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Pak-Saudi-Turkiye defence pact 'entirely for defensive purposes', not aggression: PM



STAFF REPORT, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday affirmed that the recently signed Makkah Joint Defence Agreement was “entirely for defensive purposes”, and not for any aggression.

The joint defence agreement, signed on August 7 between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkiye, aims to strengthen collective deterrence and empowers its signatory states to treat an attack against one of them as an attack against all of them.

Addressing the federal cabinet on Monday, PM Shehbaz recalled that he, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan

signed the pact in Makkah on Friday.

The prime minister stressed that the objective of the pact is to “promote peace, progress, and prosperity in the region”.

“Its purpose is definitely not that any aggression occurs. It is entirely for defensive purposes, for peace, tranquillity and progress in the region,” he affirmed.

“I believe this agreement is a source of strength not just among these three countries, but for the entire Muslim ummah,” he noted. PM Shehbaz particularly felicitated Deputy PM and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar as well as Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) Field Marshal Asim Munir on the signing of

the agreement. Efforts for the joint defence pact had been underway for “many years and materialised this Friday”, the prime minister said.

He noted that while Pakistan and Saudi Arabia had already entered the “Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement” in September 2025, Islamabad and Ankara also had “arrangements for decades” between them. PM Shehbaz recalled that the Pakistani nation and the army had been honoured to “defend the world’s holiest places” of Makkah and Madina for years along with the Saudi forces. “Last year, with Allah’s grace, this arrangement was officially recognised so that a proper agreement was signed. Friday’s agreement is another extension of it, with a trilateral agreement signed.”

In a statement issued by the Foreign Office earlier in the day, Dar felicitated the nation on the agreement’s signing. He reiterated his comments from Sunday wherein he said the pact was defensive in nature and not directed against any country. Dar also noted that the term of treating an attack on one of them as an attack against all three was “consistent with the inherent right of individual and collective self-defence under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter”.

Vote count underway after polling ends in third phase of AJK elections

STAFF REPORT, MUZAFFARABAD: Polling in the third phase of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) general elections concluded at 5pm in four constituencies of Bagh and Haveli districts, with the vote counting process now underway. More than 460,000 registered voters were eligible to cast their ballots in the four constituencies. The constituencies participating in the third phase include LA-14, LA-15, LA-16 and LA-17, where a total of 82 candidates are contesting the elections. According to Election Commission officials, polling began at 8am and continued uninterrupted until 5pm.



After the close of polling, election staff started counting votes at the respective polling stations. Initial results are expected to emerge as the counting progresses. A close contest is expected between the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). According to the Chief Election Commissioner, polling in constituencies of Poonch and Sudhanoti districts has been postponed. The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Election Commission has revised the schedule for the third phase of the 2026 general elections, postponing polling in Poonch and Sudhanoti districts due to the prevailing law and order situation.

Under the original schedule, polling was to be held on 11 seats across four districts of the Poonch Division on August 10. However, the Election Commission announced that third-phase voting will now be conducted only in Bagh and Haveli districts, while polling in all constituencies of Poonch and Sudhanoti has been deferred. The Election Commission said the revised schedule was issued in view of the security situation, adding that a new polling date for the postponed constituencies will be announced after reviewing the prevailing conditions. The first and second phases of the AJK general elections were held on July 27 and August 2 in the Mirpur and Muzaffarabad divisions, respectively. According to confirmed results, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has emerged as the leading party in the elections. Prime Minister’s Adviser on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah said the party had secured a simple majority and was set to form the next government in Azad Kashmir.

PPP leaders reject alleged AJK election rigging, vow to continue protest



MONITORING DESK, ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leaders and Senator Palwasha Khan have rejected alleged rigging in the Azad Jammu and Kashmir elections, saying the party will not remain silent over alleged electoral irregularities.

Addressing a joint press conference in Islamabad alongside PPP leaders Shahla Raza and Sharmila Faruqi, Palwasha Khan alleged that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) was involved in electoral irregularities and said the PPP had evidence to support its allegations.

Palwasha Khan claimed that government ministers had announced their victory as early as noon, alleging that an attempt was being made to form a government in AJK through alleged rigging. She said the PML-N was uncomfortable with the PPP raising its voice against alleged electoral manipulation.

She said the PPP had been allowed to govern AJK for only six months and alleged that statements by ministers claiming to have 12 seats “in their pockets” had contributed to unrest in Kashmir.

She further alleged that internal disputes within the government were being used to target the PPP, while the federal government was the actual target.

Palwasha Khan also criticised those calling for President Asif Ali Zardari’s resignation, saying political opponents should not forget that Zardari was president.

Shahla Raza said every election was important because voters exercised their constitutional right to choose their representatives. Referring to the slogan of giving respect to the vote, she said respect for the vote also required exposing alleged electoral rigging.



Ambassador of Republic of Kazakhstan to Pakistan Yerzhan Kistafin called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif

IHC Seeks Response Over Delay in Judges’ Appointment Summary

STAFF REPORT, ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has issued notices to the president and prime minister through their secretaries over the delay in approving a summary related to the appointment of new judges, seeking a response by tomorrow. The notices were issued on a petition challenging President Asif Ali Zardari’s failure to approve the summary. The court also issued a notice to the Ministry of Law and sought its response by tomorrow.

The IHC questioned at what stage the summary was currently pending and sought clarification from the federal government regarding the delay. The case was argued by Zaed Asif Chaudhry on behalf of petitioner Luqman Zafar. Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir expressed strong displeasure with the federal government during the hearing. Addressing Additional Attorney General Rashid Hafeez, Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir questioned the federal government’s

handling of the matter and asked whether it had any interest in resolving the issue. The judge said the court had expected the federal government to fulfill its responsibility but that this had not happened. Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir asked at what stage the summary was pending and whether the government had any information about it. He also questioned what was happening with the appointment and confirmation of judges of the higher judiciary.

AJK polls peaceful, PML-N poised to form govt: Rana Sanaullah

APP- ISLAMABAD: Adviser to Prime Minister Rana Sanaullah has said polling in the third phase of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) elections is proceeding peacefully in the remaining constituencies of Poonch Division, particularly Haveli and Bagh, with only a few isolated incidents reported.

Speaking to the media, Sanaullah said the elections were being held after the AJK and federal governments agreed to give protesters sufficient time to reconsider

their position. He said those who had sought to prevent the elections should now accept that they had failed to stop the democratic process. “Those who wanted to stop the elections should now realize that they have failed. The people of Azad Kashmir have exercised their right to vote and given their mandate to their elected representatives,” he said. Sanaullah said the completion of the third phase would pave the way for government formation in AJK.



Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, chairing a meeting of the Sub-Committee on Rightsizing of the Federal Government at the Finance Division

Youth, women should be given priority for customs concessions in Pak-China trade, CM

Gilgit (FIR Report):

Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Amjad Hussain Azar has said that the benefits of special customs concessions in Pak-China trade will be directly delivered to the people of Gilgit-Baltistan, while priority will be given to youth and women to benefit from this facility. Creating new employment opportunities for the youth and women of the region is the top priority of the government.

A meeting chaired by Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Amjad Hussain Azar reviewed the policy of special concessions in Pak-China trade and customs. In the meeting, Secretary Minerals and Industries gave a detailed briefing to the Chief Minister

regarding the policy of special exemptions in customs, its procedure and expected benefits.

On this occasion, the Chief Minister directed that the customs concessions given by the federal government to the people of Gilgit-Baltistan should be implemented effectively and transparently so that its benefits reach the common citizens instead of remaining limited to a limited number of people.

He said that Pak-China trade is an important opportunity for the economy of Gilgit-Baltistan, which will promote local businesses as well as create new employment opportunities. All available resources will be utilized to bring the benefits of trade policies to the common man.

The Chief Minister said that the

provincial government will soon launch new projects to provide employment and business opportunities to the youth and women. He directed the concerned authorities to formulate a policy to provide special opportunities to the youth and women to benefit from customs concessions and Pak-China trade activities.

Amjad Hussain Azar said that the youth and women of Gilgit-Baltistan are talented, by providing them with appropriate opportunities and facilities, not only unemployment can be reduced but also the local economy can be stabilized. Promotion of Pak-China trade will strengthen the economy of the region and bring about positive changes in the employment sector.

GB to Celebrate Independence Day with Grand Events Across Districts

Gilgit (FIR Report):

Speaking at a briefing given by the Tourism Department regarding the organization of various programs to celebrate Pakistan's Independence Day on August 14 in the province in a dignified manner, Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Amjad Hussain said

that it has been decided to celebrate Pakistan's Independence Day in a grand manner in all districts, for which the Tourism Department should organize special events, poetry readings and traditional and modern sports competitions in addition to calendar events, for which the provincial government will provide

the required resources. The Chief Minister said that special attention should also be paid to organizing calendar events so that the people of Gilgit-Baltistan can get opportunities for positive activities. Special attention should be paid to promoting the positive activities of the youth and highlighting their talent.

Deputy Commissioner visits various places, reviews land disputes

Gilgit (FIR Report):

Deputy Commissioner/Collector Gilgit Captain (R) Arif Ahmed visited various places and reviewed the pending cases related to land disputes and public issues in detail. On this occasion, Assistant Commissioner Gilgit and Tehsildar Gilgit were also with him. The Deputy Commissioner inspected various places on the spot and reviewed the property records related to land. On this occasion, Assistant Commissioner Gilgit gave a detailed briefing regarding the pending cases, relevant records and the current situation. During the visit, the Deputy Commissioner also met the concerned parties and heard their views. He said that all matters related to land disputes will be resolved on



merit in the light of law, rules and regulations and property records.

He directed the Assistant Commissioner and Tehsildar Gilgit to ensure complete scrutiny of records, fulfillment of legal requirements and transparent procedures in land dis-

pute cases so that timely relief can be provided to the public. Captain (ret'd) Arif Ahmed said that the district administration is utilizing all available resources to resolve public issues and land-related matters should be resolved on merit as per the law.

Jhang Press Club Condemns Threats Against Journalist

Jhang (FIR Report)

All elected officials of the Press Club Jhang, members of the News Media Group strongly condemn the attempt by the CEO of ABS Developers to threaten Imtan Shahid, the Chief Executive, to make a mark

on social media and attack his privacy. This act of the accused is an attack on freedom of expression, a deliberate attempt to suppress the voice of truth and a clear violation of basic human rights, which cannot be condemned enough. Such low tactics can never shake the resolve of jour-

nalists. We strongly demand from the government and other relevant institutions to immediately arrest the accused and take strict legal action against them and to enact effective legislation to prevent such incidents in the future and to take steps to protect all media houses and journalists.

(*On the second day of the two-day workshop organized by the Christian Study Center on the importance and protection of Gujranwala cultural heritage, Trainer Irfan Mufti, Nasir Nayar, Shehzad Francis, Professor Ayra, Project Manager Sunil Mehboob, and Project Officer Medium Nida Feroze have said that the main objective of the two-day workshop is to highlight the importance and utility of cultural heritage in the society and to create public awareness regarding its effective protection*)

Gujranwala (FIR Report)

According to the details: Organized within the Christian Study Center on the importance and protection of cultural heritage, while there is an urgent need for social importance and its long-term protection and to transfer it to our future generations in a safe manner, he expressed these views while addressing the participants of a two-day workshop organized by the Christian Study Center in Lahore. The representatives of social organizations in the workshop were Vice



President Iman Gul and General Secretary Shehbaz from The Vision Organization. Ahmed, Anas Zaheer and Sohail Butt from Social Welfare Society Ladhewala Cheema and Mirza Ishtiaq and Ayeza Ishtiaq from Urrahmat Welfare, representatives of various districts and institutions across Punjab participated. The

speakers said that our heritage is our identity and its protection is our national and social responsibility. Speaking to the Vice President of The Vision Organization, Iman Gul said that due to climate and environmental changes, the lives and health of all creatures, including humans, are facing threats.

(*Evaluation of implementation of 15-point guidelines on Suthra Punjab Program*)

Gujranwala (FIR Report)

According to details: A video link meeting was held under the chairmanship of Secretary Local Government Punjab to ensure full implementation of the 15-point instructions issued to make the sanitation system more effective under the Suthra Punjab program of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif. Deputy Commissioner Gujranwala Naveed Ahmed, Additional Deputy Commissioner Municipal Services Zeeshan Nadeem and Managing Director Suthra Punjab Agency/Chief Executive Officer Gujranwala Waste Management Company Abdul Razzaq Dogar partici-



pated in the meeting through video link. In the meeting, various issues regarding making the sanitation system more effective, improving the monitoring of field operations and ensuring hundred percent implementation of the

15-point instructions were reviewed in the meeting. Instructions were also given to the concerned officers to ensure necessary measures to further improve the quality of sanitation and public facilities.

Gujranawala (FIR Report) according to details, In compliance with the directions of the Deputy Commissioner Gujranwala, AC City mr,Ashar jamil khan inspected the ongoing paintwork of curb stones along Church Road. During the visit, he was briefed that road signage is currently under preparation and will be installed shortly.



“Sathra Punjab Program, Sanitation Operations, Review of Human Resource and Machinery Plan, Creation of Effective Sanitation System

Gilgit (FIR Report):

According to details: On the instructions of Deputy Commissioner and Chairman Gujranwala Waste Management Company Naveed Ahmed, a meeting of Gujranwala Waste Management Company (GWMC) was held under the chairmanship of Additional Deputy Commissioner General/Municipal Services Zeeshan Nadeem, in which the cleaning operations of contractors under the Sathra Punjab program were reviewed in detail along with CEO GWMC Abdul Razzaq Dogar. In the meeting, collection of garbage from houses, statistics of population and household units according to statistics, deployment of human resources and machinery at the



Union Council level were reviewed and emphasis was placed on utilization of resources according to the amount of waste generated. Addendum to Sathra Punjab Agreement and its implementation, flaws and weaknesses in field operations were also reviewed and necessary steps were agreed upon to address them. The action plan was also considered to ensure the effective implementation of the 15-point

instructions of the Chief Minister Punjab and the 10-point agenda agreed with the contractors regarding the improvement of the sanitation system on a permanent basis. In the meeting, it was decided that under Sathra Punjab, the sanitation system will be made more effective, transparent and compatible with public needs, while continuous monitoring of field operations and performance of contractors will be improved.



Labourers are busy construction work on Jaranwala Road with the help of heavy machineries during development work in metro project.

FGEHA reclaims 132 kanals in G-15/3, clears all BUP cases

APP- ISLAMABAD: On the special directives of the Director General, Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA), Capt. (Retd.) Zafar Iqbal, the anti-encroachment operation aimed at reclaiming government land and safeguarding the rights of allottees in Sector G-15/3 has been successfully carried out.

During the operation, a total of 132 kanals of land was reclaimed, while possession of the land pertaining to all BUP cases in the sector has also been handed over to the Federal Government Employees Housing Authority. The operation continued for four consecutive days under the supervision of Deputy Commissioner/Land Acquisition Collector Almas Sabeeh Saqib and Director Land & Enforcement Lt. (Retd.) Saad Bin Asad, with the cooperation of the concerned authorities



and FGEHA teams. Anti-encroachment activities were also carried out in Sector G-15/3 today.

Earlier, during a ceremony, allotment letters and relevant documents pertaining to the reclaimed land were formally distributed among 38 affectees in the presence of Member

National Assembly Anjum Aqeel Khan. Deputy Commissioner/Land Acquisition Collector Almas Sabeeh Saqib stated that the anti-encroachment operation and reclamation of land in Sector G-15/3 represent a significant step towards safeguarding the rights of allottees and affectees.

Directorate of Youth Affairs to organise International Youth Day celebrations at Peshawar University

APP- PESHAWAR: Directorate of Youth Affairs Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will organise a programme to mark International Youth Day 2026 at Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum Hall, University of Peshawar, on Wednesday, August 12, from 2pm to 6pm.

Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sohail Afridi will attend the event as the chief guest, while Advisor to the Chief Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs, Taj Muhammad Khan Tarand will also participate.

The event has been planned as a celebration of the passion, potential and power of youth and will feature a range of activities aimed at recognising young people's achievements and providing them with a platform for expression and engagement.

A key feature of the programme will be a panel discussion featuring Akif Khan, Sumaira Shams, Samar Khan, Abaseen Yousafzai, Junaid of Jamboys and Asif Qurashi.

The programme will also include Youth Excellence

Awards, through which outstanding young people will be recognised for their achievements and contributions. A youth anthem will be launched during the event, with Mehtab Ziyab associated with its presentation.

The celebrations will also feature live music performances by Tamash Band and Junaid Kamran Siddique, besides a segment featuring inspirational stories.

Director Youth Affairs, Abbas Khan Afridi said the event was being organised to celebrate the talent, energy and achievements of young people in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He said the Directorate remained committed to creating opportunities for young people to showcase their abilities, develop their potential and play a constructive role in society.

“Our youth possess immense talent, creativity and potential. It is our responsibility to provide them with platforms where their abilities can be recognised and their voices can be heard,” Mr Afridi said.



ایف آئی آر رپورٹ

پتے میں پتھری کیسے بنتی ہے، اس کی شناخت اور علاج کا طریقہ کار کیا ہے؟

پتے کی پتھری دنیا بھر میں نظام ہضم سے متعلق ایک عام بیماری ہے اور بہت سے لوگوں کو ایسی صورتحال کا سامنا کرنا پڑتا ہے۔ اس بیماری میں مبتلا بہت سے لوگوں کو برسوں تک کوئی علامت محسوس نہیں ہوتی، لیکن بعض افراد میں یہ شدید درد، انفیکشن، یرقان اور سوزش جیسی سنگین پیچیدگیوں کا باعث بن سکتی ہے۔

اگر اس کی بروقت تشخیص اور مناسب علاج کیا جائے تو اسے مکمل طور پر ٹھیک کرنا ممکن ہے۔ پتہ جگر کے نیچے موجود ایک چھوٹا سا تھیلی نما عضو ہوتا ہے۔ اس کی لمبائی عام طور پر 10 سینٹی میٹر تک ہوتی ہے۔ اس کا بنیادی کام جگر میں روزانہ بننے والے صفرا (بائل) کو عارضی طور پر ذخیرہ کرنا ہے۔ پتہ میں موجود صفرا (بائل) بنیادی طور پر تین اجزاء پر مشتمل ہوتا ہے، جن میں کولیسٹرول، بائل سائٹس اور بلی روبن شامل ہوتے ہیں۔

جب ان تینوں اجزاء کا توازن جگڑ جاتا ہے تو چھوٹے چھوٹے کرشل بننا شروع ہو جاتے ہیں۔ وقت گزرنے کے ساتھ یہ کرشل بڑے ہو کر پتھری کی شکل اختیار کر لیتے ہیں۔ پتھری بننے کی اہم وجوہات میں صفرا میں کولیسٹرول کی مقدار زیادہ ہونا، پتھری کا مکمل طور پر خالی نہ ہونا، بلی روبن کی ضرورت سے زیادہ پیداوار اور پتھری میں انفیکشن یا سوزش پیداوار اور پتھری میں

پتھری مردوں کے مقابلے میں زیادہ پائی جاتی ہے۔ اسی طرح 40 سال سے زیادہ عمر کے افراد میں اس بیماری کا امکان بڑھ جاتا ہے۔ زیادہ وزن یا موٹاپے کے شکار افراد بھی اس کے زیادہ خطرے سے دوچار ہوتے ہیں۔ بالغ اور جوان خواتین، یعنی وہ خواتین جو حاملہ ہو سکتی ہیں، ان میں بھی پتھری نسبتاً زیادہ دیکھی جاتی ہے۔ اس کے علاوہ مغربی ممالک میں گوری گنت کے افراد میں بھی اس بیماری کی شرح زیادہ دیکھی گئی ہے۔

تاہم اس کے علاوہ دیگر وجوہات اور خطرے کے عوامل بھی موجود ہیں۔ ماہرین کے مطابق موٹاپا، ذیابیطس، خون میں کولیسٹرول کی بلند سطح، حمل اور انسولین میں بارہمونیہ (بعض اوقات کا استعمال پتھری کے خطرے میں اضافہ کر سکتے ہیں۔ خاندان میں اس بیماری کی موجودگی، طویل عرصے تک فاقہ کرنا یا کھانا نہ کھانا، تھوڑی سے وزن کم ہونا، زیادہ پینائی والی غذا اور کم فائبر والی خوراک بھی اس خطرے سے منسلک ہیں۔ اس کے علاوہ جگر کی بعض بیماریاں، تھوڑا سا تھک یا اور عمر میں اضافے کے ساتھ بھی پتھری کا امکان بڑھ سکتا ہے۔

انڈیا میں پتھری کی پتھری ایک بڑھتا ہوا صحت کا مسئلہ بن رہی ہے۔ اندازوں کے مطابق پانچ سے 15 فیصد افراد کو اپنی زندگی میں کم از کم ایک مرتبہ پتھری سے



کبھی میں اس قسم کی پتھری بنتی ہے۔ دوسری قسم گھٹ پتھری ہے۔ یہ پتھری خون میں بلی روبن کی مقدار بڑھ جانے کی وجہ سے بنتی ہے۔ عموماً جگر کی بیماریوں یا خون سے متعلق

بعض مخصوص بیماریوں کے باعث اس قسم کی پتھری بن سکتی ہے۔ جبکہ تیسری اقسام کوٹھو پتھری کہا جاتا ہے اور یہ کولیسٹرول، گلیسیم اور بلی روبن کے امتزاج سے بنتی ہے۔

کئی افراد کو زیادہ خطرہ ہے۔ ڈاکٹر اس خطرے کو سمجھنے کے لیے عموماً 'فائبر ایف فارموئل' کا ذکر کرتے ہیں۔ ان کے مطابق کے مطابق خواتین میں پتھری کی



پتھری کی تشخیص (ڈیٹیکٹ یا ٹائٹس) اور انفیکشن شامل ہیں، جس میں انہیں جی کی صورتحال کے پیش نظر فوری سرجری کی جاتی ہے۔ کچھ مخصوص حالات میں پتھری کی پتھری کے علاج کے لیے ادویات استعمال کی جاسکتی ہیں، تاہم یہ طریقہ ہرمریض کے لیے موثر نہیں ہوتا۔ کولیسٹرول والی چھوٹی پتھری رکھنے والے بعض مریضوں کو ادویات سے فائدہ ہو سکتا ہے۔ تاہم علاج مکمل ہونے میں کئی ماہ، بلکہ بعض اوقات کئی سال بھی لگ سکتے ہیں۔ اس کے علاوہ پتھری دوبارہ بننے کا خطرہ بھی زیادہ رہتا ہے۔ ایسی سرجری کو اس مسئلے کا مستقل حل سمجھا جاتا ہے۔

پتھری کی تشخیص سے بھی پتھری کی پتھری سے متعلق عام غلط فہمیاں ایک عام غلط فہمی یہ ہے کہ پتھری کی پتھری ہونے کی صورت میں ہرمریض کو سرجری کروانا ضروری ہوتی ہے۔ حقیقت یہ ہے کہ جن لوگوں میں کوئی علامت ظاہر نہیں ہوتی، انہیں عموماً سرجری کی ضرورت نہیں پڑتی۔ ایک اور غلط فہمی یہ ہے کہ آئیوریک یا گھریلہ علاج سے پتھری کو مکمل طور پر ختم کیا جاسکتا ہے۔ حقیقت یہ ہے کہ اس دعوے کے حق میں کوئی نئی سائنسی شواہد موجود نہیں۔ ماہرین کے مطابق خود علاج کرنے کی کوشش بعض اوقات خطرناک ثابت ہو سکتی ہے۔ بعض لوگ یہ بھی سمجھتے ہیں کہ پتھری لگانے کے بعد زندگی بھر بائٹھ کر گزارنے سے پتھری سے بچا جاسکتا ہے؟ اگرچہ پتھری کی پتھری سے فائدہ بچاؤ ممکن نہیں، تاہم چند احتیاطی تدابیر اختیار کر کے اس کے خطرے کو کافی حد تک کم کیا جاسکتا ہے۔ ماہرین کا کہنا ہے کہ صحت مند وزن برقرار رکھنا اس سلسلے میں اہم ہے۔ موٹاپے سے متعلق کوئی بھی فیصلہ صرف ڈاکٹر کے مشورے سے ہی کرنا چاہیے۔

پتھری کی پتھری کی پتھری سے فائدہ بچاؤ ممکن نہیں، تاہم چند احتیاطی تدابیر اختیار کر کے اس کے خطرے کو کافی حد تک کم کیا جاسکتا ہے۔ ماہرین کا کہنا ہے کہ صحت مند وزن برقرار رکھنا اس سلسلے میں اہم ہے۔ موٹاپے سے متعلق کوئی بھی فیصلہ صرف ڈاکٹر کے مشورے سے ہی کرنا چاہیے۔

Trump’s Board of Peace and the politics of control

DR. RAMZY BAROUD

The history of American power is, in many ways, the history of reinventing rules – or designing new ones – to fit strategic US interests. This may sound harsh but it is a necessary realization, particularly in light of US President Donald Trump’s latest political invention: the “Board of Peace.”

Some have hastily concluded that Trump’s newest political gambit – unveiled last week at the World Economic Forum in Davos – is a uniquely Trumpian endeavor, detached from earlier US foreign policy doctrines. They are mistaken, misled largely by Trump’s self-centered political style and his constant, though unfounded, claims that he has ended wars, resolved global conflicts and made the world a safer place.

At the Davos launch, Trump reinforced this carefully crafted illusion, boasting of America’s supposed historic leadership in bringing peace, praising alleged unprecedented diplomatic breakthroughs and presenting the Board of Peace as a neutral, benevolent mechanism capable of stabilizing

the world’s most volatile regions.

Yet a less prejudiced reading of history allows us to see Trump’s political designs – whether in Gaza or beyond – not as an aberration but as part of a familiar pattern. US foreign policymakers repeatedly seek to reclaim ownership of global affairs, sideline international consensus and impose political frameworks that they alone define, manage and ultimately control.

The Board of Peace – an invitation-only political club controlled entirely by Trump – is increasingly taking shape as a new geopolitical reality. Through this scheme, the US is imposing itself as the self-appointed caretaker of global affairs, beginning with genocide-devastated Gaza, and positioning itself as an alternative to the UN.

The irony is staggering. A body ostensibly meant to guide Gaza through reconstruction after Israel’s devastating genocide does not include Palestinians – let alone Gazans. Even more damning is the fact that the genocide it claims to address was politically backed, militarily financed and diplomatically shielded by successive US administra-

tions, first under Joe Biden and later Trump.

It requires no particular insight to conclude that Trump’s Board of Peace is not concerned with peace, nor genuinely with Gaza. So what, then, is this initiative really about?

It is not about reconstruction or justice but about exploiting Gaza’s suffering to impose a new US-led world order, first in the Middle East and eventually beyond.

Gaza – a besieged territory of just 365 sq. km – does not require a new political structure populated by dozens of world leaders, each reportedly paying a \$1 billion membership fee. Gaza needs reconstruction, its people must be granted their basic rights and Israel’s crimes must be met with accountability. The mechanisms to achieve this already exist: the UN, international law, long-standing humanitarian institutions and, above all, the Palestinians themselves, whose agency, resilience and determination to survive Israel’s onslaught have become legendary.

The Board of Peace discards all of this in favor of a hollow, improvised structure tailored to advance US-Israeli political and geopolitical interests. In effect, it drags Palestine

back a century, to an era when Western powers unilaterally determined its fate, guided by racist assumptions about Palestinians and the Middle East – assumptions that laid the groundwork for the region’s enduring catastrophes.

Yet the central question remains: Is this truly a uniquely Trumpian initiative?

No, it is not. This is a familiar American tactic, particularly during moments of profound crisis. This strategy is persuasively outlined in Naomi Klein’s 2007 book “The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism,” which argues that political and economic elites exploit collective trauma – wars, natural disasters and social breakdown – to impose radical policies that would otherwise face public resistance.

Trump’s Board of Peace fits squarely within this framework, using the devastation of Gaza not as a call for justice or accountability but as an opportunity to reshape political realities in ways that entrench US dominance and sideline international norms. This is hardly unprecedented. The pattern can be traced back to the US-envisioned UN, estab-

lished in 1945 as a replacement for the League of Nations. Its principal architect, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, was determined that the new institution would secure the structural dominance of the US, most notably through the Security Council and the veto system, ensuring Washington’s decisive influence over global affairs. When the UN later failed to fully acquiesce to US interests – most notably when it refused to grant the George W. Bush administration legal authorization to invade Iraq – the organization was labeled “irrelevant.” Bush then led his own so-called coalition of the willing into a war of aggression that devastated Iraq and destabilized the entire region, with consequences that persist to this day. A similar maneuver unfolded in Palestine with the 2002 invention of the Quartet on the Middle East, a US-dominated framework. From its inception, the Quartet systematically sidelined Palestinian agency, insulated Israel from accountability and relegated international law to a secondary – and often expendable – consideration.

– Arab News

The affable aide to Mr. President

GHASSAN CHARBEL

Don’t say that you have a solution. You are not a decision-maker and have no right to steal the spotlight or praise. Your fate is to remain in the shadows and for others to take credit for your work. The solution comes from the source. Your participation in devising it does not give you any right to it. Solutions are part of the indisputable skills of Mr. President. No one else is party to them.

Don’t say that you have the winning idea. Salvation is not part of your duties or even your rank. Salvation is the responsibility of the man in power – the man whom the nation chose before the ballot boxes did. Men of landmark moments are not born of ballot boxes. Fate chooses them for major duties; then comes the role of the citizens in voting and applauding.

Don’t say that the situation is difficult. Always say that it is under control and that the fate of livelihoods and people are in safe hands. Always say that the man in charge is skilled at knowing the dreams, feelings and needs of the nation. Say that the people will be held responsible should any misunderstanding arise because they failed to grasp Mr. President’s pioneering ideas. You are Mr. President’s aide. You are the echo, not the voice. Don’t even dare to speak about concerns over destiny or correcting course. Destiny is the responsibility of the savior alone. The course itself is glittering, no matter how much the enemies or critics say otherwise. Your primary task is to preserve your position and safety and appease the man in charge of your fate. This means paying compliments and issuing praise whenever necessary.

Don’t say that Mr. President is following in his predecessor’s footsteps. Mr. President has his own unique path. His style is out of the ordinary and his own. He doesn’t imitate anyone and no one can imitate him. I once asked a man who worked with Saddam Hussein if any member of the Baath Party’s central command had ever implied to Mr. President that the decision to invade Kuwait was catastrophic, reckless or costly. The answer was no secret. Tariq Aziz said it pained him to remain seated during the meeting in which it was announced that Kuwait would be annexed and become an Iraqi province. He realized the dangers but, when confronted with the ruthless people surrounding the president, he chose to keep his thoughts to himself. Saddam once met with Iranian Foreign Minister Sadegh Ghotbzadeh on the sidelines of a Non-

Aligned Movement summit in Havana. The minister flattered the president. At the end of the meeting, Iraqi Ambassador to the UN Salah Omar Al-Ali described the talks as positive and that more could be built upon them. Mr. President was quick to reprimand him, saying: “Don’t ever say that again. I will break the Iranians and reclaim every inch of territory they seized.” Al-Ali realized the difficulty of offering advice to the “historic leader.” During a trip to Damascus, I met with President Bashar Assad and then-Vice President Abdul Halim Khaddam. I asked Khaddam about why Bashar was chosen to succeed his father Hafez. Khaddam knew the walls had many ears, so he replied by saying that he was the natural choice. Bashar was raised around his father and grew up in his environment, so it was normal for the party leadership to name him as successor. Years later, I again met with Khaddam, who by then was living in Paris after defecting from the regime. I asked him the same question and he replied that, at the time, he had been summoned by Hafez and informed that the decision related to Bashar had been taken. So, Khaddam had no role in Bashar’s rise to power. He said Bashar was not fit to assume such a major post. The party’s policy of having sons inherit their father’s position was wrong because it showed that Hafez had no one but his son to whom he could entrust the running of the country.

Libyan diplomat Ali Abdussalam Treki once told me that he hid his face in embarrassment when Muammar Qaddafi tore up a copy of the UN Charter while he was addressing the General Assembly. Treki admitted that he did not dare to call on the leader to cut short his speech, even when he had far exceeded his allotted time. Treki most certainly did not criticize the leader after the scandalous incident.

Has the world returned to the time of the strongman who does not recognize any borders or whom no aide or adviser dares to confront with even a fraction of the truth? We don’t have the necessary information as to whether Vladimir Putin consulted Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov before ordering the Russian army to enter Ukraine. We don’t know the veteran Lavrov’s opinion, even if he were consulted. It is difficult to imagine that an aide to Donald Trump would have warned him of the dangerous precedent of kidnapping Venezuela’s Nicolas Maduro. It is difficult to believe that an aide urged him to tone down his statements about NATO.

– Arab News

There is scope for Trump to strike a deal on Greenland

ANDREW HAMMOND

US President Donald Trump has previously threatened both military action and trade tariffs on much of Europe as he tries to acquire Greenland. The irony is that there is significant scope for a deal to be done that secures US interests, should America’s approach be based on skillful diplomacy that focuses on both security and commerce. The public debate tends to focus on two main options: that of US military action or the potentially expensive purchase of Greenland. However, there are other pathways, such as an agreement along the lines of the Compacts of Free Association, which the US has with three Pacific island nations.

Denmark, an EU member state and NATO member, has controlled Greenland for about 300 years. In 1916, the US formally recognized Copenhagen’s interests in the island in exchange for the Danish West Indies, which became the US Virgin Islands. In recent decades, the autonomous territory that Greenland has become, with a population of about 57,000, has gone from direct Danish rule to much greater independence. Today, Denmark retains the powers of defense and foreign policy, monetary policy and justice.

The leaders of all five political parties in Greenland’s parliament this month said in a joint statement that “we do not want to be Americans, we do not want to be Danes, we want to be Greenlanders.” While this may preclude any future US purchase of Greenland, Washington could push forward with diplomacy in other ways to boost its influence in and around the island. On the security front, the US first opened Thule Air Base (now known as the Pituffik Space Base) to house military assets in the 1940s. During the height of the Cold War, some 10,000 US troops were stationed on the island. The US has options to increase its military presence again very significantly, as long as it consults Denmark and Greenland. This could help to deliver

key goals of America’s new security strategy, released in November, which puts greater emphasis on securing its interests in the Western Hemisphere.

This is what NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte, a former Dutch prime minister, emphasized to Trump at the World Economic Forum in Davos last week. A growing number of European leaders, including Rutte, recognize the need for a bigger collective effort to work with the Trump team to try to make the Arctic (not only Greenland) safer for Western interests. For instance, numerous European countries, including the UK and Germany, are debating sending more military assets to Greenland and the wider region, including ships and aircraft, as Denmark is doing. This is not incompatible with allowing the US to also expand its military base there or build new ones.

Beyond security and Trump’s cited concerns about China and Russia, what is often missing from his recent professions of interest in Greenland is its resource richness. As think tanks like the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington have shown, a defining feature of Trump’s second presidency so far has been significant US efforts to secure greater access to critical minerals and other resources across the world. Greenland, which is currently about 80 percent ice-capped, is about 2.1 million sq. km in size. It boasts the world’s northernmost point of land – the closest land to the North Pole – just off its coast. The growing economic focus on the Arctic stems, in large part, from the region’s melting ice caps, which are opening up new shipping lanes. These have significantly decreased maritime trade transport times, allowing ships to bypass the Suez and Panama canals. The melting ice caps are also exposing unclaimed lands. This has been described as a modern-day gold rush, with states competing over resources including zinc, copper, iron ore and rare earth elements.



US’ Gaza ‘Master Plan’ clashes with reality

CHRIS DOYLE

Anyone who saw Jared Kushner’s PowerPoint presentation in Davos last week without knowing the topic would have struggled to identify the territory to which he was referring. Many might have thought this was for North America, with shiny new office and residential blocks and a certain space-age or Hollywood sci-fi feel to the slides of the “Master Plan.” The vaulting ambition of the speaker may have impressed his father-in-law, US President Donald Trump, who is certainly familiar with the world of real estate. No doubt Trump, the freshly minted chairman of the Board of Peace, was the premier target of the messaging. It reflected much of what was released at the announcement of Trump’s “Gaza riviera” plan last February, which envisaged the Strip being entirely emptied of Palestinians. Even this version treats Gaza as a tabula rasa to impose whatever architectural fantasies its authors can conjure up. It treats the enclave as being devoid of any culture, tradition or history.

Others have been more skeptical – and with good reason. First of all, Israel has not even adhered to the Oct. 10 ceasefire and is bombing and shelling with intensity. Second, the full entry of aid, as referenced in the Trump peace plan, has not yet been achieved. Third, the plan presumes the disarmament of Hamas, something that is far from imminent. Finally, no international stabilization force is on the horizon. Those are the significant near-term impediments. Delivering this plan, at a time when the conflict still rages, will be nigh on impossible. Just clearing the 60 million tonnes of rubble, which is peppered with unexploded ordnance and a host of toxins, will take an age and cost a fortune.

One major element Kushner did not address was how the land would be acquired and whether owners would be compensated. According to a 2015 study, about half of the land in Gaza is privately owned. Much of the land is unregistered because owners did not wish to pay tax. What is clear is that the companies lining up to fill their coffers have no claim to the land at all. But progress also presumes the Israeli leadership will be comfortable with this. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is still smarting from the invitation that was extended to Turkey and Qatar to join the executive committee of the Board of Peace. Many members of Netanyahu’s Cabinet and right-wing Knesset members have dreams of inhabiting these plush new riviera residences themselves.

Israel will have to consent as the occupying power. For starters, it will have to allow in all the construction materials and abandon its restrictive dual-use list. Throughout Kushner’s presentation to world leaders and the business elite, it was clear that Palestinians have had no input into these plans – and not just because the Arabic on the slides was all wrong. He did not outline how the local Palestinians in Gaza would be won over by the project or where they would go during reconstruction. Kushner said Gaza would be run on free-market principles, as opposed to how Palestinians might wish to shape their economic future.

Do Palestinians want tourism, given the beachfront is all labeled for coastal tourism? Who decided on the importance of data centers at this stage? And how many of the companies making a fortune out of this dreamworld will be Palestinian and how many will be rich businessmen with no link to Gaza at all? The Palestinians in Gaza I have spoken to largely see this all as a sick joke. “Who is going to live in these villas and flashy apartments? Certainly not us Palestinians,” sighed one woman. Another said: “What will stop Israel from bombing them again? Where will our security come from? We need that before rich houses.” But there is also the issue of who will pay for it. The experts at the UN, those who actually have experience of such situations, calculate that postwar reconstruction will cost about \$70 billion. This is without the high-end infrastructure of Kushner’s presentation. The UAE has reportedly expressed an interest in funding the first planned community on the outskirts of Rafah in the south. Beyond that, it is not clear. More alarming is who might make money out of it. This is a war zone profiteering racket. US companies are lining up at the trough. This is all premised on the naive and ill-founded belief that the entirety of Gaza’s problems can be resolved with bulldozers, cranes and cement. The plan has echoes of earlier economic roadmaps for peace, but even those were not so divorced from reality. At no stage did the presentation reference a viable peace process or even mention that Gaza would be the western segment of an independent state of Palestine. It did not address a single one of the underlying causes or drivers of this 100-year-plus conflict. On this occasion, the last word goes to French President Emmanuel Macron, who was reported as saying: “Peace is not a real estate transaction. You cannot build stability on the erasure of a people’s history and the privatization of their tragedy.”

– Arab News

Letters to the Editor

Phone tongue

Language has always been the strongest marker of identity. Traditionally, a child’s mother tongue was the language spoken at home by parents and elders. However, in the modern digital age, this natural process is rapidly changing. A new phenomenon is emerging – the “phone tongue.” Today’s children are growing up surrounded by screens. As a result, many children are learning and adopting the language of digital media rather than their inherited mother tongue. The phone does not just entertain; it educates, influences pronunciation, builds vocabulary and even shapes thinking patterns. This change carries both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, children become multilingual and globally connected. On the other hand, local languages face the risk of decline if they are not actively preserved at home and in society. The responsibility now lies with parents, educators and content creators to ensure that digital spaces also support and promote native languages, so tradition and technology can grow together rather than apart.

Aamir Khan Wagan

Larkana

Int’l education day

The International Day of Education is observed each year on January 24, and this year’s theme was “The Power of Youth in Co-Creating Education.” This important day highlights the vital role education plays in promoting global peace and sustainable development. Education is essential for children’s safety, health, happiness and future opportunities. It equips young minds with knowledge, skills and confidence, allowing them to build better lives and contribute positively to society. Education is not a privilege for a few – it is a fundamental right for all. On this day, we not only celebrate the importance of learning but also encourage young people to take an active role in shaping education systems. It is also a time to recognise and appreciate the dedication and hard work of teachers and educators who guide and inspire future generations. We must use this day as a reminder to support education for every child and to empower youth to

become leaders of tomorrow.

Kulsoom Balach
Gidroshia, Balochistan

Unrealised dreams

While our leaders debate politically for our future, there is a pain we are holding in our hearts for our nation – for the collapse of the quality of public education. Pakistan has one of the world’s largest out of school population and those who attend school often receive the kind of learning that destroys critical thinking and creativity. The divide between private schools and underfunded government schools is deeply vast and discriminatory. This is not just an educational problem but also one pertaining to our futures. An unskilled youth craves stability, a good future and a bright career through education. But if we lose this facility, most people will give up on their dreams and goals. It’s a crucial request that the government prioritises education as our futures depend not on the road that we build today but the minds that we shape for tomorrow.

Sharan Noor Ahmad
Dashtibazar, Turbat



National flags of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye are displayed along roads and on walls in Quetta to mark the historic joint defense agreement reached between the three countries in Makkah

Kyrgyzstan envoy says “Cholpon-Ata Summit” redefines Central Asian geopolitics, opens new corridors to Europe

APP- ISLAMABAD: Kyrgyzstan’s Charge d’Affaires in embassy of Kyrgyzstan in Pakistan, Aibek Tilebeliev Kyrgyzstan has described the recent informal Consultative meeting of the heads of State of Central Asia and the Republic of Azerbaijan as a historic turning point for regional cooperation, saying the expanded platform has created new opportunities for connectivity, trade, energy and diplomatic coordination stretching from China to Europe.

Speaking at a press briefing here at the Embassy of Kyrgyzstan on Sunday, Kyrgyzstan’s Charge d’Affaires, Aibek Tilebeliev, said the summit, held on July 31 at the Cholpon-Ata tourist zone on the shores of Lake Issyk-Kul, marked a “qualitatively new level” of regional cooperation.

The Consultative Meetings, launched in 2018 among Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, were established to strengthen interstate cooperation and promote a peaceful, stable and united Central Asia.

Tilebeliev said the Cholpon-Ata meeting marked a major transformation of the format as Azerbaijan participated for the first time as a full participant.

He said the development reflected growing regional harmony, particularly following Kyrgyzstan’s resolution of its long-standing border issues with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The three countries have also strengthened their relations through agreements on border junctions and the Khujand Declaration of



Eternal Friendship.
“Today, the borders of Central Asia are no longer barriers; they have become

bridges of friendship and gateways for trade,” Tilebeliev said.

According to the envoy, the broader Central Asian region, together with Azerbaijan, represents a market and economic space of approximately 85 million people and a gross regional product exceeding US\$ 600 billion.

The region’s strategic importance is further enhanced by its fossil fuel reserves, critical minerals, agricultural resources and location between Europe and Asia.

Tilebeliev said the region has increasingly developed “C5+1” dialogue mechanisms with major international partners, including China, Russia, the United States, the European Union, Japan, South Korea and Italy.

“Royal Thai Embassy” marks King’s birthday with free medical Camp benefiting hundreds



APP- ISLAMABAD: The Royal Thai Embassy in Pakistan, in collaboration with Dr. Akbar Niazi Teaching Hospital (ANTH), commemorated the Birthday of His Majesty the King Maha Vajiralongkorn Phra Vajiraklaochaoyuhua of Thailand by organizing a Free Health Screening Medical Camp, bringing quality healthcare services for free to hundreds of underserved residents access to medical consultations and check-ups they might otherwise be unable to afford.

The one-day medical camp attracted hundreds of people who received consultations across multiple specialties, including general medicine, breast health, and diet and nutrition, along with screening and diagnostic services and free medicines, all under one roof, said a release issued here on a Sunday.

Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand to Pakistan Rongvudhi Virabutr along with a delegation of Thai Embassy, visited the camp and interacted with patients, doctors, healthcare professionals and volunteers. He

was received by Yasir Khan Niazi, Group Chief Executive Officer of GAK HealthCare International, and Dr. Areej Neyazi, Director of Dr. Akbar Niazi Teaching Hospital, along with the hospital’s senior management.

The Ambassador toured the consultation, screening and diagnostic facilities, met patients and appreciated the dedication of doctors, healthcare professionals and volunteer students from Islamabad Medical & Dental College, who played an important role in guiding patients and facilitating the smooth conduct of the camp. Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Virabutr thanked Akbar Niazi Teaching Hospital, its management and healthcare professionals for partnering with the Royal Thai Embassy in organizing the humanitarian initiative. He said commemorating His Majesty the King’s Birthday through service to the community reflected the values of compassion, goodwill and friendship that continue to strengthen the longstanding relations between Thailand and Pakistan.

FIA swift action recovers Rs400,000 from visa fraud suspect

APP- ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Anti-Human Trafficking Circle (AHTC) Islamabad has recovered Rs400,000 from an alleged visa fraud suspect and returned the entire amount to the complainant at the inquiry stage, after the suspect had allegedly withheld both the money and the complainant’s passport for nearly two years.

An FIA official told APP on Monday that the action was taken under Inquiry No. 522/2026 immediately after the complaint was received by AHTC Islamabad. The complainant told the FIA that the suspect had received Rs400,000 through bank transactions in different instalments during 2024, promising to arrange an overseas visa within nine to 10 months. However, despite the passage of nearly two years, the suspect allegedly neither arranged the visa nor returned the money. He had also kept the complainant’s passport in his possession for around two years. The official said the suspect initially used delaying tactics when asked to return the money and later allegedly threatened the complainant with dire consequences.



Vendors display National flags ,Pakistan-themed bands, toys and decorative items at a roadside stall ahead of Independence Day celebrations at Qissa Khawani Bazaar

Philippines, Pakistan seek to boost bilateral trade to US\$ 500 million; private sector, chambers key: Philippines envoy

APP- ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Philippines to Pakistan, Dr. Emmanuel R. Fernandez, on Monday reiterated the commitment to enhance bilateral trade between Pakistan and the Philippine to US\$ 500 million, stressing that the private sectors and chambers of commerce of both countries could play a pivotal role in expanding trade and economic relations.

“The current bilateral trade between Pakistan and the Philippines stood at around US\$ 197 million, which was significantly below the actual trade potential of the two countries. There was, therefore, a need to explore new avenues for trade, investment and business-to-business linkages,” Ambassador of Philippines to Pakistan, Dr. Emmanuel R. Fernandez said this in



an exclusive interview to APP here.

The Ambassador said the Philippines, being the second-largest market in The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in terms of population, could serve as an important gateway for Pakistan to the ASEAN region and the Philippines

could also play a significant role in strengthening Pakistan’s trade and economic engagement with ASEAN member states.

The envoy said that after the finalization of a Regional Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with ASEAN, Pakistan could benefit substantially from the approximately US\$ four trillion ASEAN market. Such integration would be a major milestone in promoting Pakistan’s regional economic integration, exports and connectivity with Southeast Asian economies.

He said the Pakistan-Philippines Joint Economic Council was already functioning as an important institutional mechanism to review bilateral economic and trade relations, investment-related matters and progress in expanding trade between the two countries.

Railways expands freight, passenger services to boost connectivity in KP, Balochistan

STAFF REPORT, ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Railways has undertaken a series of measures to strengthen freight and passenger services in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan, with a focus on improving connectivity, facilitating trade and providing economical transportation facilities.

“A state-of-the-art dry port has been established at Azakhel in Peshawar Railway Division to cater to the business requirements for bulk transportation of goods between Peshawar and other parts of the country,” an official in the Ministry told APP.

He said the brake vans and luggage vans attached to major trains are also facilitating farmers and small traders in transporting vegetables, fruits, dairy products and other small consignments at economical rates.

The official said the regular freight services are operating from Balochistan for transportation of minerals, livestock feed and agricultural products to Karachi and other markets across the country.

He said continuous improvements in digital ticketing, complaint management systems, station facilities and onboard services were providing safer, more comfortable and economical travel options to railway passengers, including those in KP and Balochistan.

At present, he said four Mail/Express trains are operating from Peshawar, connecting the city with different parts of the country.

Similarly, two Mail/Express trains are running from Quetta, linking Balochistan with Peshawar and Karachi.



An elderly vendor patiently waits for customers to sell plastic ewers on roadside at Maghanki Road

Stars set for Champions Cup battle



SPORTS DESK, Pakistan’s leading white-ball cricketers will return to domestic action on Tuesday as the Al Batal Presents University of Lahore National Champions Cup 2026-27 gets underway at the Multan Cricket Stadium, providing the national selectors and coaching staff with an early opportunity to assess the country’s options ahead of the ICC Cricket World Cup 2027.

Pakistan Greens, Pakistan Gold, Pakistan Whites and Pakistan Blues will contest seven 50-over matches from August 11-18, with the top two sides progressing to the final. Shaheen Shah Afridi, Shadab Khan, Saim Ayub and Sahibzada Farhan will lead the four teams respectively. The tournament, which serves as the opening event of Pakistan’s 2026-27 domestic cricket season, has been

designed not only to crown a domestic champion but also to widen the national team’s pool ahead of the 2027 World Cup.

The opening fixture on Tuesday will see Shadab’s Pakistan Greens take on Saim’s Pakistan Whites. All matches will begin at 3pm, with the toss scheduled for 2:30pm. The four squads, along with their support staff, arrived in Multan on August 8 and have since trained in day and night sessions at the Inzamam-ul-Haq High Performance Centre and Multan Cricket Stadium.

Pakistan’s white-ball head coach Mike Hesson is also in Multan and will closely observe the tournament. Hesson met the coaching staff of all four teams on Sunday and briefed them on Pakistan’s preparation plan for the 2027 World Cup.

The tournament gives the coaching

staff an opportunity to assess players in defined roles and under different match situations, while also identifying possible replacements and backups for the national side.

Shaheen, who will captain Pakistan Gold, believes the players are entering the competition in good shape after an extended white-ball camp at the National Cricket Academy.

“Most of the players are coming on the back of a two-month white-ball camp in National Cricket Academy so I feel they are good preparation-wise and in terms of their fitness,” Shaheen said during Monday’s trophy unveiling and pre-tournament press conference.

He said the principal objective was to create greater depth before the World Cup. “The purpose of arranging this tour-

nament is to unearth multiple options for various roles before the ODI World Cup. We want to have backups identified and ready by the time the mega event inches closer,” he said.

Shaheen added that players had been assigned specific responsibilities so the coaching staff could assess them in a range of situations. “Players have their roles set with the bat and ball in the tournament so that we can test their skills in different situations,” he said. Saim, meanwhile, is relishing the chance to lead Pakistan Whites and stressed the importance of adapting to the demands of the 50-over format. “I’m excited to lead Pakistan Whites in the tournament. All players in the team are important for me and in the end, we will try to win the tournament,” Saim said.

Rybakina survives scare as Gauff, Osaka race into Toronto quarters

SPORTS DESK, TORONTO: World number two Elena Rybakina survived a huge scare to battle into the Canadian Open quarter-finals on Sunday in Toronto



while fourth-ranked Coco Gauff cruised through.

Kazakhstan’s Rybakina recovered from 0-3 and two breaks down in the final set to beat Liudmila Samsonova 6-4, 4-6, 6-4 before American Gauff swept aside Russian teenage qualifier Alina Korneeva, 6-3, 6-1.

Rybakina will face four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka, who eliminated home hero Leylah Fernandez 6-4, 6-4.

Gauff reached the last eight in Canada for the first time since 2023 and next meets 14th-ranked Swiss Belinda Bencic, who won 6-4, 6-0 in 73 minutes over 20th-ranked Alexandra Eala, a Filipina who won her first WTA title last Monday in Washington. “My main focus today was let me try and close it out,” said Gauff, who has not dropped a set in Canada. “Probably not the way I should be thinking but it worked today.

Infantino targeted by three confederations

SPORTS DESK, LAUSANNE: FIFA president Gianni Infantino came under renewed fire on Monday as a joint letter from three confederations -- UEFA, CONCACAF and AFC -- declared football “belongs to no individual”.

Infantino has been the butt of scathing criticism ever since launching, and then withdrawing within days, a plan to bring private investment into FIFA competitions, including World Cups. FIFA had hit back on Saturday at “a concerted and ongoing effort by some to undermine” football’s governing body and Infantino. However, Monday’s letter from the governing bodies of European football (UEFA), North and Central America (CONCACAF) and Asia (AFC), showed his critics are unbowed. “Leadership in football is not a possession. It is not about holding -- or demanding -- power to be held,” they wrote. “When trust is broken through deception, when an individual places himself above the collective that entrusted him with authority, that duty has been abandoned,” the confederations added.

Pakistan begin England Test preparations



SPORTS DESK, Pakistan’s Test squad has begun preparations for their upcoming series against England, with the players taking part in their first training session at Kent County Club in Beckenham on Monday.

The squad underwent physical drills and fielding exercises during the opening practice session as the team began its preparations for the Test series which is expected to be a highly challenging task for the visitors. Newly appointed Pakistan batting coach Michael Smith of South Africa also joined the squad and met with the players before taking part in a batting session.

Smith’s arrival comes as Pakistan look to fine-tune their batting plans ahead of the series against England. The coaching staff is expected to use the preparation period to assess the players and work on technical and tactical aspects of the game.

The Pakistan Test team will continue its training at Kent County

Club on Tuesday (today), with the session scheduled to begin at 12:30 pm. The team’s preparations are focused on building match readiness and sharpening fielding, fitness and batting skills before the Test series gets under way.

Pakistan will be hoping their preparation in English conditions helps the squad adapt quickly and provides a strong foundation for the challenges of the series.

Pakistan headed into their upcoming Test series in England with renewed confidence after recovering from an opening-match defeat to draw their recent series in the Caribbean.

The Green-shirts secured an eight-wicket victory in the second Test in Trinidad to level the two-match series 1-1, responding strongly after suffering a 90-run defeat in the opening match. The result has given Pakistan a timely boost before a challenging assignment in England, where they will face a side accus-

tomed to using home conditions to their advantage. Unusually warm weather during the tour, however, could lessen the assistance traditionally available to England’s seam attack and potentially alter the balance between bat and ball.

Pakistan’s record in England remains modest despite a number of memorable individual and team performances over the years. The two sides have played 16 Test series on English soil, with England winning eight, Pakistan three and five ending in draws.

Pakistan’s most recent series victory in England came three decades ago, in 1996, when they won the three-match series 2-0. They had also prevailed in 1992, winning 2-1, while their earlier success came in 1987, when they secured a 1-0 series victory. The long gap since Pakistan’s last series triumph in England underlines the scale of the challenge facing the current squad.

Pakistan will also have an opportunity to test their combinations in a four-day warm-up match against a Select XI from August 12 to 15. The game is expected to provide the team with valuable preparation ahead of the first Test, particularly for players adjusting to the conditions and demands of English cricket.

The series will begin at Headingley in Leeds, where the first Test is scheduled from August 19 to 23. The second Test will be played at Lord’s in London from August 27 to 31, before the teams move to Birmingham for the third and final Test at Edgbaston from September 9 to 13.



Bergson (R) of Johor Darul Ta'zim dribbles for the ball during a pre-season friendly football match between Johor Darul Ta'zim from Malaysia Super League and Chelsea FC from Premier League at Sultan Ibrahim Stadium in Johor Bahru, Malaysia.

Rahim Khan doubts Pakistan’s World Cup prospects

SPORTS DESK, KARACHI: Former Olympian and 1994 World Cup gold medalist Rahim Khan is not optimistic about Pakistan making a major impact at the FIH Hockey World Cup, warning that the team has not had the preparation required to challenge the leading sides.

“I am not quite hopeful about any major success as the team has not prepared the way it should have,” Rahim told The Express Tribune in a detailed interaction on Monday.

Pakistan, he said, should have played a stronger opposition instead of relying on a series against South Korea ahead of the global event.

“Instead of playing a series against



a weaker opposition like South Korea, we needed a series against a tough side before going to the World Cup,” said Rahim, a former right-in.

He also questioned the limited time available to the foreign coach-

ing staff to work with the national side. “The foreign coaching staff also did not get enough time with the team. You need different strategies against different oppositions and that requires a lot of homework.

Brook, Greaves shortlisted for ICC awards

SPORTS DESK, England captain Harry Brook and West Indies all-rounder Justin Greaves headline the nominees for the ICC Men’s Player of the Month award for July while England skipper Nat Sciver-Brunt leads the women’s shortlist.

Bangladesh opener Tanzida Hasan completes the men’s nominations, with Sri Lanka batsman Harshitha Samarawickrama and West Indies captain Hayley Matthews joining Sciver-Brunt in the women’s category.

Brook was rewarded for a prolific month in which he excelled during England’s T20I series against India. Although he managed only 31 runs in the ODI series, the England captain produced a stunning 229 runs in five T20Is at an average of 114.50 and a strike rate of 214.01. He was named Player of the Series and finished as the leading run-scorer. Greaves impressed across formats for the West Indies, producing match-winning contributions with both bat and ball. He struck a remarkable 180 against Sri Lanka after the visitors declared on 549/9 and later claimed eight wickets in two Tests against Pakistan.



He finished July with 215 Test runs at an average of 71.66 and eight wickets at 10.25.



Alexandra Eala of the Philippines returns the ball during the women’s singles round of 16 match between Alexandra Eala of the Philippines and Belinda Bencic of Switzerland at the 2026 National Bank Open tennis tournament in Toronto, Canada,



Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, meeting with U.S. Chargé d'Affaires H.E. Ms. Natalie Baker at the Finance Division to discuss Pakistan-U.S. economic cooperation and investment

PM directs FBR to continue enforcement against smuggling, tax evasion, illegal businesses

APP- ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday directed the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to continue effective enforcement against smuggling, tax evasion, and illegal businesses across the country.

Chairing a review meeting regarding ongoing FBR reforms, the prime minister directed that implementation of the FBR reforms be further accelerated. He welcomed the growing confidence of the business community in the ongoing tax reforms. The prime minister further instructed that the Chairman FBR and senior officers should stay in Lahore for two days every month, in addition to their monthly stay in Karachi. "The FBR should accelerate enforcement measures to achieve the prescribed revenue target."

The prime minister appreciated the FBR's actions against illegal cigarette manufacturing factories in Chakwal and Swabi



and directed that officers and personnel of good reputation and integrity be appointed to all sensitive posts and departments of the FBR. He also directed the timely completion of the proposed Faceless System for Inland Revenue. The complete rollout of the Faceless System should be ensured by 2027. During the meeting, the prime minister

was informed that the first phase of the Faceless Inland Revenue System will become operational from October 1, 2026 and the AI- and advanced technology-based Faceless System was an important component of the FBR's recent digitization reforms.

The system will include a National

Faceless Audit Wing for the audit of tax returns and a Faceless Assessment Unit for assessments. Under the Faceless System, jurisdiction, over tax cases will be assigned on a random basis, irrespective of geographical boundaries.

The Chairman FBR also briefed the prime minister on his monthly stay in Karachi during the first week of each month, as directed by the Prime Minister, and his meetings with the business community. The chairman said that he met representatives of seven major trade organizations in Karachi and listened to their concerns. He said that the issues faced by the business community were resolved promptly during his stay in Karachi. Time-bound SOPs are being issued for the payment of tax refunds to exporters, he said and added that an intelligence-based operation was conducted against an illegal cigarette factory in Chakwal.

Experts warn Pakistan's population policies lag behind demographic realities, call for data-driven, multi-sectoral reforms

APP- ISLAMABAD: With Pakistan's population having crossed 240 million and a median age of just 19, policymakers, health experts and researchers warned that the country's demographic trajectory demanded an urgent shift from short-term fixes to robust, evidence-based strategies.

The stakeholders gathered here at the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) on Monday at a seminar titled "Population Growth and Policy Coherence in Pakistan: Challenges and Pathways", said a press release.

The seminar was steered by a wide-ranging discussion on institutional silos, regional implementation bottlenecks and community-level narratives shaping Pakistan's population policy landscape.

Prof. Dr. Shezad Ali Khan, Executive Director, Health Services Academy, presented some of the seminar's starkest findings, arguing that population dynamics could not be understood through a narrow medical lens alone. He said many pregnancies carried out through unsafe procedures in unregulated clinics that result in severe complications and sepsis.

Dr. Khan said that infants who are not breastfed were 11 times more likely to die of diarrhoea and five times more likely to die of pneumonia, reinforcing the need for a multi-sectoral approach that brings education and economic



planning alongside healthcare.

Ms. Rabia Zafar, from National Institute of Population Studies (NIPS), drew attention to these macroeconomic projections, pointing to structural deficits in long-term financing, regional coordination and ground-level commitment. She urged policymakers to move from reactive planning to systematic, projection-based frameworks, stressing that only targeted investments in human capital, health and skill development would allow Pakistan to capitalise on its approaching demographic window.

Ms. Farah Ashraf, from United Nations Family Planning Association (UNFPA), highlighted the pressing need to dismantle fragmented departmental silos that continue to hamper coherent policymaking. Speaking on UNFPA-backed initiatives, she said unified data governance, harmonised coordination between federal and provincial stakeholders, and aligning national budgets with long-term demographic trends were fundamental prerequisites for effective policy implementation.

Dr. Shafqat Munir Deputy Executive Director (Policy) SDPI, noted that Pakistan's 57 million women currently in their reproductive age were projected to surpass 100 million by 2050, while the country's working-age population currently bolstered by a youth cohort making up 67 percent of the population was expected to grow from 164 million to 292 million over the same period. He added that Pakistan's core challenge was not a shortage of policy statements, but inadequate long-term financing, uneven regional access and weak inter-departmental coordination.

Closing the discussion, Dr. Shafqat Munir reiterated SDPI's commitment to evidence-based, multi-sectoral dialogue that bridged research and actionable governance, apprising participants that Pakistan must now move "from dialogue to implementation."

He said the seminar forms part of its continuing research agenda on demographic and development policy in Pakistan.



A vendor displays national flags and other Independence Day items to attract customers ahead of Pakistan's 79th Independence Day celebrations on August 14.

Interior Minister hails security forces for killing five militants in Panjgur Operation

APP- ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has lauded the security forces for successfully conducting an intelligence-based operation in the Panjgur area of Balochistan under Operation Radd-ul-Fitna 3, in which five militants, including their ringleader, were killed.

Paying tribute to the professionalism and operational capabilities of the security forces, Naqvi said the successful action had thwarted the nefarious designs of the militants and dealt a major blow to their activities in the region.

The interior minister praised the bravery and determination of the security personnel who took part in the operation, describing them as a source of pride for the entire nation. He said the courageous sons of the soil were continuing their efforts to eliminate terrorism from Balochistan



and were making significant sacrifices to protect the country and its people.

Naqvi said the successful operation demonstrated the security forces' preparedness, professionalism and unwavering commitment to combating terrorism. He stressed that the elimination of terrorist elements

was essential for restoring lasting peace and stability in Balochistan and across the country.

"Security forces have successfully thwarted the nefarious designs of the militants," Naqvi said, adding that the nation stood firmly behind the brave personnel engaged in the fight against terrorism.

He said the sacrifices of security forces would always be remembered by the nation, adding that Pakistan's struggle against terrorism was a collective national cause.

The interior minister reaffirmed that the entire nation was united against terrorism and stood shoulder to shoulder with the security forces. He said the government and the people remained committed to supporting the security forces in their efforts to eradicate terrorist networks and ensure peace and security throughout the country.

HSA Conducts Digital Skills Test for 360 Balochistan Candidates

APP- ISLAMABAD: Health Services Academy (HSA), Islamabad, has successfully concluded the recruitment screening and skill tests for 85 technical and support positions across 21 categories under the Health Information & Service Delivery Unit (HISDU), Health Department, Government of Balochistan.

A total of 2,914 candidates submitted applications for these positions, out of which 681 were shortlisted, and 360 candidates ultimately appeared for the final knowledge and skill assessments. A key highlight of the four-day exercise, conducted from August 3 to 6, was the end-to-end digital and paperless system, which processed and compiled results for each paper within just 30 minutes of completion before submitting

them to the Balochistan government. This initiative reflects the vision of Provincial Health Minister Bakht Muhammad Kakar and Health Secretary Majeed-ur-Rehman Panezai toward institutional merit and digitalization. Under the leadership of Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Shahzad Ali Khan and the direct supervision of Controller of Examinations Nadeem Sajjad Kayani, HSA's examination and technical teams developed this advanced testing framework to ensure the health sector is equipped with a highly skilled workforce. To guarantee complete transparency and rigorous evaluation, candidates underwent both theoretical knowledge assessments and practical skill tests.



Families buy utensils from a roadside vendor during routine business activity in the city