashmiri reporters, in particular, have faced severe repercussions, including passport revocations or detentions under laws typically reserved for terrorism, signaling a profound and chilling crackdown on free expression and independent journalism.

Scholars like Yale's Dr. Jason Stanley have explicitly drawn parallels, noting what they describe as Hindu supremacists' admiration for Nazi methods, including explicit state leaders reportedly expressing desires to emulate Nazi treatment of Jews. Academic analyses further argue that, similar to Hitler's Germany, India's ruling party is reportedly merging state and religion, actively pushing an exclusionary nationalist agenda that systematically marginalizes religious minorities. The parallels drawn extend to specific tactics: internet censorship, the proliferation of propaganda films such as "The Kashmir Files"—which many critics contend incite dangerous anti-Muslim sentiment—and controversial bans on documentaries like the BBC's "The Modi Question" further echo elements of the Nazi-state's suppression of dissent and its sophisticated media control apparatus. Online discussions, particularly on platforms like Reddit, frequently caution against minimizing historical atrocities but nonetheless acknowledge what they perceive as disturbing echoes in contemporary India, citing concerns such as "Dehumanization of Muslims like how Hitler did for Jews... boycotts... Modi infiltrated all government bodies... ensuring dissent rot in jail." These online sentiments reflect a broader unease among observers regarding the trajectory of human rights and democratic values in India.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's policies and actions in India bear unsettling parallels to those of Adolf Hitler in the past. For many among India's minority communities and the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), Modi has come to represent a similarly authoritarian and oppressive figure-one under whose leadership they face systemic marginalization, repression, and alleged human rights abuses.

A strong, unified, and sustained international effort is urgently needed to pressure the Modi government to halt all alleged human rights abuses against India's minorities and the people of IIOJK. Silence and inaction in the face of such grave concerns only embolden authoritarian tendencies and erode the global commitment to human rights and international law.

A defence without dams

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal

SINCE its inception in August 1947, Pakistan has been resolute in strengthening its defenses, always aware of the challenges posed by its eastern neighbor. The fledgling state pledged to prioritize its security needs, even at the cost of hardship, and has stayed true to this commitment. Just a few months ago, the world witnessed Pakistan's impressive response to Indian aggression, demonstrating prowess in conventional warfare by dismantling fourteen layers of the Indian threat with remarkable effectiveness.

Even with the clarity of that mastery, there was still one area where, unfortunately, we stayed indifferent-or perhaps even accepted our ignorance. In this neglected domain, India once again prevailed; not by gun or missile, but by the waters that flow unchecked. Following our triumph in conventional war, India turned to a form of aggression less ostentatious but no less potent, releasing waters of rivers under its control into our territory. The consequences are now upon us in the form of catastrophic floods. The wise counsel that one must ever remain alert to the enemy and harbour no expectation of generosity; still, in this matter Pakistan has suffered from prolonged inertia and neglect.

This year, beginning in late June and continuing into August, Pakistan has endured unprecedented floods. Heavy monsoon rains, augmented by cloudbursts, triggered flash floods and landslides across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Jammu & Kashmir, and the capital region. As of late August 2025, the National Disaster Management Authority reports that over eight hundred souls have perished and more than one thousand others are wounded. In KP alone, nearly 479 lives were lost and 347 persons were injured.

The KP province bore the worst of the calamity, with catastrophic flash floods and landslides claiming hundreds more-over three hundred fatalities-and several areas such as Buner, Swat, Bajaur, Battagram, Mansehra, Shangla, Lower Dir, and Abbottabad were severely affected. In Buner District, tragedy struck with particular severity: at least 158 perished, many more remain missing, and a rescue helicopter crashed during operations, claiming the lives of five rescuers. Punjab, too, stands in peril; over 150,000 persons have been evacuated from eastern districts such as Kasur and Bahawalnagar, following Indian warnings of dam water releases from swollen rivers. These rivers-Ravi, Sutlej, and Chenab-originating in India, now threaten Pakistan's agricultural heartland and food supply. The deteriorating Kawawali bridge, vital to ten villages, teeters in Fazilka; its collapse would compound the plight of the rural population already facing crop damage and destroyed embankments.

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Punjab, too, stands in peril; over 150,000 persons have been evacuated from eastern districts such as Kasur and Bahawalnagar, following Indian warnings of dam water releases from swollen rivers. These rivers-Ravi, Sutlej, and Chenab-originating in India, now threaten Pakistan's agricultural heartland and food supply. The deteriorating Kawawali bridge, vital to ten villages, teeters in Fazilka; its collapse would compound the plight of the rural population already facing crop damage and destroyed embankments.

As for economic consequences, the devastation is immense. Already, since 26 June, over 1,676 buildings-of which 562 were destroyed-have been reported across Swat, Abbottabad, Charsadda, Malakand, Shangla, Lower Dir, and Torgarh. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa alone, infrastructure loss amounts to roughly Rs 20

billion, including thirty-seven schools, eighty-three roads, ten bridges, over two hundred irrigation channels, and nearly seventy water-supply schemes rendered unusable; the irrigation authority's losses alone exceed Rs 10.3 billion.

Nationwide, the human and agricultural toll is staggering. Livestock numbering in the thousands have been swept away; thousands of homes destroyed; entire farmlands ruined; and tens of thousands displaced-evacuated to safer ground yet left with shattered livelihoods. The crops of Pakistan, particularly in Punjab and Sindh, are under grave threat, and vast fields of rice, wheat, and sugarcane lie submerged. This ruin of agriculture shall inevitably deepen the food crisis. Economists have already warned that such destruction will intensify inflation, compounding the misery of the common man who already struggles with soaring prices.

The flood, thus, is not merely a natural calamity but a peril to Pakistan's economy, its sustenance, and its stability.

One must ask: why did we fail to attend to the water sector with equal vigour as defence? Why have key infrastructure projects-dams such as Kalabagh-remained unbuilt, when they could have stored these waters and forestalled disaster? Here, the responsibility lies squarely upon our leadership. For decades, parochial politics, provincial rivalries, and vested interests have obstructed the construction of Kalabagh Dam.

Successful governments, despite enjoying authority and resources, lacked either the courage or the will to build it. Some rulers, had they been truly statesmen, could have secured Pakistan's future by pushing forward this vital project; instead, they chose silence or expediency. As a result, future generations inherit calamity in place of security, floods in place of reservoirs, and perpetual vulnerability in place of stability.

It was not solely external agency that led to this ruin. The broader factors-deforestation, poor urban planning, illegal construction, weakened embankments, climate change aggravating cloudburst and monsoon intensity-have all conspired against us.

Experts and residents testify to the swift and force of rising torrents: many were dragged to rooftops or stranded; clean water and medical supplies were inaccessible; devastation was widespread.

This calamity stands as a clarion call. Pakistan must redouble its efforts: to pursue storage infrastructure, uphold embankments, strengthen early-warning systems, and enforce land-use regulations.

Above all, it must rise above the paralysis of political discord. Agricultural heartlands and rural communities require protection-not only rescue in crisis, but mitigation in peace.

Thus, the nation remains ever committed to its defence, clinging to that creed of resilience. Yet this year, we have learnt anew that defence must include the conservation and governance of vital natural resources. The flood that descended from India's rivers demands not only lamentation, but foresight, preparation, and resolve. Let this disaster awaken in us a renewal of vigilance-for without mastery over both arms and waters, our sovereignty remains incomplete.

Trump aims high in bid to impose ultimate power

IN the gospel according to Donald Trump — his book “The Art of the Deal” — the future president laid out his business and life philosophy.

“I aim very high, and then I just keep pushing and pushing and pushing to get what I’m after,” Trump wrote. “Sometimes I settle for less than I sought, but in most cases I still end up with what I want.”

Once, Trump used this technique to haggle with contractors, to intimidate rival real estate sharks and in endless lawsuits to pursue his business interests.

Twenty-eight years later, he hasn’t changed. His pushing and pushing and pushing just takes place on a grander and more consequential stage.

The president’s relentless attempts to create leverage and wield decisive and uninhibited power on multiple fronts have dominated a summer in which he’s been more unrestrained than ever.

August has often been a cruel month for presidents. In 2014, in an odd echo of today, fighting raged in Gaza and Ukraine, intruding on President Barack Obama’s vacation and raising questions about his leadership.

Chroniclers of the Biden years date the start of the eclipse of the 46th president’s administration to August 26, 2021, when a suicide bomber killed 13 Americans at Kabul International Airport.

Trump motored through this August determined to beat the curse, always testing the boundaries of what is appropriate legal or constitutional conduct in a president.

His pushing culminated this week with threats to federalize National Guard troops and send them to Chicago — even when Democratic leaders of the city and the state of Illinois told him to stay away.

Emergency conditions prescribed by the US Code that include rebellions, which might make this a clear legal act, do not exist in the city — despite Trump’s claims Tuesday that it’s in “big trouble” and is a “disaster” because of crime.

But that’s not stopping the president, who is also threatening to send federal forces to other cities controlled by Democrats.

“I (have) the right to do anything that I want to do. I’m the president of the United States. If I think our country’s in danger — and it is in danger in these cities — I can do it,” Trump said

during a Cabinet meeting Tuesday.

This is consistent with the president’s long-held view that there are few constraints on a president and that his authority is almost absolute.

Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker, a possible 2028 presidential candidate, however, seemed on solid ground when he wrote on X. “No, Donald, you can’t do whatever you want.”

Time will tell. Trump is pushing his authority on another front, announcing this week he had fired Federal Reserve official Lisa Cook.

The Department of Justice is investigating Cook over alleged mortgage transgressions. She has denied wrongdoing and plans to fight her dismissal in the courts.

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For example, by the time dismissed bureaucrats working for USAID were able to legally challenge him, Trump had eviscerated their agency.

And as he fought four criminal indictments as a presidential candidate, he filed countless and often frivolous procedural motions to slow court action and run out the accountability clock over his attempt to steal the 2020 election.

Now that he’s back in power, his administration is using the legal system to settle scores.

Several of Trump’s political enemies have found themselves under investigation over mortgage filings, including

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California Sen. Adam Schiff and New York Attorney General Letitia James, who won a civil fraud judgment against Trump, his adult sons and the Trump organization. Neither has been charged, and both deny wrongdoing.

Last week, FBI agents arrived at the home of John Bolton, a first-term Trump national security adviser who frequently criticizes the president on television. A search warrant would have been approved by a judge on the grounds that there was probable cause that a crime had been committed. But it did seem rather a coincidence that yet another Trump adversary was under investigation.

“What the president is trying to do here is very systemic and systematic,” Schiff told NBC’s “Meet the Press” regard-

ing the search of Bolton’s home. “Anyone who stands up to the president, anyone who criticizes the president, anyone who says anything adverse to the president’s interests, gets the full weight of the federal government brought down on them.”

But who is to stop Trump?

The courts have curtailed some of his policies, although the increasing ranks of judges appointed by the president — and a conservative Supreme Court majority that sometimes rules in his favor — are helping his bid to expand presidential power. And the high court fueled Trump’s vision of impunity by ruling in a case related to one of his criminal indictments that presidents have substan-

impunity, vengeance and ambition grows by the day.

“Any person who defies him is viewed not as an intellectual adversary but as a vicious opponent,” Ty Cobb, who served for a time as a White House lawyer in Trump’s first term, told CNN’s Erin Burnett, “Anything that he can do to wreak vengeance, obviously, makes him very happy, just like expanding his power, makes him very happy.”

Cobb added, “I think this is something that Americans need to look at seriously because this cannot be what people in the country voted for in terms of honor, virtue and the rule of law.”

But nothing will stop Trump aiming very high — and pushing and pushing.

tial immunity for official acts.

Congress ought to be another brake. But Republican majorities in the House and Senate are supine to Trump, willingly ceding power to the executive. And the ultimate constitutional curb on his behavior — impeachment — was carried out twice by Democratic House majorities but was thwarted when Republicans in the Senate refused to convict him of high crimes and misdemeanors.

And forget anyone in Trump’s handpicked second-term team of uberloyalists imposing restraint. In a more-than-three-hour Cabinet meeting Tuesday, his subordinates took turns to layer extravagant praise on the president.

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But Russia’s war machine is also operating at full speed, with many factories running around the clock. A clear sign of how quickly Russia can scale up effective weapon systems came on July 9, when it launched 728 Shahed drones in a single day. By the end of the month, more than 6,200 Shaheds had been deployed — 14 times more than in July 2024 and 16 percent more than in June. To address this threat, at least two Ukrainian defense companies have developed artificial intelligence-powered interceptor drones that use machine learning to identify and destroy Shaheds. On the best nights, they have achieved 60 percent to 70 percent success rates.

But the fight is evolving quickly. The Shaheds, too, are getting smarter. When Ukraine deployed machine guns for air defense, Shaheds responded by flying above 3 km — well out of range. Then, in late July, Russia launched a jet-powered Shahed that can fly up to 700 kph, faster than most known interceptors. Moreover, some Shaheds are now

The age of robotic warfare has arrived

Ragnar Sass

RUSSIA’S war against Ukraine has become a full-scale technological conflict, where 70 percent to 80 percent of casualties are now caused by unmanned aerial drones. After three and a half years, the war has become a nonstop cat-and-mouse game, where every new weapon system offers only a brief two- or three-month advantage before the other side develops countermeasures.

That means the age of robotic warfare is here. We are witnessing its first stage in Ukraine’s skies, on the ground and at sea. The fastest military-tech development in the world is happening in Ukrainian garages, basements and factories, where hundreds of small teams are building new-model drones and interceptors.

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equipped with thermal imaging, advanced processors and even autonomous swarm coordination. They appear to sense when they are being hunted, swerving and dodging to escape their pursuer.

Such is the nature of the first ever robot-on-robot war. The conflict is being waged by two autonomous systems, each trying to outsmart the other in real time. Similar breakthroughs are happening on the ground. First-person view drones with optical cable connections (meaning their signal cannot be jammed) can now strike targets up to 30 km from the front line — making any movement in that zone extremely dangerous. Both sides have begun using “sleeping drones” that wait on the ground for hours until a target appears.

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One of Ukraine’s biggest successes has been the use of maritime drones to push Russian ships out of the Black Sea. These units, too, have been upgraded over time. On Dec. 31, 2024, a Ukrainian Magura V5 sea drone armed with a surface-to-air missile destroyed a Russian Mi-8 helicopter over the Black Sea. Never before had

an unmanned surface vehicle shot down a manned aircraft. And now, some maritime drones are being used as launch platforms or communication relays for smaller drones, expanding both range and capability. These are not isolated cases. They confirm that we have entered a new era of warfare, in which autonomous systems are central to battlefield success. Ukraine’s top drone units operate like high-performance tech startups, each with its own recruitment, training, funding and team culture. One advanced brigade includes more than 70 data architects analyzing live intelligence around the clock. These units build rapid learning loops, adapting to battlefield changes faster than traditional military units.

ground vehicles are now being deployed at scale — mostly for logistics, resupply, evacuation, mining and even attacks. For now, Ukraine appears to be ahead in this area. In July, its 3rd Assault Brigade carried out a historic fully autonomous operation, combining first-person view drones and ground robots to force Russian troops to surrender in Kharkiv Oblast without any Ukrainian soldiers participating directly in the assault.

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mer Google CEO Eric Schmidt’s defense company Swift Beat, which plans to deliver hundreds of thousands of drones this year. The company has developed one of the most effective Shahed interceptor drones and is also developing systems capable of intercepting cruise and ballistic missiles. Remarkably, many of the new technologies are being developed not by large defense contractors but by thousands of volunteers and civil society.

These kinds of innovations help to explain how Ukraine has managed to hold off a military superpower for so long. NATO and its allies urgently need to study and bolster their support for Ukraine. Robotic warfare is here and Ukraine is writing the field manual.

Al-Aqsa violations reach unprecedented levels

Daoud Kuttab

ONE of the bedrocks of the 19th-century status quo agreement governing Jerusalem’s holy places is that each faith community has the exclusive right to pray in its own houses of worship. This principle was reaffirmed on Nov. 13, 2014, when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Jordan’s King Abdullah, in the presence of then-US Secretary of State John Kerry, summarized it in one simple but important sentence: “Al-Aqsa is for Muslims to pray and for all others to visit.”

Yet, in recent years, this status quo has been eroding at an alarming pace. Jewish groups continue to enter the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound without coordination with its Muslim owners and Hashemite custodians. The number of incursions has increased, while Al-Aqsa guards, who are on the Jordanian waqf payroll, are prevented from enforcing the long-established rules.

The violations reached boiling point on Aug. 3, when Israel’s National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir led an extraor-

dinarily large group of supporters into the mosque compound and openly carried out Jewish prayers. Videos circulated by the Temple Mount Administration, a small Jewish organization, showed Ben-Gvir leading his group inside the compound and additional footage appeared to show him praying. Jordan’s Foreign Ministry issued a scathing condemnation.

Just days later, on Aug. 15, the foreign ministers of 31 Arab and Islamic countries, joined by the heads of the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Gulf Cooperation Council, released a joint statement warning of the “dangers of the continued expansionist settlement policy in the Occupied West Bank pursued by the extremist Israeli government, including attempts targeting Islamic and Christian holy sites, foremost among them Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif.” The statement described these actions as nothing less than “settler terrorism.”

Jordan has even signaled its intention to add these violations of the status quo to the Palestinian complaint against Israel already

under consideration by the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

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Despite this, the office of the Israeli prime minister responded with its usual refrain. According to Reuters, Netanyahu repeated the same line he has used for years: the status quo “has not changed and will not change.” But this claim has no relationship to reality. Further proof came on Monday, when hundreds of Israeli settlers, under the protection of heavily armed security forces, entered Al-Aqsa. In a particularly provocative act, some blew the shofar within the compound — an overt Jewish ritual

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The consequences of this erosion of the status quo are deeply dangerous. Any further escalation could ignite a major round of violence. Yet,

violations of the status quo cut to the core of Palestinian, Arab and Muslim identity — and any attempt to change the rules risks unleashing uncontrollable violence.

Meanwhile, Israel is working relentlessly to block Palestinian aspirations for an independent state on the 1967 borders, including East Jerusalem. Yet momentum for recognition of Palestine is growing internationally. The upcoming UN General Assembly is expected to witness a wave of new recognitions and, by the end of September, four-fifths of

describe as genocide. Others point to Netanyahu’s own rhetoric, in which he has proclaimed a “historic and spiritual mission” to create a “Greater Israel” — an expansion that would come at the expense not only of Palestinian statehood but also Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

But the issue of Al-Aqsa cannot be dismissed as secondary. The compound has long been a flashpoint that can inflame the entire region. Previous uprisings and waves of resistance have often been triggered by perceived threats to Al-Aqsa.

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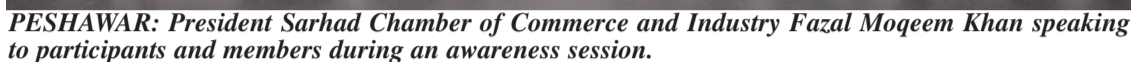
UN Security Council permanent members and nearly 80 percent of UN member states will have recognized Palestine. Israel’s obstruction of Palestinian statehood, combined with its provocations at Al-Aqsa, is creating a political and religious powder keg.

If left unchecked, the collision course is obvious: global rejection of Israel’s expansionist policies, regional instability and, potentially, another eruption of violence centered on Jerusalem.

Al-Aqsa Mosque and its Hashemite custodianship enjoy broad international support.

But support alone is not enough. The international community — particularly the US and Europe — must make clear that any violation of the status quo will not be tolerated. Preserving Al-Aqsa’s integrity is not just a matter of religious freedom or international law, it is essential for regional and global peace.

Unless immediate steps are taken to enforce the historic status quo, the danger of explosion will only grow — and the entire world will be forced to bear the consequences.

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In brief

Govt approves Rs. 250m for hockey team

ISLAMABAD (APP): The federal government has approved financial assistance of Rs. 250 million for the participation of Pakistan's hockey team in the upcoming FIH Pro League (Season 7). According to an official letter issued by the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) here Wednesday, total funds of Rs. 400 million have been sanctioned. Out of this amount, Rs. 250 million has been specifically earmarked for the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) to facilitate the team's participation in the prestigious international league, while Rs. 150 million has been allocated for organizing the First National Youth Games in Islamabad. The PSB has asked PHF to submit a comprehensive participation plan within three days, covering travel schedules, logistics, administrative arrangements, and training details.

PCB Inter-School Cricket Talent Hunt trials held

HYDERABAD (APP): Under the Pakistan Cricket Board's (PCB) Inter-School Talent Hunt Programme, cricket trials were held on Wednesday at Government Comprehensive Boys Higher Secondary School, Latifabad No.10, where school children participated with great enthusiasm. According to details, the trials were conducted by PCB selectors Lal Kumar and Wahab Malik. On the occasion, school sports in-charge Mohammed Din Shaikh, coach Imran Khan, focal person Zahid Mughal, Usman Ishaq and Ashfaq were also present. Around 50 students of the school took part in the trials.

Clarke undergoes another skin cancer surgery

SYDNEY (Agencies): Former Australian captain Michael Clarke has revealed that he has undergone another surgery for skin cancer, renewing concerns about the disease's prevalence in Australia. Clarke, 44, shared the update via social media, posting a photo from a hospital bed with a visible bandage on his nose. "Skin cancer is real! Especially in Australia," Clarke wrote. "Another one cut out of my nose today. A friendly reminder to get your skin checked." He emphasised the importance of early detection, adding, "Prevention is better than cure but in my case, regular check-ups and early detection is key." The former cricketer also expressed appreciation for his surgeon, saying, "So grateful that Dr. Bish Soliman got it early." Clarke was first diagnosed with skin cancer in 2006 and has since undergone multiple procedures. Over the years, he has publicly spoken about his health journey, frequently encouraging others to prioritise skin checks. In a 2023 interview, Clarke admitted that ongoing cancer scares had left him fearful about not being around for his daughter, Kelsey Lee. Widely considered one of Australia's top batters, Clarke played 394 international matches between 2004 and 2015, scoring 17,112 runs across formats. As captain, he led Australia in 74 Tests and 139 ODIs, guiding the team to a 5-0 Ashes whitewash in 2013-14 and a World Cup victory in 2015.



NEW YORK: Emma Raducanu of Great Britain returns against Janice Tjen of Indonesia during their Women's Singles Second Round match.

Pakistan moves in ATF Team Competition quarterfinals

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan recorded a convincing 3-0 victory over Uzbekistan to secure a place in the quarterfinals of the ATF 12 & under Team Competition Finals, at Singapore.

In the first singles match, Rashid Ali Bachani defeated Zinatuln Milan 6-4, 6-2.

In the second singles, Shayan Afridi outclassed Ziyatov Azamjon 6-1, 6-1, said a press release.

In the doubles encounter, the pair of Shayan Afridi and M. Ibraheem Gill sealed the win by beating Umedov Alimkhan, Zinatulin

Milan 6-4, 6-4.

Pakistan were placed in Group D along with Thailand and Uzbekistan. Yesterday, Pakistan lost tough three-set matches against Thailand, the No. 3 seed in the tournament. Rashid Ali won the first set 7-6(4) but unfortunately lost the match, while Shayan also won the first set 6-4 before losing his match.

Pakistan bounced back strongly, defeating Uzbekistan 3-0 to qualify for the quarterfinals. Pakistan will face south Korea in the quarterfinals. The tournament features strong teams from

Iran, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, China, Korea, and Chinese Taipei.

Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi, President PTF, extended his congratulations to the young team for their outstanding performance and expressed hope that they will continue their winning momentum in the upcoming stages.

Col. (R) Zia-ud-din Tufail, Secretary General PTF, also lauded the players and team management for their dedication and teamwork, which led to this important victory.

Pakistan coach addresses drop in Shaheen Afridi's pace

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan bowling coach Ashley Noffke has addressed the recent dip in the form and pace of Shaheen Afridi ahead of the Asia Cup 2025. The left-arm pacer has found it challenging to bowl at speeds of his earlier career days since he battled a back issue in 2023.

However, Pakistan bowling coach Ashley Noffke has high hopes for the 25-year-old to find his best form in the Asia Cup 2025. "In terms of pace, he is aware it has dropped and he has experienced a dip in form," Noffke said ahead of Pakistan's tri-series with hosts UAE and Afghanistan. "Recovering pace takes time, but we're building nicely now. We've started seeing more balls in the 140km/h range during the West Indies series. He's definitely on his way back and his confidence is growing," the Pakistan coach added.

According to Noffke, the left-arm seamer was close to regain his best form and the ability to hit speeds close to 150km/h. Shaheen Afridi will once again lead the Pakistan pace battery in the Asia Cup 2025 after the conclusion of the tri-series.

The eight-team continental tournament is scheduled to commence on September 9. Following the Asia Cup 2025, Pakistan will compete in the T20 World Cup for a second time.

Ahead of the two global tournaments, Ashley Noffke said that Shaheen Afridi was making all efforts to swing the new ball. "I think swing can be influenced by the environment and conditions on the day."

Ashwin retires from IPL to play in overseas leagues

NEW DELHI (Agencies): Former India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin has retired from the Indian Premier League (IPL) and plans to play in other franchise leagues across the world. Ashwin, 38, played for five franchises including the Chennai Super Kings - where he won the title twice in 2010 and 2011 - and is fifth on the all-time wicket-taker list with 187.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) does not allow any player in Indian international or domestic cricket to feature in overseas leagues. "They say every ending will have a new start," Ashwin posted on social media. "My time as an IPL cricketer comes to a close today but my time as an explorer of the game around various leagues begins today."

Ashwin retired from international cricket in December as the seventh-highest wicket-taker in Test history. He took 537 wickets at an average of 24 in 106 Tests - second only to Anil Kumble's 619 among India bowlers. He also took 156 wickets at 33.20 apiece in 116 one-day internationals and 72 at an average of 23.22 in 65 T20s.

Pakistan Independence Day Tennis finals set for Thursday

ISLAMABAD (APP): The semifinals of Pakistan Independence Day National Ranking Tennis Tournament were played here at the PTF Tennis Complex on Wednesday.

A total of 110 entries across nine categories (Men's Singles, Men's Doubles, Ladies' Singles, Boys 18&under, Girls 18&under, Boys 14&under, Girls 14&under, Boys 12&under, and Girls 12&under- are participating in the event. Among the top players in action are Aqeel Khan, Muzammil Murtaza, Yousaf Khalil, Barkat Ullah, Shahzad Khan, Hamza Roman, Sami Zeb Khan, Ushna Suhail, Sheeza Sajid, Esha Jawad, and Noor Malik. The tournament is being organized to commemorate Pakistan's Independence Day and to

celebrate the spirit of sports. Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi, President, PTF and Col. (R) Zia-ud-Din Tufail Secretary General-PTF extended their best wishes to all participants, encouraging them to demonstrate their talent, sportsmanship, and commitment throughout the event.

Men's Singles semifinals: Aqeel Khan beat Yousaf Khalil 7-6(5), 6-2; Muzammil Murtaza beat Barkatullah 6-2, 6-3.

Men's Doubles semifinals: Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi, Aqeel Khan beat Shahzad Khan, Muzammil Murtaza 7-6(4), 7-5; Yousaf Khalil, Barkatullah beat Sami Zeb Khan, Ahmed Chudary 6-2, 6-7(3), 10-5.

Ladies Singles semifinals: Sheeza Sajid beat Soha Ali 5-7, 7-5, 6-2; Ushna Suhail w/o Noor

Malik due to injury.

Boys 18&under Singles semifinals: Abdul Basit beat Haziq Aasim 2-6, 7-6(3), 6-3; Hamza Roman bt Hassan Usmani 6-3, 6-4.

Girls 18&under Singles semifinals: Zunaisha Noor beat Romaisa Malik 4-6, 6-2, 6-2.

Boys 14&under Singles semifinals: Razik Sultan beat M.Umair Ali 6-2, 6-1.

Girls 14&under Singles Semi Finals: Aimen Rehan beat Shahnoor Umer 6-2, 6-1; Bismal Zia beat Eman Shahbaz 6-2, 6-0.

Boys 12&under semifinals: Muhammad Muaz beat Muhammad Faizan 6-2, 6-1; M Ayan beat Daniyal Abdullah 6-2, 6-2.

Girls 12&under semifinals: Eman Shahbaz beat Amalia Aidrus 6-2, 6-1. The finals are scheduled for August 28.

India risks second global football ban in three years



NEW DELHI (AFP): India could be banned from world football for the second time in three years after FIFA and the Asian governing body demanded it implement a new constitution by October 30 or risk suspension.

World governing body FIFA and the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) sent a joint letter to the All India Football Federation (AIFF) president Kalyan Chaubey expressing "profound concern" at the continued failure to finalise and adopt the constitution.

"Failure to meet this

schedule will leave us with no alternative but to refer the matter to the relevant FIFA decision-making body for consideration and decision," said the letter, seen by AFP.

"AIFF must regard this communication as binding and requiring immediate compliance in order to safeguard its rights as a member of FIFA and the AFC," it added. The AIFF constitution has been in India's Supreme Court awaiting a decision since 2017.

A suspension would mean India national teams and clubs being barred

from all international competitions. FIFA previously suspended India in August 2022 for third-party influence after the Supreme Court appointed a committee of administrators to run the AIFF.

The ban was lifted a few days later, paving the way for the AIFF to elect Chaubey. India's top-flight club football is currently in disarray.

The Indian Super League (ISL) could fold over a dispute between the AIFF and its commercial partner.

This season's ISL kickoff has been delayed with thousands of players and staff in danger of losing their jobs. A rights agreement between the AIFF and the company that runs the ISL, Football Sports Development Limited, ends on December 8 and is yet to be renewed.

The AIFF has been unable to come up with a revival plan for the ISL, which is usually played between September and April. Players union FIFPRO Asia/Oceania raised the issue with FIFA last week.

Lyles unfazed by rain ahead of Diamond League finals

ZURICH (AFP): US sprinter Noah Lyles played down the prospect of heavy rain at the Diamond League finals in Zurich on Thursday when he will go head-to-head in a mouth-watering 200m with Botswana rival Letsile Tsebo.

The forecast for the Swiss city predicts the temperature dipping from current hot, humid conditions, accompanied by heavy, persistent rain at the Letzigrund Stadium for the culmination of the elite track and field circuit.

"I don't think the rain specifically is a disadvantage or an advantage," Olympic 100m champion Lyles said, with the finals taking place just two weeks away from the world championships in Tokyo.

"If you keep your mind straight, you'll be fine."

Lyles was involved in a rain-hit 100m in Lausanne last week, with rain and storms also a strong possibility in Tokyo. The 28-year-old stuttered out of the blocks in Lausanne, a slow getaway handing Oblique Seville the advantage from the start, something the Jamaican then never looked

in danger of ceding.

Seville clocked an impressive 9.87 seconds in the torrential rain at the Stade Olympique de la Pontaise, Lyles battling back in a strong finish to snatch second in 10.02sec.

"I had a bad start, I had a bad reaction, that's really what I chalk up that race to," Lyles said. "I wouldn't say the rain was something that hindered it all that much, and that is proved by the fact Oblique ran a great time. 'So you can obviously run fast times in the rain, just getting your mindset prepared, and saying, 'Hey, this is what we all got to deal with, that's really what it's about.'"

"Strong versatility"

When reminded that Jamaican sprint legend Usain Bolt clocked 19.59sec, then the fourth fastest time ever run (now joint 30th), in tropical downpours over the 200m at the 2009 meet in Lausanne, Lyles' interest was piqued. "Well, that sounds good because that's what me and my coach got in our heads!" the American said.

Lyles will again be up against Tsebo, who won the 200m at last year's Paris

Olympics, the Covid-hit American having to be content with bronze after first claiming 100m gold.

"I would definitely say versatility," Lyles said when asked what he thought Tsebo's strength was. "Letsile has a strong versatility in all his events, it's very impressive."

"There's not a lot of people who go from the 100m to the 400 or even 100m to the 300. 'From 2007-15 there were a lot more (athletes competing in sprint) doubles, and then they kind of drifted off. Now you can see a resurgence with Letsile being one of those people.'"

Tsebo is hunting a first ever Diamond League title while Lyles, who was beaten by Seville in the 100m in London and Jamaica's Kishane Thompson in Silesia this summer, is looking to win the trophy for a record-breaking sixth time.

"His top end is something that's crazy," Tsebo said of Lyles' finishing prowess. "I haven't seen anybody get to that level. For you to catch him and pass, it takes a lot from somebody."



Eight Pakistani fighters qualify for World MMA Championship

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): The Battle of Truth - Pakistan Combat Night marked a defining moment for combat sports in Pakistan, as eight athletes qualified for the World MMA Championship in Georgia and five more secured places in the Road to BRAVE 100 and the World Championship in Bahrain.

Organised by the Pakistan Mixed Martial Arts Federation (PAKMMAF) with the support of the Punjab government, the event drew a packed stadium with a crowd louder and more involved than any cricket match, creating an electrifying atmosphere that kept fans on their feet until the final bell.

Islamabad fighters stamped their authority in the Pakistan Open MMA Championship, with Abdul Manan, Moiz Satti, Siddiq Ullah, Ayan Hussain, Shahab Ali, and Sajid Katoshi all winning their bouts to book places at the IMMAF World Championship in Georgia.

The Road to BRAVE 100 card provided equal drama. Aqib Awan outclassed Egypt's Al-Hassan Muhammad in the flyweight division, Babar Ali overcame Azerbaijan's Shirkhan Valili in bantamweight, while Zia Mashwani dominated Iran's Saman Moradmamand. In the main event, Rizwan Ali defeated Egypt's Adham Muhammad to thunderous applause. The night also cele-

brated women's MMA, with Eman Khan producing a sensational first-round knockout over Tunisia's Maha.

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, though in Japan at the time, closely followed updates of the event. Observers noted that had she been present, she would have seen a crowd and atmosphere unlike anything Pakistan has witnessed in modern sport. Punjab Sports Minister Faisal Khokhar reiterated that MMA will be central to his plan of making Punjab the sports capital of Pakistan.

The event achieved unprecedented broadcast reach, going live on ARY Sports, PTV Sports, and multiple OTT platforms, while also being carried by major international outlets including BBC Urdu, Arab News, and The Independent UK. Reviews from foreign contingents — fighters from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Iran, Egypt, and Morocco — praised Pakistan's hospitality and organisation, significantly elevating the country's global image.

PAKMMAF President Omar Ahmed emphasised that MMA is not just a sport but a cultural force capable of reshaping Pakistan's social fabric. He stressed the federation's mission to create intellectual properties (IPs) that can rival cricket in scale, value, and commercial impact, while also instilling discipline, resilience, and national

pride in the country's youth.

Ahmed highlighted the federation's close partnership with the Special Forces of Pakistan, noting that many officers attended the event. He pointed out that the integration of MMA into unarmed combat training has already enhanced the armed forces' operational competency, and further collaboration is underway.

The federation has also worked with the Higher Education Commission (HEC) to integrate MMA into the university sports framework, ensuring that the next generation has access to structured pathways into the sport.

The event followed shortly after Omar Ahmed and fighter Rizwan Ali were recognised by ISPR with the Pride of Pakistan honour for their contributions to the sport. Ahmed was acknowledged for building sustainable structures for MMA, while Rizwan's reputation as one of Asia's brightest talents continues to grow with every victory.

With a filled stadium, roaring fans, unprecedented coverage, and international applause, Pakistan Combat Night was more than just an event — it was a national statement. MMA has arrived as Pakistan's new sporting frontier, one that unites the people, inspires the youth, and strengthens the nation's global standing.



In brief

IRSA releases 623,400 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 623,400 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 668,800 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1549.85 feet, which was 147.85 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 179,500 cusecs and 154,400 cusecs, respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1221.50 feet, which was 171.50 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 28,400 cusecs and 8,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 264,000, 327,700, 280,300 and 296,800 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 35,900 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 412,200 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Police nab 15 criminals

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police Margalla, Shams Colony, Khanna, Nilore, Phulgran and Koral police station teams arrested nine accused involved in different criminal activities. A police spokesperson told APP on Wednesday that police teams also recovered 2,386 grams of heroin, 580 grams of hashish, two pistols, one gun with ammunition, and a dagger from their possession. He said that cases have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are underway. He said that during a special campaign launched for the arrest of proclaimed offenders and absconders, various police teams also arrested five criminals. Following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, the ICT Police continue their effective crackdown against crime and criminal elements to ensure peace and tranquility in the federal capital, he added. He said the Islamabad Police are committed to protecting the lives and property of the residents and no elements will be allowed to disturb public peace. Ensuring peace and protecting citizens remains the top priority of Islamabad Police.

Police arrest bike lifter

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police Wednesday apprehended a wanted member of a notorious bike lifter gang and recovered five stolen motorcycles during a successful operation carried out by Bani Gala police team. An official told APP that the police team, using technical and human resources, arrested the accused identified as Rizwan, who was involved in numerous bike lifting activities across the city. He said five stolen motorbikes were recovered from his possession. He said that cases had already been registered against the nabbed accused while further investigation was underway to trace his other accomplices and recover additional stolen property. Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Islamabad Muhammad Jawad Tariq directed officers to continue an effective crackdown against criminal elements and to take all possible measures to protect the life and property of citizens.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani in a meeting with Vicente Azpitarte Pérez member of the Senate of Spain. —APP Photo

Gilani, Spanish senator discuss stronger bilateral ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani and Senator Vicente Azpitarte Pérez of the Spanish Senate on Wednesday discussed ways to strengthen parliamentary relations, expand trade and cultural cooperation, and extend mutual support at global level.

Gilani said Pakistan value its ties with Spain, especially within the framework of the European Union. He thanked Spain for its support at international forums, calling it a strong basis for deepening bilateral relations.

The Senate chairman praised Spain's stance on Palestine, describing it a historic step toward peace and justice. Referring to

Kashmir, he reiterated Pakistan's principled stance that the dispute should be resolved in line with United Nations Security Council resolutions. He warned that India's unilateral actions threaten regional peace and stability.

Highlighting Pakistan's consistent advocacy for peace, Gilani said the country had acted responsibly despite tensions with India, a position widely recognised internationally. He also identified climate change, security and energy as important areas for future cooperation with Spain.

The Senate chairman invited the Spanish side to attend the Inter-Parliamentary Speakers' Conference to be held in

Islamabad in November 2025, noting that the forum would promote dialogue, parliamentary cooperation, and stronger bilateral ties.

Both sides agreed to increase the exchange of parliamentary delegations and revive cultural and historical linkages. Gilani also acknowledged the role of the Pakistani diaspora in Spain, saying it acts as a bridge of friendship between the two countries.

Senator Vicente Azpitarte Pérez reaffirmed Spain's commitment to deepening ties with Pakistan and stressed the importance of greater parliamentary cooperation and joint strategies to address global challenges.

SC dismisses accused's bail in drugs smuggling case

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court on Wednesday rejected the bail petition of accused Fayyaz Hussain in the drug smuggling case.

A two-member bench headed by Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi heard the bail application of accused Fayyaz Hussain in the drug case.

The lawyer of the Anti-Narcotics Force told the court that ten kilograms of heroin and a drone were recovered from the accused, and Punjab Police official Mazhar Iqbal was also involved in drug smuggling along with the accused.

Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan said in his remarks that drones are used to smuggle drugs to other countries these days, and very influential people are involved in it.

He said that if the accused is granted bail today, he will abscond, adding that it seemed that the accused is seeking bail out of fear of punishment.

The accused's lawyer took the stand that he will come to court if he is sentenced. Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi said that the trial court should complete the proceedings. The court, subsequently, rejected the accused's bail application.

Govt to completely eradicate Polio disease: Kamal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Health, Syed Mustafa Kamal has reaffirmed the government's strong commitment to completely eradicate the Polio disease from the country.

He was chairing a meeting at Polio Emergency Operations Center (EOC) during which the National EOC Coordinator for Polio Eradication briefed the minister on the current polio situation in the country and preparations for the upcoming immunization campaigns.

The minister was informed that the special polio campaign is scheduled to commence from 1st September in 99 selected districts, while in South Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, it will begin on 15th September. During the campaign, over 28 million children under the age of five will be administered polio drops to ensure protection against the virus.

The minister emphasized the importance of implementing effective strategies in high-risk areas to achieve comprehensive immunization coverage and stated that he would personally oversee the campaign to ensure its successful execution and impact.

"Polio virus is still present in our environment. To prevent its spread, it is essential that every child receives the polio vaccine," Kamal said.

He added that, unlike cancer, polio has no cure, making vaccination the only safeguard for children.

The minister urged parents to ensure that their children receive polio drops to secure a healthy and safe future.

He warned against believing negative propaganda, stressing that such misinformation could put children at risk of permanent disability.

Pakistan, Belarus sign extradition pact, pledge closer security ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Belarusian Interior Minister Ivan Kubrakov visited Pakistan on Wednesday and held high-level meetings with Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi at the Ministry of Interior, where both sides agreed to deepen bilateral cooperation across multiple sectors.

The two ministers, accompanied by their delegations, held detailed discussions on counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics, border security, and police training. Both countries finalized an extradition treaty and signed a protocol for its implementation.

It was also agreed to establish a Joint Working Group between the two interior ministries. "The formation of this group will prove beneficial in promoting relations between Pakistan and Belarus," said Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi.

During the meeting, both sides decided to sign a Memorandum of Understanding soon to enhance cooperation in the field of counter-narcotics. An agreement was also reached on launching a police training exchange program.

Minister Naqvi said Pakistan values its ties with Belarus and seeks to strengthen them in every field. He welcomed the signing of a separate MoU between the Belarusian government and the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis, under which thousands of Pakistani workers will be employed in Belarus. "We will ensure that only the best workforce is sent after thorough scrutiny," he added.

Belarusian Interior Minister Kubrakov reaffirmed his country's commitment to expanding cooperation with Pakistan in all areas and invited Naqvi to visit Belarus. "Your visit will help further strengthen ties between our two nations," he said, praising Pakistanis as a hard-



Naqvi orders fast-track construction of 11-storey hostel at National Police Academy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Wednesday visited the National Police Academy, where he reviewed ongoing projects aimed at upgrading the institution and addressing its shortage of accommodation.

During the visit, Naqvi assigned the task of completing the construction of an eleven-storey hostel comprising 126 rooms within five months. He inspected the construction site and emphasized that "speed must not come at the expense of quality."

The minister also visited the Academy's swimming pool, observed a swimming competition among trainee police officers, and encouraged both probationers and instructors. Later, he toured classrooms to meet with trainee officers and joined ASPs at the Officers' Mess to personally assess the quality of food. He also sought feedback and suggestions from the trainees.

Naqvi chaired an important meeting at the Academy, where progress on previous decisions was reviewed, including the reorganization of the institution and trainee officers' attachments with FIA, forensic agencies, Safe City projects, and cybercrime units.

According to a briefing by the Deputy Commandant, approval has been granted to award MS degrees in Criminology and Police Studies to ASPs completing the National Command Course. The training program also includes regular field visits to police stations and specialized institutions. Trainee ASPs expressed gratitude to the Interior Minister for improving facilities at the Academy. Senior officials, including the Deputy Commandant of the Academy, Chief Commissioner of Islamabad, and CDA engineering members, were also present.

working nation.

The Belarusian minister also expressed gratitude to the Government of Pakistan and the Ministry of Interior for their warm hospitality.

Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry,

Secretary Interior, senior officials of the ministry, Commandant NPA, DG Cybercrime, Director Anti-Narcotics Force, and other concerned officers were also present at the occasion.

ISSI hosts Air Chief Marshal (R) Sohail Aman at thought leaders forum



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In its latest edition of the Thought Leaders Forum (TLF), the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted former Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal (R) Sohail Aman as the Distinguished Speaker. The session was titled "Marka-e-Haq and Beyond."

DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, in his remarks on the occasion, described "Marka-e-Haq" as the latest manifestation of Pakistan's resolute defence against Indian aggression, where the armed forces, with the unitary backing of the whole nation, thwarted India's reprehensible designs and successfully defended the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. He noted that the crisis was triggered by the BJP regime driven by the toxic mix of Hindutva ideology, electoral calculations, presumptions of military and technological superiority, misguided war-fighting doctrines, quest for regional hegemony, and incalculable hubris and arrogance.

Ambassador Sohail Mahmood underlined that throughout the crisis period and actual conflict in May 2025, Pakistan prevailed across all key domains -- diplomatic, military, and informational -- with the Pakistan Air Force demonstrating its prowess in what has been termed the largest air battle in history, downing at least six Indian fighter jets. He added that Pakistan's calibrated military response, "Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos," represented a decisive shift towards integrated, multi-domain warfare by combining drone operations, preci-

sion strikes, cyber disruption, and joint command and control. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood cautioned, however, that the situation remains fragile as India insists that there is only a pause and that "Operation Sindoor" continues in different forms. He also underscored the dangers of India's belief in space for a limited conventional war under the nuclear threshold and stressed that for the sake of strategic stability India needs to be disabused of this false notion. Emphasizing the need for constant vigilance and high preparedness, he underlined the imperative of military modernization, indigenization, and proactive diplomacy to deter future aggression and advance the cause of sustainable peace in South Asia.

Air Chief Marshal (R) Sohail Aman, in his comprehensive talk, underlined that there remains a dangerous disconnect between the global quest for peace and India's active pursuit of conflict with Pakistan. He also underlined that it was fundamentally wrong on the part of anyone to think that Pakistan would not respond in the face of the provocation and military aggression undertaken by India. He added that "Marka-e-Haq" and Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos represented a fundamental transformation towards multi-domain warfare, where Pakistan innovatively employed air power alongside precision strikes and cyber disruption. He specifically stressed that India's misperception -- that Pakistan would not respond -- was a reckless notion, firmly dispelled by Pakistan's robust military and national response. He

also challenged India's false narrative of having confronted a joint China-Pakistan force, calling it a face-saving measure.

He asserted that a technologically advanced and operationally superior Pakistan Air Force decisively outperformed its numerically larger Indian counterpart. While noting that nuclear deterrence held during the crisis, Air Chief Marshal Aman warned against India's misguided belief that there is space for a limited conventional war under the nuclear threshold. He cautioned that although a nuclear exchange remains unlikely, uncontrolled escalation could not be ruled out. Therefore, it was essential to ensure that Pakistan's clearly defined red-lines are not crossed. He concluded that the region's future peace rests on dialogue and diplomacy and resolving disputes such as Kashmir. He also stressed prioritising economic development, stability, and trade and connectivity.

Earlier, in his introductory remarks, Director China-Pakistan Study Centre, Dr. Talat Shabbir, highlighted the timeliness of the discussion. He emphasised that during "Marka-e-Haq," all elements of Pakistan's national power, backed by strong political leadership and public support, successfully safeguarded the country's sovereignty and restored balance in the region.

The address was followed by a thought-provoking question and answer session, where participants engaged deeply with the speaker on evolving regional dynamics, multi-domain warfare, and the future of deterrence stability in South Asia.

Ambassador Sohail Mahmood presented a memento to Air Chief Marshal (R) Sohail Aman. The session brought together scholars, diplomats, and policy experts for an insightful discussion on strategic stability, evolving conflict dynamics, and pathways to enduring peace in South Asia and beyond.

Khalid Maqbool inaugurates CCD at IBCC

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui visited the Inter-Boards Coordination Commission (IBCC) office, where he inaugurated the Customer Care Desk (CCD), a state-of-the-art digital support system, aiming to resolve complaints on time and provide better service to the public.

During the visit, Executive Director IBCC, Dr. Ghulam Ali Mallah, welcomed the Federal Minister and gave him a detailed briefing on the development journey of IBCC which has been ongoing since the enactment of IBCC Act XIII 2023, said a press release on Wednesday.

He highlighted the significant reforms that have been implemented, including the launch of the Central Credentials and

Equivalency Portal, development of Model Assessment Framework (MAF), implementation of uniform grading system and academic calendar, integration of digital verification technologies, enhancement of Credentials Verification and Equivalency Portal, implementation of One-Link Payment System, and establishment of partnerships with global institutions including Pearson, Oxford AQA and ECCTIS.

The CCD has been established to facilitate students to overcome the difficulties they faced in raising complaint tickets regarding equivalency and credential verification, especially due to limited telephone lines, he informed, adding that through this new service, access to customer support has become more effective, transparent and easy.

This initiative was also in line with the government's vision for digitalization and transparency in public service, he said.

The minister appreciated the IBCC team for their commitment to delivering public services through technology, which was in line with the government's vision of building a technology-based nation.

"Education is important for everyone and providing modern facilities to today's students is one of our main responsibilities. This CCD portal will help the students to eliminate the unnecessary difficulties or delays in resolving their complaints and issues related to equivalency and verification of credentials," he said, adding "This step is in line with the requirements of the digital age and I appreciate the technology-based commitment of IBCC to provide effective and transparent services to millions of students."

BISP launches iGMS with ADB support

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has launched its Integrated Grievance Management System (iGMS) to provide beneficiaries with a unified and transparent mechanism for complaint registration and resolution.

Developed with the technical assistance of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the system is aimed at strengthening accountability and enhancing service delivery for Pakistan's most deserving families.

The iGMS was inaugurated at the BISP One Window Facilitation Center, Islamabad, by ADB President Masato Kanda, who launched the system during his visit, accompanied by a high-level delegation.

Chairpersons BISP

Chief Advisor to the President Keiichiro Inui, Senior Advisor John Juhyun Jeong, Director General Leah C. Gutierrez, Executive Director Noor Ahmed, Sr. Project Officer Mansoor Ali Masood, Additional Secretary Sabina Qureshi, and Senior Joint Secretary EAD Miran Mohiyuddin Soomro.

Speaking on the occasion, Senator Rubina Khalid said that BISP was not just a financial support programme but also a platform for the socio-economic empowerment of women.

"Making CNIC mandatory for registration gave women an identity, while declaring them heads of households reflects the revolutionary vision of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto," she said. Senator Rubina Khalid also highlighted initiatives being integrated under the One Window model, including Mobile Registration Vans (MRVs), Benazir Taleemi

Wazaif, Benazir Nashonuma Awareness Counters, and the Hybrid Social Protection Scheme.

Secretary BISP, Amer Ali Ahmad briefed the delegation on core programmes, new initiatives, and upcoming reforms.

He underlined how the One Window Service is improving convenience, transparency, and efficiency for beneficiaries.

The ADB President and delegation reviewed service counters, interacted with beneficiaries, and met children enrolled in Benazir Taleemi Wazaif, inquiring about the programme's impact on their families.

The delegation praised the transparency and accessibility of services at the facilitation center. The ceremony concluded with the presentation of a souvenir by Senator Rubina Khalid to ADB President Masato Kanda, acknowledging ADB's continued support to Pakistan's social protection initiatives.

3 children hurt in shell blast

FEROZKOH (Pajhwok): Three children have been injured in western Badghis province after an old unexploded shell went off, an official said on Wednesday. Police spokesman Sediq Sediqi said the incident took place on Tuesday in the Qoroto area of Bala Murghab district. "The children were herding sheep in the desert when they came across a shell left over from past conflicts. They threw it into a fire, triggering the explosion and injuring all three," he explained.

5 held for illegally digging

CHARIKAR (Pajhwok): Five individuals have been arrested for illegally digging at an archaeological site Hofian Sharif hill to steel historical artifacts on Wednesday. Police spokesman Faz Al-Rahim said these people were detained on Wednesday. He said: "The arrested suspects were secretly digging an underground tunnel 15 meters deep and nearly 100 meters long from inside a courtyard, intending to extract and loot historical artifacts, but they were stopped by security forces".

Afghanistan urges global help to tackle climate change

KABUL (TOLONews): The head of Afghanistan's National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) says Afghanistan has a very small role in producing greenhouse gases but has suffered heavily from the global phenomenon of climate change.

Speaking at a scientific seminar titled "Environment and Sustainable Development", Matiul Haq Khalis said the aim of the gathering was to raise public awareness and strengthen coordination in addressing the impacts of climate change.

Khalis noted: "No single institution can develop policies for all areas at the national or global level. Our focus here has been to increase public awareness

programs." NEPA officials also called on the international community to support Afghanistan in tackling climate challenges.

Some organizers of the seminar highlighted the role of educational institutions in raising awareness about climate change, warning that the phenomenon could negatively affect Afghanistan's foreign relations, particularly with neighboring countries.

Organizer Abdul Basir Nabizada said: "Afghanistan's environment has been severely damaged by decades of war, and there is a pressing need for comprehensive research and educational policies."

University professor

Ramazan Ali said: "Climate change has reduced water resources, and this shortage has created challenges for Afghanistan's policies with its neighbors."

Participant Abdul Khaliq said: "This seminar will provide important guidelines that we can implement in our lives with the cooperation of government and institutions." Afghanistan is among the countries with the least contribution to greenhouse gas emissions but remains one of the most affected by climate change.

Over the past two decades, repeated droughts, declining groundwater levels, sudden floods, and soil erosion have severely impacted the lives of millions of Afghans.

'Taliban to monitor work of beauticians'

KABUL (Amu TV): Some female beauticians in Kabul say the Taliban have appointed "women spies" to monitor their work and gather information on their income, operations, and professional relationships.

The women, speaking anonymously to Amu TV, said individuals posing as clients visit salons under various pretexts to collect details and report them to Taliban authorities.

"This new tactic by the Taliban truly worries us," said one beautician, whose voice was altered for safety reasons. "They come into salons disguised as women and ask questions about how we work, how much we earn, and what kind of services we offer."

Several beauticians said that in addition to surveillance, the Taliban have demanded bribes in some cases, threatening to shut down their operations if they do not comply.

"In addition to arrests, restrictions, and imprisoning female beauticians, they also ask us for money to continue our work," one woman said.

The Taliban's Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, and the police in Kabul, did not respond to requests for comment.

Some citizens have also expressed growing alarm over the Taliban's ongoing restrictions on women's employment, education, and mobility.

"The Taliban have made life unbearable for us," a Kabul resident said. "We're afraid to go to the market or even to the hospital without a male escort."

In recent months, the Taliban have shut down dozens of home-based beauty salons in Kabul. Beauticians say authorities confiscated their tools and required their families to sign written pledges preventing further work.

3 detained on various charges

QALA-I-NAW (Pajhwok): Security forces have arrested three individuals on the charges of fraud, smuggling narcotics and trafficking of antiquities in the Muqur district of western Badghis province.

Police spokesman Sediqullah Siddiqi said in a statement that security forces from the highway protection unit of the province arrested the three individuals during an operation in the district on Monday night.

He added: "The detainees are accused of not only trafficking antiquities and narcotics, but also deceiving people, depriving them of valuable goods and fleeing without making payment."

The cases of the detainees, all residents of Faryab, have been referred to the judicial and legal institutions after completion of preliminary investigations.

Jalali: New plan on cards to improve health sector

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Minister of Public Health Maulvi Noor Jalal Jalali on Wednesday said that a long-term strategic plan for the Afghanistan's health sector would be developed after 2026 to clearly define the role of donors in ensuring the integration of services following a comprehensive assessment.

The Afghan Minister said this at a coordination meeting with representatives of the World Health Organisation (WHO), the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), Gavi, World Bank and others donors, the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) said.

A statement from the ministry said the meeting participants discussed the current state of Afghanistan's health sector, the importance of support and future programmes.

Jalali described effective resource management, adherence to transparency and combatting corruption



as shared responsibility for delivering high-quality and efficient services.

He announced that a clear, long-term strategic plan for Afghanistan's health sector would be devised post-2026, detailing donors' roles and logically integrating services based on comprehensive evaluations.

He added the development of a new health strate-

gy was underway, which would be critical for strengthening of public health.

In addition, the review process for the Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS) and Essential Package of Hospital Services (EPHS) has begun to improve the quality of primary and secondary healthcare, safeguard public health

and meet the needs of population.

For their part, representatives of WHO, UNICEF, Gavi, WB and other donors pledged to continue supporting Afghanistan's health sector until 2026. During this period, they would closely collaborate with MoPH in urgent health services (HSS) in a cooperative and participatory manner.

Taliban publicly flog nine people in Ghor and Logar provinces

GHOR (Amu TV): Taliban publicly flogged nine people — five men and four women — in two provinces on charges including adultery and fleeing from home, according to a statement from the Taliban's Supreme Court.

In Ghor province, four men and three women were convicted by a district court in Saghar on charges of

adultery and fleeing home. They were sentenced to between six months and two years in prison, along with 30 to 39 lashes, the statement said. The floggings were carried out in a public stadium.

Separately, in Azra district of Logar province, one man and one woman were each sentenced to one year in prison and 20 lashes for

"leaving home," the court said. Their punishment was also carried out in public.

Since returning to power in 2021, the Taliban have flogged more than 1,200 people in public across various provinces, according to local sources and human rights organizations.

Rights activists and citizens have condemned the Taliban's use of public cor-

poral punishment, calling it a clear violation of human rights. In a recent report, the UNHRC's special rapporteur for Afghanistan criticized the Taliban's use of corporal punishment and said both men and women are often sentenced without sufficient evidence or access to fair trials — with women and girls disproportionately affected.

Practical work on phase-I of Azizi Group's power project soon

KABUL (Pajhwok): Practical work on the first phase of Azizi Group's 10,000-megawatt power generation project will begin in the near future, the head of the company has announced.

Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar met national entrepreneur Mirwais Azizi, CEO of Azizi Energy, along with his technical team today (Wednesday), his office said in a statement.

During the meeting, Azizi presented a progress report on the mega project to the deputy premier.

He said that following the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding, his teams— in coordination with technical experts from the relevant ministries— had been



dispatched to Baghlan, Balkh, Jawzjan, Herat and Bamyan provinces.

Over the past two weeks, the teams have carried out preliminary surveys and collected technical data for several projects.

According to Azizi, the 10,000-megawatt initiative has been divided into three phases, with the first phase designed to generate 4,000 megawatts. He added that

practical implementation of the existing projects under this phase would soon begin in coordination with the ministries concerned and agencies.

Azizi also shared his requests related to the project with the deputy premier.

For his part, Mullah Baradar, accompanied by heads of the relevant ministries and agencies, assured full support and

commitment to meeting those requests.

At the end of the meeting, a joint committee— comprising representatives from the relevant ministries, agencies and Azizi Energy— was formed to oversee and monitor implementation of the power projects. The committee will regularly report back to the Deputy PM for Economic Affairs.

Number of radio stations in Kandahar rises to 15

K A N D A H A R (TOLONews): Local officials in Kandahar province said that since the return of the Islamic Emirate to power, the number of radio stations in the province has increased.

During the launch of a new radio station, officials from the Kandahar Department of Information and Culture said the Islamic Emirate fully supports media activities.

Hamidullah Hashimi, head of information at the Department of Information and Culture, said: "Since the return of the Islamic Emirate, many new radios

have opened in Kandahar. With the opening of Cheragh Radio, the number of active stations has reached 15. We hope more media outlets will become active in the future."

Cheragh Radio, the newly established station, began broadcasting on Tuesday in Kandahar. Its management says the programming will be tailored to the needs of society.

Hayat Khan, director of Cheragh Radio, said: "This is a major responsibility entrusted to me at the provincial level, and I will fulfill it to the best of my ability."

Ahmad Ludin, head of

the Afghan Journalists Safety Committee in the south, said: "The quality of some media outlets is not good, and their broadcasts are unprofessional. This should be addressed, and priority should be given to professional human resources."

Religious scholar Waliullah Zahin added: "Society has the right that we work for its reform and present content to the younger generation that brings positive change."

Earlier, two private radio stations had also begun broadcasting in Helmand and Zabul provinces.

Ayoubi to journalists: Cover public issues impartially



PUL-I-ALAM (Pajhwok): The governor of central Logar province Qari Salahuddin Ayoubi has reaffirmed the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan's (IEA) commitment to supporting the media, stressing journalists must not conceal the truth during incidents and should cover public issues in an impartial manner.

He made these remarks during a meeting with representatives of local media

outlets and journalists. He said the media was the "tongue, eyes and ears" of the nation.

He added IEA was striving to provide opportunities for independent media, alongside state-run outlets, to operate across the country, including in Logar, in a way that safeguards Islamic, national and cultural values.

He called on journalists not to hide the truth during events and to report the

problems of the people in a neutral way.

Meanwhile, Information and Culture Director Faizullah Johari said that since the re-establishment of IEA, the province has witnessed notable achievements in the field of media and journalism, and they were working to resolve all challenges faced by journalists and media outlets.

Speaking on behalf of Logar's journalists and

media, Khan Wali Ahmadzai, a member of the Afghan Journalists Safety Committee, said that although no incidents of violence against journalists have been recorded in Logar in recent years, there was still a need for the provincial authorities and the Department of Information and Culture to provide facilities for journalists in terms of access to information, coordination and capacity-building.

Separately, Noorullah Stanikzai, head of a private radio station in Logar, said that local media in the province had made significant progress compared to the past, but they still faced economic challenges.

According to available information, there are currently seven radio stations, one print outlet and one online media organisation operating in Logar, including one state-run media outlet.

Taliban close shops selling beauty products

KHOST (Amu TV): Taliban have shut down shops in parts of Khost province that sell items for women, including beauty products and other personal necessities, local sources said.

The closures were carried out Tuesday by the Taliban's Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice in Gurbaz district and other areas, according to shopkeepers and residents who spoke on condition of anonymity due to security concerns.

Taliban morality enforcers reportedly told shop owners that selling such items to or for women is now prohibited.

The move comes alongside other restrictions on women's presence in public spaces and access to basic goods.

"These stores were essential for women's daily needs," one shopkeeper said. "We were told to stop selling anything related to female use."

Since returning to power in 2021, the Taliban have imposed sweeping restrictions on women's education, employment, movement and participation in public life.

Taliban remove 18 university subjects

KABUL (Amu TV): The Taliban-led Ministry of Higher Education has removed 18 academic subjects from university curricula across Afghanistan and ordered revisions to more than 200 others.

The directive, issued by Zia ur-Rahman Aryoubi, the Taliban's deputy minister for academic affairs, states that the changes were made following a review by Islamic scholars and Sharia experts. The subjects were eliminated or modified to ensure that higher education content complies with "Islamic principles and the policies of the system," the letter says.

In accordance with the findings of religious scholars and experts, 18 subjects from various disciplines were removed for contradicting Sharia and national policy," Aryoubi wrote in the letter addressed to public and private universities and higher education institutes.

In addition to the subjects removed entirely, the ministry said 201 others

were identified as having "relative issues" and will be taught only after revision. These courses must now be delivered in a "critical and corrective" manner to bring their content in line with the Taliban's interpretation of Islamic law.

University administrators were instructed to share the updated subject lists with relevant faculties and departments and to ensure the banned subjects are removed from teaching schedules. Institutions were also ordered to prepare the revised subjects for instruction without delay.

According to university professors who spoke with Amu TV on condition of anonymity, most of the eliminated subjects come from faculties of political science, philosophy, sociology and public administration.

The move is part of a broader effort by the Taliban to reshape Afghanistan's education system around strict interpretations of Islamic teachings. In 2023, Taliban leader Hibatullah Akhundzada ordered a comprehensive review of the country's academic curriculum in higher education institutions.

Man shot dead in Logar

LOGAR (Amu TV): A man who had recently returned from Iran was shot and killed by unidentified gunmen in Logar province, local sources said Wednesday.

The incident occurred Tuesday in the Deh Naw area of Mohammad Agha district, according to the sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity due to security concerns.

The victim, identified as Hafizullah, was targeted by armed men who opened fire on him. One of his brothers was also reportedly killed in a separate incident in the past, the sources added.

KP CM chairs meeting on priority development projects

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur here Wednesday chaired a high-level meeting to discuss priority development projects.

Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah, Additional Chief Secretary Planning and Development Ikramullah Khan, administrative secretaries of concerned departments attended the meeting. The meeting identified key public service delivery projects in health, education, drinking water, communications, irrigation, relief and other sectors for completion during the current fiscal year.

Addressing the meeting, CM said that the purpose of allocating additional funds was to expedite the completion and operationalization of these schemes which are directly linked to essential public services. He emphasized that their timely completion was a top priority to ensure uninterrupted service delivery to the people.

He noted that additional funding provided during last three months of previous fiscal year had yielded tangible results. "The provincial government is determined to immediately



Gandapur files contempt of court petition against denial of meeting with PTI Founder Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Advocate General (AG) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shah Faisal Utmankhel has stated Chief Minister has filed contempt of court petition despite court orders after denial of permission to meet with the PTI founder at Adiala Jail. The meeting is crucial for conducting provincial affairs and policy-making with the PTI founder, on Wednesday.

During a media interaction at the Peshawar High Court, the Advocate General of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa mentioned that a tweet from the PTI founder's account suggested that Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur was not meeting with him. However, the reality is that Ali Amin Gandapur wants to meet but is not being allowed to do so. The Chief Minister has formally submitted requests for meetings in court, but the Adiala Jail authorities are not complying with court orders. The Advocate General highlighted that there is video evidence showing Ali Amin Gandapur's presence outside Adiala Jail, indicating his intent to meet. Due to the denial of permission, a contempt of court petition was filed in the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court has forwarded the case to a constitutional bench, and due to court holidays, a request has been made to hear the case in chambers.

complete projects where 80 percent work has already been done," he said and directed finance department to release allocated amount of Rs. 20 billion.

31 killed, many trapped after landslide in Jammu

JAMMU: At least thirty-one people were killed and several others are feared trapped after a massive landslide struck the route leading to the Vaishno Devi shrine in Katra town of Jammu region in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

The landslide occurred near the Adhkari area on the 12-kilometre-long track from Katra to the shrine, burying scores of Hindu pilgrims under debris. Rescue teams have been pressed into service, while search operations are being hampered by heavy rains and difficult terrain.

The incident came amid incessant monsoon rains that have triggered flash floods, road collapses and large-scale damage to infrastructure across the Jammu region. Low-lying areas remain inundated while landslides have blocked several key highways. Communication networks have also been badly affected with reports of telecommunication services going down in many areas. Meanwhile, locals said that the administration has failed to put in place preventive measures despite

repeated incidents of landslides and flash floods in the region, leaving residents and pilgrims vulnerable to natural disasters.

Meanwhile, panicked Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) after mobile internet, broadband, and phone services went offline across the territory.

This is not the first instance of communication blackout in the occupied territory. While some users reported a complete loss of connectivity, others complained of extremely slow internet speed and persistent disruptions, making communication nearly impossible.

Officials claimed that the situation was being closely monitored and urged the public not to panic, adding that technical teams were on the ground. However, phone calls continued to fail and internet services remained suspended across all major networks, compounding difficulties for residents already affected by heavy rainfall and fears of flooding. Locals from border districts have also reported heavy movement of Indian troops

along with army and ammunition on the Uri-Gulmarg stretch, bordering the Poonch sector of the Line of Control. This military buildup has added to the anxiety among residents.

Reports suggest that the Narendra Modi-led Indian government is preparing for a major reshuffle in its military deployment in IIOJK, including plans to withdraw the Rashtriya Rifles from the hinterland and redeploy them along the Line of Control. Analysts believe this exposes New Delhi's mis-adventurism and its aggressive posture towards Pakistan.

Observers say that the recurring internet blackouts, movement of forces, and shortages of petrol, medicines, electricity, and other essentials are part of the Modi regime's psychological operations against the Kashmiri people. Such tactics, they point out, have been employed since the BJP government came to power, aiming to create an environment of fear and suppression in the occupied territory. — Agencies

Kohistan scam: Court extends remand of four accused

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Accountability Court Peshawar has extended the physical remand of four accused individuals arrested in connection with the Kohistan corruption scandal by five more days. The accused, including Gul Rehman, Shafiq Ali, Alamzeb, and Mushraf, were presented before the court, on Wednesday.

The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) investigation officer informed the court that Gul Rehman and Mushraf, who were cashiers at a bank, colluded with other accused to issue unchecked cheques to various construction companies and conducted heavy transactions. Shafiq Ali, the owner of a private construction company, opened an account for transactions, which were allegedly facilitated by Alamzeb, a senior auditor at the Accountant General's office.

The court accepted NAB's request for further remand and extended the physical remand of all four accused by five days. The investigation officer stated that the investigation is not complete, and further interrogation is required to uncover the full extent of the alleged corruption.

Junaid quits as PAC Chairman

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Junaid Akbar has stepped down from his position as the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) chairman.

According to sources, Akbar submitted his resignation to Chief Whip Aamir Dogar. He also held a farewell meeting with the PAC staff, thanking them for their support during his tenure. Sources indicate that Aamir Dogar will collect all resignations from PTI members and submit them to the Speaker of the National Assembly.

This move follows an earlier announcement by PTI leader Sanaullah Masti Khel, who also resigned from PAC membership. He stated that party members would collectively resign from the committee after a meeting, and that Junaid Akbar was also expected to resign during the same session. PTI has officially announced its decision to withdraw from all parliamentary committees.

Israel strikes on Syria kill 6

DAMASCUS (AFP): Israeli strikes killed at least six people across southern Syria, state media and official sources said, as Israel continues attacks on the country's new leaders even as it pursues talks. Israel has carried out hundreds of strikes in Syria since an Islamist-led alliance toppled longtime ruler Bashar Assad in December. It has also opened talks with the interim authorities in Damascus.

Drones strikes killed six Syrian soldiers outside Damascus, state television reported Wednesday, updating the toll for attacks the previous day, which also saw a man killed in the south. Three soldiers were killed in an attack near Damascus, an official at the defense ministry told AFP.

"An Israeli drone targeted one of the military buildings of the 44th division of the Syrian army in Kiswah, west of Damascus, killing three members of the division," the official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity. Earlier in the day, the official SANA news agency reported that "a young man was killed in an Israeli strike on a home in the village of Taranja," on the formerly Syria-controlled side of the armistice line on the Golan Heights.

Syria condemned "the recent Israeli attacks on its territory, which resulted in the martyrdom of a young man," the foreign ministry said. It also condemned the Israeli forces' incursion into a town in the Quneitra countryside, their "arrest campaigns against civilians," and their "announcement of the continuation of their illegal presence on the summit of Mount Hermon and the buffer zone." "These aggressive practices constitute a flagrant violation of the UN Charter, international law, and relevant Security Council resolutions, and constitute a direct threat to peace and security in the region."



GARHI KHUDA BUX: PPP Chairman, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari along with Faryal Talpur offering feteiha at the grave of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Commander Ethiopian Air Force visits Air Headquarters

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Lieutenant General Yilma Mardassa, Commander Ethiopian Air Force, called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force, at Air Headquarters, Islamabad. During the meeting, both dignitaries held detailed discussions on areas of professional interest and reaffirmed their resolve to strengthen cooperation between the two Air Forces.

Upon his arrival, a smartly turned-out contingent of Pakistan Air Force presented Guard of Honour to Lieutenant General Yilma Mardassa. During the meeting, Chief of the Air Staff reaffirmed his commitment to enhancing military partnership between the two Air Forces through joint training initiatives. He assured the visiting dignitary of PAF's steadfast support to the Ethiopian Air Force in its professional pursuits, while reiterating that Pakistan deeply cherishes its cordial relations with Ethiopia and remains firmly committed to providing comprehensive assistance in capacity building, advanced training and operational domains.

Lieutenant General Yilma Mardassa conveyed his sincere grati-



tude for the warm hospitality extended to him and his delegation. Commander Ethiopian Air Force lauded PAF's robust operational readiness, its evolving Multi Domain capabilities and its credible deterrence posture. He highlighted that the Ethiopian Air Force looks forward to drawing lessons from PAF's rich combat experience, integrated command systems and technological innovations to strengthen its own operational capabilities. The visiting dignitary also expressed keen interest in exploring avenues of technology transfer within the aviation sector,

particularly in indigenous development and modernization initiatives.

As part of his visit, the Ethiopian Air Chief received comprehensive briefings at the National ISR & Integrated Air Operations Centre and PAF Cyber Command, where he appreciated PAF's technological advancement and integration of cutting-edge capabilities in modern warfare. The visit of Lieutenant General Yilma Mardassa to Air Headquarters, Islamabad, signifies a resolute commitment of both countries to reinforce military partnership, fostering collaboration and promoting robust relations.

Relief items being provided to flood affectees: Tarar

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Wednesday said that efforts are underway to ensure seamless supply of relief items including tents to those who have been affected by the recent floods.

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) is actively providing tents and other essential supplies to the flood-affected population, the minister said while addressing a news briefing along with Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) DG Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry and NDMA Chairman Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has issued directives to further improve the early warning system and expedite relief activities, while also ensuring that Punjab receives

necessary supplies promptly.

The prime minister is continuously monitoring the situation and has been briefed on the forecast for the next 24 to 48 hours, he added. The minister announced that the prime minister will soon visit the flood-affected areas. He underscored that the current response is a "National Response," involving the Pakistan Army and all relevant institutions working together.

Tarar said authorities have been instructed to not permit construction along the riverbeds in the future. Efforts are underway for evacuation in the Qadirabad area, he added. After the relief phase is complete, he said a comprehensive assessment of the damages will be conducted and rehabilitation of the affected people will be ensured.

Israel ups pressure on Gaza City as Trump eyes post-war plan

GAZA (AFP): The Israeli military pressed operations around Gaza City on Wednesday, as President Donald Trump prepared to host a White House meeting on post-war plans for the shattered Palestinian territory.

Israel is under mounting pressure both at home and abroad to end its almost two-year campaign in Gaza, where the military is preparing to conquer the territory's largest city and the United Nations has declared a famine. A spokesman for the Israeli military said Wednesday the evacuation of Gaza City was "inevitable" as the army prepares to conquer the Palestinian territory's largest city.

"The evacuation of Gaza City is inevitable, and therefore, every family that relocates to the south will receive the most generous humanitarian aid, which is currently being worked on," the military's Arabic-language spokesman Avichay Adraee posted on X. Mediators have circulated a draft ceasefire and hostage release deal which has been accepted by Palestinian militant group Hamas. But Israel has yet to give an official response.

On the ground, the Israeli

military said its troops were "operating on the outskirts of Gaza City to locate and dismantle terror infrastructure sites above and below ground." Residents of the Zeitoun neighborhood of the city spoke of heavy Israeli bombardment overnight. "Warplanes struck several times, and drones fired throughout the night," Tala Al-Khatib, 29, told AFP by telephone.

"Several homes in Zeitoun were blown up. We are still in our house — some neighbors have fled, while others remain. But wherever you flee, death follows you," she said. Abdel Hamid Al-Sayfi, 62, said he hadn't gone outdoors since Tuesday afternoon. "Whoever steps outside is fired upon by the drones," he told AFP by telephone.

"My phone battery is about to die, and once it does, we will lose all contact. Our fate is unknown," Defense Minister Israel Katz vowed on Friday to destroy Gaza City if Hamas does not agree to end the war on Israel's terms. It came after the defense ministry approved the military's plan to seize the city and authorized the call-up of roughly 60,000 reservists.

It also came as the

United Nations officially declared a famine in Gaza governorate, including Gaza City, that it blamed on "systematic obstruction of aid" by Israel. As pressure builds on Israel to wrap up its offensive, Donald Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff said the US president would host top officials at the White House on Wednesday to thrash out a detailed plan for post-war Gaza. "We've got a large meeting in the White House tomorrow, chaired by the president, and it's a very comprehensive plan we're putting together on the next day," Witkoff said on Fox News, without offering more details.

Trump stunned the world earlier this year when he suggested the United States should take control of the Gaza Strip, clear out its inhabitants and redevelop it as seaside real estate. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu praised the proposal, which sparked an outcry in Europe and the Arab world. As Israel's security cabinet convened on Tuesday evening, tens of thousands of protesters massed in commercial hub Tel Aviv to demand an end to the war and a deal to return the hostages.

US tariffs on Indian goods double to 50%

WASHINGTON (AFP): US tariffs of 50 percent took effect on Wednesday on many Indian products, doubling an existing duty as President Donald Trump sought to punish New Delhi for buying Russian oil. Trump has raised pressure on India over the energy transactions, a key source of revenue for Moscow's war in Ukraine, as part of a campaign to end the conflict. The latest salvo strains US-India ties, giving New Delhi fresh incentive to improve relations with Beijing.

While Trump has slapped fresh duties on allies and competitors alike since returning to the presidency in January, this 50-percent level is among the highest that US trading partners face. Crucially, however, exemptions remain for sectors that could be hit with separate levies — like pharmaceuticals and computer chips. The Trump administration has launched investigations into these and other sectors that could culminate in further duties. Smartphones are in the list of exempted products as well.

Industries that have already been singled out, such as steel, aluminum and automobiles, are similarly spared these country-wide levies. The United States was India's top export destination in 2024, with shipments worth \$87.3 billion. But analysts have cautioned that a 50-percent duty is akin to a trade embargo and is likely to harm smaller firms.

Exporters of textiles, seafood and jewelry were already reporting cancelled US orders and losses to rivals such as Bangladesh and Vietnam, raising fears of heavy job cuts. New Delhi has criticised Washington's move as "unfair, unjustified and unreasonable." The world's fifth-largest economy is looking to cushion the blow, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi promising to lower the tax burden on citizens during an annual speech to mark India's independence.

Modi earlier vowed self-reliance as well, pledging to defend his country's interests. The foreign ministry previously said India had begun importing oil from Russia as traditional supplies were diverted to Europe over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.



ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Ms Jane Marriot called on Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf at Naval Headquarters.

PM lauds ADB

(Continued from Page 1)

dum of understanding was signed today to facilitate the employment of skilled Pakistani workers in different sectors of Belarus.

He said Pakistan and Belarus enjoyed friendly relations which were growing stronger over the time. The prime minister expressed the views during a meeting with Interior Minister of Belarus Ivan Kubrakov, who along with a delegation, called on him at the Prime Minister's House.

The prime minister while warmly welcoming the Belarusian Interior Minister to Pakistan, recalled his visit to Belarus earlier this year. He also conveyed his best wishes for President of Belarus Aleksander Lukashenko, noting that during his visit to Belarus, several agreements and memorandums of understanding were signed between the two countries across various sectors, PM Office Media

Wing said in a press release.

He further said that Pakistan was looking forward to the visit of the President of Belarus to Pakistan. The meeting was also attended by Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Chaudhry Salik Hussain, Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry, Minister of State for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Muhammad Aun Chaudhry and other relevant officials.

The Belarusian interior minister thanked the prime minister for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to him in Pakistan. He conveyed the best wishes of the president of Belarus and expressed the desire to enhance cooperation and work together with Pakistan in various fields, including agriculture and industry.

Referring to his meet-

ings with Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Chaudhry Salik Hussain, Ivan Kubrakov said that these discussions were highly productive in terms of strengthening the bilateral relations. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi informed the prime minister that the Belarusian interior minister, along with his delegation, also visited the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA).

Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Chaudhry Salik Hussain apprised that a memorandum of understanding was signed today regarding the export of skilled Pakistani workers to Belarus and after it, the formal process of sending skilled workers to Belarus would begin. Belarus would also provide these workers with medical and other social security facilities, he added.