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Surging debt and challenges ahead

Gaza Genocide

Netanyahu puts pressure on ICC to avoid arrest warrants

Monal Restaurant

Supreme Court orders closure of the hotel

Javelin Star Arshad Nadeem wins Gold Medal



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Arshad Nadeem's Gold Medal doubles festivities of Independence Day in Pakistan



By Hina Kashif

Pakistan's Javelin star Arshad Nadeem's gold medal doubled the festivities of the Independence Day in Pakistan. His victory in the Paris Olympics 2024 also brought smiles to millions of Pakistanis in the country and abroad. By winning the gold medal, Arshad Nadeem emerged as a global hero. Therefore, the federal and provincial governments while many organizations and individuals announced rewards for Arshad Nadeem in cash and kind.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has announced a reward of Rs150 million for Arshad Nadeem and Rs10 million for coach, Salman Iqbal Butt. The Olympic gold medalist arrived at the PM House on Tuesday, accompanied by his family and coach, where he was honored with a standing ovation.

Expressing his gratitude, Arshad thanked his family and the nation for their unwavering support and prayers, crediting them for his success in breaking the Olympic record in the javelin throw event adding that his next goal is to break the world record.

Nadeem broke a century-old Olympic record by achieving a massive 92.27-metre javelin throw last week at the Paris 2024 Olympics.

PM Shehbaz shared that the star athlete and nation's pride will be presented with a Hilal-e-Imtiaz. He further declared that the road between F-9 and F-10 sectors in Islamabad would be named after Arshad Nadeem.

He also unveiled plans to establish Arshad Nadeem High-Performance Academy at Jinnah Stadium, Islamabad, to train athletes for the 2028 Olympics. He announced Rs 1 billion Sports Endowment Fund aimed at supporting athletes, addressing the needs of retired sports figures, and providing top-tier training opportunities.

"I was overjoyed when God blessed me with the gold medal, and I look forward to celebrating August 14th with this achievement. Returning to Pakistan and receiving such overwhelming love from everyone has made me incredibly happy," Nadeem said.

He extended his thanks to PM Shehbaz and the public for the warm reception he received upon his return, noting that the welcome was perhaps "even more gratifying than the medal itself."

"The respect and encouragement you all show embolden athletes to work harder and push their limits," he added. He also acknowledged the tremendous effort that went into his journey and expressed gratitude to his coach and Dr Ali Sher Bajwa for their invaluable support.

Reflecting on his preparation for the Games, Nadeem shared that he had full confidence in himself, having given his all during training. "I secured my spot in the final at the Paris Olympics qualifying round with my first throw exceeding 86 meters. That's when I knew I had a real shot at fighting for the gold in the final," he said.

Recalling the day of the final, he mentioned that while the other athletes were warming up, he was slightly concerned about an injury. His first throw resulted in a foul, but he remained focused.

"When I took the second throw, I took God's name. As soon as the javelin left my hand, I knew it was over 90 meters," Nadeem recounted. He told his coach afterward that not only was the gold medal secured, but he also felt confident about breaking the world record soon.

PM Shehbaz lauded the hard work and determination behind Nadeem's record-breaking success, stating that his victory was a remarkable gift to the nation ahead of Independence Day, amplifying the celebrations.

Earlier today, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz arrived at Nadeem's home in a nearby village close to his hometown Mian Channu.

She presented him with a cheque for Rs100 million and gifted him a car in recognition of his achievements. He was also presented with a personalised number plate, PAK 92 97, for the vehicle referring to his record 92.97 metre throw at the Olympics.

Punjab Chief Minister gave Rs 100 million cash reward to hero of Pakistan

Olympian Arshad Nadeem and his family warmly welcomed Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz to their home in a village

near Mian Channu. During the visit, Maryam Nawaz congratulated Arshad Nadeem's mother, Razia Parveen, and presented Arshad with a cheque for Rs100 million and a car in recognition of his achievements. The vehicle also came with a personalized number plate, "PAK 92 97," symbolizing his record 92.97-meter throw at the Olympics.

In addition, she awarded Rs5 million to his javelin throw coach, Salman Iqbal Butt. Maryam Nawaz praised Arshad Nadeem for bringing immense pride to the nation. Arshad's father expressed deep gratitude, calling the CM's visit a great honor. The CM was accompanied by Senior Minister Maryam Aurangzeb, Sports Minister Faisal Ayub Khokhar, Special Assistant Zeeshan Malik, and other officials during the visit.

10.Arshad Nadeem's Historic Gold for Pakistan

Arshad Nadeem made history for Pakistan at the Paris 2024 Olympics, clinching gold in the javelin throw with a record-breaking throw of 92.97 meters. This achievement marked Pakistan's first Olympic gold since 1992 and set a new Olympic record. Nadeem's rise, despite limited track and field resources in his home country, is a story of determination and resilience. His

victory was celebrated across Pakistan and throughout South Asia, where India's reigning champion, Neeraj Chopra, claimed the silver medal. Nadeem's triumph sparked national pride and became a historic moment for the region.

Upon his return home, Nadeem was greeted with an outpouring of joy. Thousands of Pakistanis, along with government officials, politicians, and media, gathered at the airport to welcome the champion. As he spoke to the press, Nadeem acknowledged the pivotal role of his coach and the Prime Minister's youth program in his success, emphasizing that his journey was fuelled by hard work and dedication.

Rewards and Honors for Arshad Nadeem's Historic Win

The National Assembly and Senate of Pakistan have extended their heartfelt congratulations to Arshad Nadeem for his historic gold medal victory in the Men's Javelin Throw at the Paris Olympics. In a unanimous show of support, the National Assembly passed a resolution recommending the highest civil award be conferred upon Nadeem. Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar, who proposed the resolution, commended Nadeem's remarkable achievement and emphasized his signifi-



cant contribution to Pakistani sports. Deputy Chairman Syedaal Khan Nasar also announced that the Senate would host a special dinner in Nadeem's honor, recognizing the pride he has brought to the nation.

Law Minister Tarar further praised Nadeem's extraordinary feat, assuring that the government is committed to fostering sports development across the country. He encouraged Pakistani youth to take inspiration from Nadeem's historic victory as a testament to perseverance and hard work.



Further tributes followed, with Karachi Mayor Murtaza Wahab announcing plans to establish the 'Arshad Nadeem Athletics Academy' in Karachi, a gesture aimed at inspiring future athletes. Beacon Energy, a leading solar energy company, pledged to gift Nadeem a solar energy system to appreciate his achievement. Renowned scholar Maulana Tariq Jamil also honored Nadeem with a Rs 0.5 million cheque.

Nadeem's victory has brought a wave of joy and pride to Pakistan, with many hailing him as a beacon of hope in challenging times. His triumph uplifted the nation on Independence Day and inspired countless young Pakistanis to dream big, despite the country's socio-economic struggles. His legacy as an inspiration to the youth is firmly cemented as he continues to be celebrated nationwide.

Paris 2024 Olympics

The opening ceremony of the 2024 Summer Olympics, held on July 26, 2024, captivated the world with a breathtaking display of art

and culture across various iconic locations in Paris. Starting at 19:30, the event celebrated French heritage through an artistic program, the athletes' parade, and the Olympic cauldron's lighting. French President Emmanuel Macron officially declared the Games open. This momentous occasion also marked the 130th anniversary of the International Olympic Committee, the centenary of the 1924 Summer and Winter Olympics, and the 235th anniversary of the French Revolution.

For the first time in modern Olympic

The U.S. and China tied with 40 golds each, with the U.S. winning the total medal count at 126. China followed with 91 medals. From heartwarming to hilarious, the Paris 2024 Olympics delivered memorable moments that captured the world's imagination.

Paris Olympics 2024: A Journey of Records, Controversies, and Iconic Moments

1. Armand Duplantis's Record-Breaking Vault

Swedish pole-vaulter Armand "Mondo" Duplantis set a new world record, clearing 6.25 meters to secure his gold medal and continue his reign from Tokyo 2020. His ninth world record turned the Stade de France electric, cementing his status as one of the sport's greatest athletes.

2. Simone Biles' Triumphant Return

Simone Biles' return at Paris 2024 was nothing short of extraordinary. After taking a step back during the Tokyo 2020 Olympics to prioritize her mental health, Biles came back stronger than ever, with a mission of redemption. She captured three gold medals and one silver, leading the U.S. team to victory and securing individual golds in the all-around and vault events. Biles also earned a silver in the floor exercise. Her inspiring comeback, overcoming mental health struggles to reaffirm her status as one of the most celebrated athletes of the Games, will be remembered as a historic moment in Olympic history.

3. Julien Alfred's Historic Victory for Saint Lucia

Julien Alfred made history for Saint Lucia by winning the country's first-ever Olympic medal. In a stunning display of speed, Alfred sprinted to victory in the women's 100m final at the Stade de France, crossing the finish line in 10.72 seconds to secure gold. Her victory was a monumental moment for her Caribbean homeland, as she edged out pre-race favorite Sha'Carri Richardson, who took silver. Alfred's triumph marked a new chapter for Saint Lucia on the Olympic stage.

4. Zhou Yaqin's Adorable Medal Moment

China's Zhou Yaqin, an 18-year-old gymnast, captured hearts worldwide with a charming, unscripted moment during the medal ceremony for the women's balance beam event. After winning silver, Zhou noticed her Italian counterparts, Alice D'Amato and Manila Esposito, playfully biting their medals in the traditional photo op. Unfamiliar with the custom, Zhou joined in with a delighted smile, creating a viral moment of innocence and joy. It was a sweet and memorable conclusion to her Olympic debut.

5. Vinesh Phogat's Stunning Victory

Indian wrestler Vinesh Phogat pulled off one of the biggest upsets of the Paris 2024 Olympics in the women's freestyle 50kg category. Phogat advanced to the semi-finals with a dramatic 7-5 victory over Ukraine's Oksana Livach, overcoming a 5-2 deficit in the final 20 seconds of the match. Earlier in the tournament, she stunned reigning Olympic champion Yui Susaki of Japan, ending Susaki's 82-match unbeaten streak with a 3-2 victory. Phogat's remarkable resilience and determination in these matches etched her name into Olympic lore.

6. Rebeca Andrade's Golden Floor Routine

Brazil's Rebeca Andrade dazzled the world with her gold-medal performance in the women's floor exercise at Paris 2024, her first victory in this event on the international stage. Her routine was nothing short of spectacular, and the moment was made even more special when Simone Biles and Jordan Chiles bowed to her on the podium. This historic all-Black podium celebrated the incredible talents of Andrade, Biles, and Chiles, but the moment was bittersweet as Chiles was later stripped of her bronze medal following a ruling by the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

7. Huang Yaqiong's Double Celebration

Chinese badminton player Huang Yaqiong experienced a fairy-tale moment at the Paris 2024 Olympics. After securing the mixed doubles gold medal with her partner Zheng Siwei, her celebration was taken to the next level when her boyfriend, Liu Yuchen, proposed to her in front of a cheering crowd at La Chapelle Arena. This romantic surprise added an unforgettable twist to her Olympic success, making her triumph even sweeter as she left Paris with both an Olympic gold medal and a diamond ring.

8. Snoop Dogg's Olympic Side Quests

American rapper Snoop Dogg became an unexpected sensation at the Paris Olympics, leaving his mark not as an athlete but as a charismatic presence at the Games. Attending various events and providing lively commentary for NBC, Snoop captivated audiences with his enthusiasm and humorous interactions. From offering a swim lesson with Olympic legend Michael Phelps to cheering on athletes from different sports, Snoop's infectious personality brought a unique and refreshing vibe to the Olympics, proving that the magic of the Games extends far beyond the competition itself.

9. Yusuf Dikec's Viral Coolness

Turkish shooter Yusuf Dikec became an internet sensation thanks to his effortlessly cool demeanor during the mixed team 10m air pistol event. Despite winning a silver medal, Dikec stood out not for his precision alone but for his relaxed style, casually posing with one hand in his pocket while competing. His laid-back attitude, combined with his impressive performance, quickly went viral, making him one of the most talked-about athletes of the Paris 2024 Olympics and a social media Favorite.



Supreme Court Orders Closure of Restaurants in Margalla Hills National Park: A Comprehensive Overview

By Kanwal Munir

Introduction

In a landmark decision with broad implications for environmental protection, the Supreme Court of Pakistan has ordered the closure of all restaurants within Islamabad's Margalla Hills National Park, including the renowned Monal Restaurant. Established as a popular dining destination, Monal Restaurant has been a fixture in the park, offering spectacular views of the city along with a range of culinary delights.

However, the court's ruling underscores a shift towards prioritizing environmental conservation over commercial interests. The decision, which emerged from a legal review of the legitimacy of such commercial activities within a protected area, mandates that Monal and other establishments vacate the park within three months. This move reflects a strong commitment to preserving the national park's natural habitat and ensuring that it remains undisturbed by commercial exploitation.

Supreme Court's Directive: A Clear Mandate

On June 11, the Supreme Court issued a decisive order requiring the removal of all commercial activities within the Margalla Hills National Park. The court emphasized that all restaurants, including Monal, must cease operations and vacate the premises within three months. This ruling reflects the court's commitment to ensuring that commercial ventures do not undermine the ecological integrity of protected areas.

The court's decision was prompted by concerns regarding the legality and environmental impact of the restaurants operating within the park. The Supreme Court underscored that commercial activities are incompatible with the park's conservation goals and that any leases for such activities are deemed null and void.



Controversy Surrounding the Capital Development Authority

The Supreme Court's recent ruling has exposed significant issues with the Capital Development Authority (CDA), the entity responsible for managing land use in Islamabad. The court dismissed the CDA report concerning park construction and summoned its chairman for urgent questioning. Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa expressed profound dissatisfaction with the CDA's handling of the matter, questioning the authority's competence and suggesting that its officials might need additional training to properly understand and implement the court's orders.

The CJP also criticized the CDA for including irrelevant entities in their report, such as the Pak-China Friendship Center and the Arts Council National Monument, which were unrelated to the core issue of illegal construction in Margalla Hills National Park. These inclusions were seen as undermining the report's credibility and failing to address the central concern of preserving the park's ecological integrity.

CDA's Response and Accountability

During the court proceedings, the CDA's lawyer defended the authority's report, claiming it provided a detailed account of all Margalla Hills National Park construction activities. However, CJP Isa criticized the CDA for its apparent ignorance about the number of restaurants operating in the park and the frequent fire incidents on Margalla Hills. The CDA chairman revealed that there had been 21 fire incidents on the hills during the current season, a fact that further fuelled the court's dissatisfaction with the CDA's performance.

In response to these criticisms, the CDA chairman acknowledged the presence of some "black sheep" within the organization and pledged to address these issues. He also mentioned that helicopters from the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) had been requisitioned to combat the fires, highlighting ongoing efforts to manage the park's environmental challenges.

The Impact on Monal Restaurant and Other Establishments

The Monal Restaurant, an iconic dining establishment celebrated for its breathtaking views of Islamabad, is directly impacted by the Supreme Court's recent ruling. Renowned for its scenic location and distinctive ambiance, Monal has been a popular destination since its inception in 2006. As part of the court's directive to close all restaurants within Islamabad's Margalla Hills National Park, Monal's management has pledged to adhere to the ruling, committing to relocate the restaurant within the stipulated three-month period.

In a heartfelt statement shared on its Facebook page, Monal Restaurant expressed deep gratitude to its patrons for their unwavering support over the years. The restaurant highlighted its role in showcasing Pakistan's natural beauty and providing a memorable dining experience.

The closure signifies a significant change for many who have valued Monal's unique atmosphere and exceptional service. This decision marks the end of a cherished chapter for both the restaurant and its loyal customers, who have enjoyed its distinctive offerings and stunning vistas of the capital city.

Broader Implications for National Park Conservation

The Supreme Court's ruling extends well beyond the closure of Monal Restaurant, encompassing all commercial activities within the Margalla Hills National Park. This landmark decision underscores a significant commitment to preserving the park's ecological integrity and ensuring that such protected areas remain in their natural state. The ruling reflects a broader intent to halt commercial ventures that threaten the environmental balance, aligning with global conservation standards designed to protect national parks and their diverse ecosystems.

The court's decision addresses growing concerns over environmental degradation

and emphasizes the need for stringent enforcement of conservation laws. By mandating the removal of commercial enterprises from the park, the Supreme Court aims to establish a precedent for the management of other protected areas across Pakistan.

This move is expected to inspire a shift towards more sustainable land use practices, promoting greater respect for natural habitats and biodiversity. The ruling is not only a step towards better environmental stewardship but also a call for enhanced conservation efforts nationwide, reinforcing the importance of protecting Pakistan's natural heritage for future generations.



A Step Towards Environmental Stewardship

The Supreme Court's ruling to close all restaurants within Islamabad's Margalla Hills National Park, including the popular Monal Restaurant, represents a crucial advancement in environmental conservation in Pakistan. This landmark decision underscores the court's commitment to preserving the ecological integrity of the national park, which has long been threatened by commercial encroachment. The directive to shut down these establishments is a significant measure aimed at halting further environmental degradation and ensuring that the park's natural beauty and biodiversity are protected.

Monal Restaurant, renowned for its breathtaking views and widespread popularity

will be required to relocate as per the court's order. This ruling aligns with global conservation practices that prioritize the protection of natural landscapes and ecosystems. The focus now shifts to enforcing the court's directives and ensuring that no further commercial activities compromise the park's conservation objectives. By setting such a precedent, the Supreme Court is reaffirming its dedication to environmental stewardship and sustainable land use.

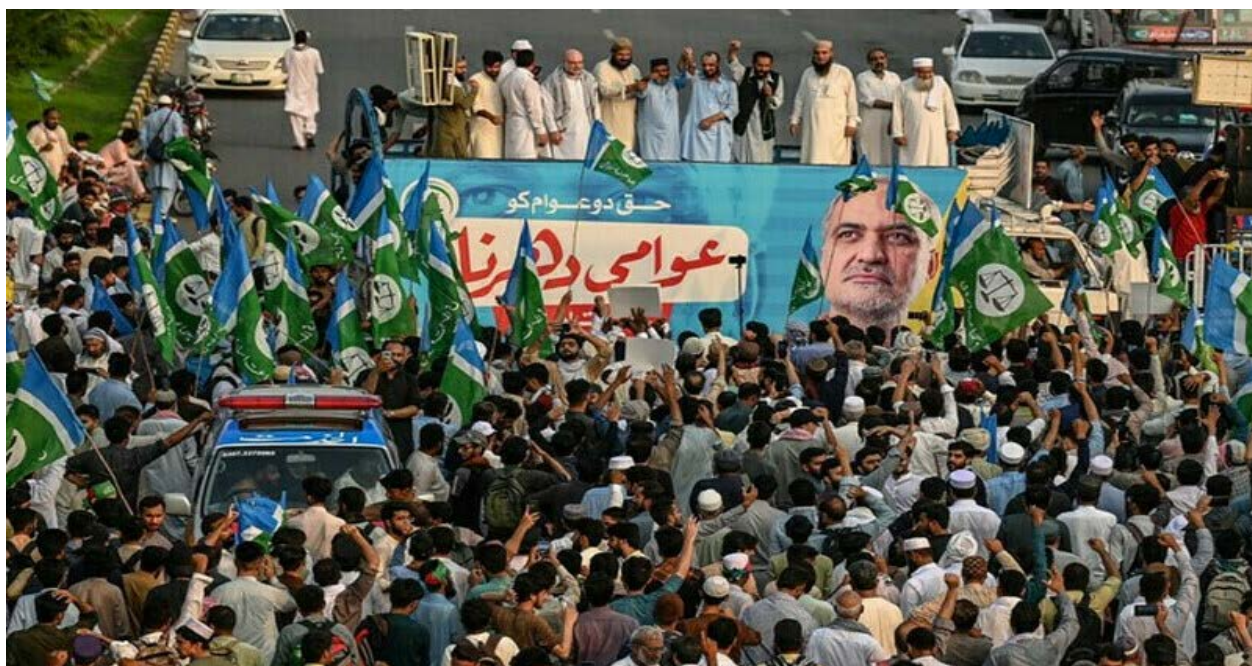
Conclusion

The Supreme Court's decision to mandate the closure of all restaurants within Margalla Hills National Park marks a

pivotal moment in Pakistan's environmental conservation efforts. This ruling not only addresses the immediate issue of illegal commercial activities but also reinforces the necessity for rigorous enforcement of environmental regulations to protect natural resources.

As Monal Restaurant and other affected establishments prepare to relocate, the emphasis will be on implementing the court's directives and safeguarding the park's ecological balance. This case highlights the ongoing challenge of reconciling development with environmental preservation and the vital role that legal frameworks play in this endeavor. The ruling is a testament to the country's commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainable land management practices.

Jamaat-e-Islami's Sit-in in Rawalpindi: A Fight Against Inflation and High Electricity Costs



By Kanwal Munir

Introduction

In a politically charged atmosphere, Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), a prominent religious political party in Pakistan, spearheaded a significant two-week sit-in in Rawalpindi from July 26 to August 9, 2024. The protest responded to the rapidly escalating inflation and surging electricity prices that have placed an immense burden on the average Pakistani citizen. JI positioned itself as a voice for the oppressed, demanding government action to alleviate the economic hardships faced by the public.

The sit-in garnered substantial attention, reflecting the growing public frustration with the government's handling of the economy. JI's strategic choice of Rawalpindi, a city with significant political and military influence, underscored the seriousness of their demands. The government's response was measured, seeking to maintain order while avoiding any actions that could escalate tensions further. This protest not only highlighted the economic struggles of the

masses but also solidified JI's role as a formidable force in Pakistan's political landscape, potentially reshaping future political dynamics.

Background of the Protest

The JI protest did not occur in a vacuum; it was the result of prolonged economic challenges that have gripped Pakistan. The country has been grappling with a severe economic crisis, marked by rampant inflation, a devaluing currency, and an increasing cost of living. One of the most pressing issues has been the surge in electricity prices, which have doubled for many Pakistanis due to a combination of increased base rates and a plethora of taxes.

In recent years, Pakistan's government has been forced to implement austerity measures as a condition of securing a \$7 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These measures have included significant hikes in electricity prices—26% in the last fiscal year alone, followed by

another 20% increase in July 2024. For many Pakistanis, particularly the lower and middle-income groups, these hikes have made basic utilities unaffordable.

The situation was exacerbated by faulty agreements with Independent Power Producers (IPPs), which have led to the generation of expensive power that the country struggles to afford. These agreements have come under scrutiny as public outrage over inflated electricity bills reached a boiling point, setting the stage for JI's protest.

Jamaat-e-Islami's Role and Political Objectives

Jamaat-e-Islami is one of Pakistan's oldest and most organized religious political parties, with a history of activism and a strong grassroots presence. Over the years, JI has carved out a niche for itself as a voice for the economically marginalized, often championing causes that resonate with the working class. The party's decision to organize a sit-in in Rawalpindi was a



strategic move to tap into the growing public anger over economic mismanagement and rising living costs.

The primary demands of the protest were clear: the withdrawal of taxes on electricity and a reduction in electricity prices. However, JI's political objectives extended beyond these immediate concerns. The party sought to position itself as a defender of the public against a government it portrayed as being out of touch with the common man's struggles. By rallying against high electricity costs and inflation, JI aimed to bolster its political capital and strengthen its base ahead of future elections.

JI also called for a comprehensive audit of IPP agreements, highlighting the need for greater transparency and accountability in the energy sector. This demand was in line with the party's broader goal of advocating for economic reforms that would reduce the burden on ordinary citizens and ensure that the country's resources were used more efficiently.

Public mobilization was a key aspect of JI's strategy. The party succeeded in drawing a significant number of supporters to its sit-in, with around 3,000 people occupying a major road in Rawalpindi for two weeks. The sit-in was marked by speeches from JI leaders, including the party's Emir, Hafiz Naeemur Rehman, who emphasized the urgency of addressing the economic crisis and warned the government of the consequences of failing to meet the protesters' demands.

The Government's Response

The government initially responded to the JI protest with caution, recognizing the potential for the sit-in to escalate into a larger movement. To manage the situation, the government formed a committee to negotiate with JI, with Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Information Minister Attaullah Tarar playing leading roles in the discussions.

The negotiation process was not without its challenges. Talks between the government and JI began shortly after the sit-in commenced but were temporarily halted

due to a five-day hiatus. When talks resumed, both sides were eager to reach a resolution to avoid further public unrest. After three rounds of negotiations, an agreement was finally reached late on August 8, 2024.

The key points of the agreement included the formation of a task force to audit IPP agreements and the establishment of a mechanism to reduce electricity prices. The task force was given 45 days to submit its report to the prime minister, after which the government would take further steps to implement the agreed-upon measures. In addition to addressing electricity costs, the agreement also included commitments to reduce taxes on the salaried class and to create an effective income tax system targeting landlords and landholders.



In the aftermath of the agreement, the government was keen to assure the public that it was committed to providing relief. Both Mohsin Naqvi and Attaullah Tarar emphasized the importance of respecting public sentiment and pledged that the demands of the sit-in would be implemented.

However, the government's handling of the protest was not without criticism. JI leaders, including Hafiz Naeemur Rehman, accused the government of attempting to disrupt the sit-in through heavy-handed tactics, such as raids on the homes of JI workers by Punjab Police. Despite these alleged attempts to stifle the protest, JI remained resolute, with Rehman warning that the party would escalate its protests with a nationwide wheel jam strike if the government failed to honor the agreement within the stipulated 45 days.

Political Implications

The Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) protest and the resulting agreement with the government carry profound implications for Pakistan's political landscape. For the government, the agreement symbolizes a precarious balancing act. By negotiating with JI and reaching a compromise, the government successfully defused a potentially volatile situation that could have escalated into wider unrest. However, this victory is tempered by the challenge of implementing the agreed-upon measures within a tight deadline. The government now faces the risk that failing to fulfill its commitments could reignite protests, further erode public trust, and damage its already fragile credibility.

For Jamaat-e-Islami, the protest is a clear political win. The party's ability to mobilize large numbers of supporters and compel the government to negotiate highlights its growing influence and effectiveness in channelling public frustration into tangible political action. JI's focus on economic issues, particularly inflation and soaring electricity costs, has struck a chord with a substantial segment of the population, especially those most affected by the economic crisis. This could lead to increased electoral support for JI in future elections, especially if the government fails to deliver on its promises.

Moreover, the protest allowed JI to position itself as a champion of accountability and transparency, particularly concerning the controversial Independent Power Producer (IPP) agreements. This emphasis on



economic justice is consistent with JI's broader political agenda and sets it apart from mainstream political parties that are often perceived as corrupt or indifferent to the plight of ordinary citizens. By advocating for reforms and challenging the status quo, JI has the potential to attract disillusioned voters who are seeking an alternative to the traditional political elite.

In sum, the JI protest has not only brought economic grievances to the forefront but has also reshaped the political discourse in Pakistan. The government's response and the party's rising influence could significantly impact the dynamics of upcoming elections and the overall political trajectory of the country.

Broader Context and Social Discontent

The Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) protest is not an isolated incident but rather a reflection of broader social and political discontent in Pakistan. The country has been experiencing a wave of protests and strikes in recent months, driven by worsening economic conditions and widespread dissatisfaction with the government's management of the crisis. While the JI sit-in was among the most prominent, it is part of a larger trend of growing public dissent, which is intensifying as more people are affected by inflation, unemployment, and the rising cost of living.

The protest also carries significant regional implications, highlighting the challenges the government faces in maintaining stability in an increasingly politically volatile environment. JI's critique of the government extends beyond domestic issues to include its handling of foreign relations, particularly with neighboring countries like Afghanistan and India. This criticism reflects the party's ambition to shape Pakistan's foreign policy, aiming for a more assertive role in regional affairs.

Hafiz Naeemur Rehman, a key JI leader, has emphasized the need for constructive dialogue with Afghanistan and better treatment of the people of Balochistan, illustrating the party's broader political agenda. By raising these issues, JI is positioning itself not only as a champion of economic justice but also as a credible voice on national security and foreign policy matters. This strategy could help the party expand its appeal beyond its traditional voter base, attracting those who are dissatisfied with the current government's approach to both domestic and international challenges.

Overall, the JI protest signals a shifting political landscape in Pakistan, where economic grievances are increasingly intertwined with broader social and political concerns. The government's ability to address these issues effectively will be crucial in determining the country's future

stability and political direction.

Conclusion

The Jamaat-e-Islami protest in Rawalpindi was a significant event in Pakistan's ongoing political drama, showcasing the power of public mobilization in challenging government policies. While the protest may have been called off following an agreement with the government, the underlying issues that prompted it—rising inflation, high electricity costs, and economic mismanagement—remain unresolved.

As Pakistan navigates its economic challenges, the JI protest serves as a reminder of the potential for public dissent to shape the political landscape. Whether the government can successfully implement the agreement within the 45-day deadline will be a crucial test of its ability to address the concerns of its citizens. If it fails, the country could see a resurgence of protests, with JI and other political forces ready to capitalize on the public's frustration.

In the meantime, JI has solidified its position as a key player in Pakistan's political arena, with the potential to influence future policy decisions and electoral outcomes. The coming weeks will be critical in determining whether the government can deliver on its promises and whether JI's gamble on public discontent will pay off.





The Influence of Social Media on Modern Politics



By Romana Afsheen

In recent years, social media has dramatically reshaped the landscape of modern politics. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok have become central to political discourse, campaign strategies, and voter engagement. This transformation has brought both opportunities and challenges, fundamentally altering how political messages are disseminated and how political actors interact with the public. This article explores the multifaceted influence of social media on contemporary politics, examining its effects on political campaigns, public opinion, and democratic processes.

The Rise of Social Media in Politics

Social media's emergence as a political tool can be traced back to the early 2000s, but its impact has grown exponentially with the proliferation of mobile devices and high-speed internet. Politicians and parties quickly recognized the potential of these platforms for reaching voters directly, bypassing traditional media gatekeepers. This shift marked a significant change in how political communication is conducted, moving from a model dominated by television, radio, and print media to one where digital platforms play a central role.

One of the most notable impacts of social media is its transformation of campaign strategies. Social media has revolutionized political campaigning by enabling candidates to engage with voters in real-time. This direct interaction allows candidates to address issues, respond to questions, and adapt their messaging based on immediate feedback. Unlike traditional media, where candidates often rely on scripted messages and controlled environments, social media offers a more dynamic and interactive platform for communication.

The ability to craft personalized messages and target specific demographics has further enhanced the effectiveness of political campaigns. Social media platforms provide a wealth of data on user behavior and preferences, which campaigns can leverage to tailor their messages. Targeted advertising enables campaigns to reach individuals based on their interests, location, and demographic information, making it possible to craft highly specific messages that resonate with different voter segments. This precision has transformed how campaigns are run, with data analytics and algorithms playing a crucial role in shaping campaign strategies and optimizing voter outreach.

In addition to these strategic advantages, social media has empowered grassroots

mobilization by providing a platform for organizing and amplifying voices. Activist groups and political movements leverage social media to mobilize supporters, organize protests, and spread their messages. The Arab Spring, Black Lives Matter, and recent climate strikes are prime examples of how social media has facilitated grassroots activism and brought attention to critical issues. These movements have demonstrated the power of social media to rally people around causes, drive social change, and challenge established power structures.

Shaping Public Opinion

The role of social media in shaping public opinion is also profound. The platforms facilitate the rapid spread of information, which can be both beneficial and problematic. On the one hand, social media allows for the swift dissemination of news and political information, keeping the public informed about current events and political developments. This speed can be advantageous, particularly in times of crisis or when timely information is crucial for public awareness.

However, the rapid spread of information also raises concerns about the accuracy and credibility of the content being shared. The prevalence of "fake news" and misinforma-



tion has become a significant issue, impacting how voters perceive political events and candidates. Misinformation can spread quickly through social media networks, often outpacing efforts to correct false information. This challenge has highlighted the need for critical media literacy and the importance of verifying information before accepting it as true.

Another significant impact of social media on public opinion is the creation of echo chambers. Social media algorithms often prioritize content that aligns with users' existing beliefs, creating environments where individuals are exposed primarily to information that reinforces their viewpoints. This phenomenon can contribute to political polarization, as individuals become less likely to encounter and engage with differing perspectives. The resulting division can exacerbate societal tensions and impact the overall health of democratic discourse.

Influencers and micro-influencers have emerged as key players in political communication, further illustrating the transformative impact of social media. These individuals, with their substantial followings and perceived authenticity, can sway public opinion and mobilize voters. Influencers often endorse political candidates or causes, leveraging their platforms to reach large audiences. Their endorsements can significantly impact voter perceptions, especially among younger demographics who may be more influenced by these personalities than traditional political figures.

Micro-influencers, who may have smaller but highly engaged followings, can also play a critical role in political campaigns. Their ability to engage with niche communities and foster personal connections makes them valuable assets for targeted campaigning. By tapping into these smaller, highly engaged networks, campaigns can reach voters in a more personalized and impactful way.

Challenges and Risks

While social media offers numerous benefits, it also presents significant challenges and risks to the political landscape. Addressing these challenges is crucial for ensuring that social media continues to contribute positively to democratic processes.

The spread of false information and deliberate disinformation campaigns have become major concerns. Social media platforms have struggled to address these issues effectively, leading to calls for greater regulation and transparency. The challenge of combating misinformation while preserving freedom of expression is complex and continues to be a subject of debate among policymakers, technology companies, and civil society organizations.

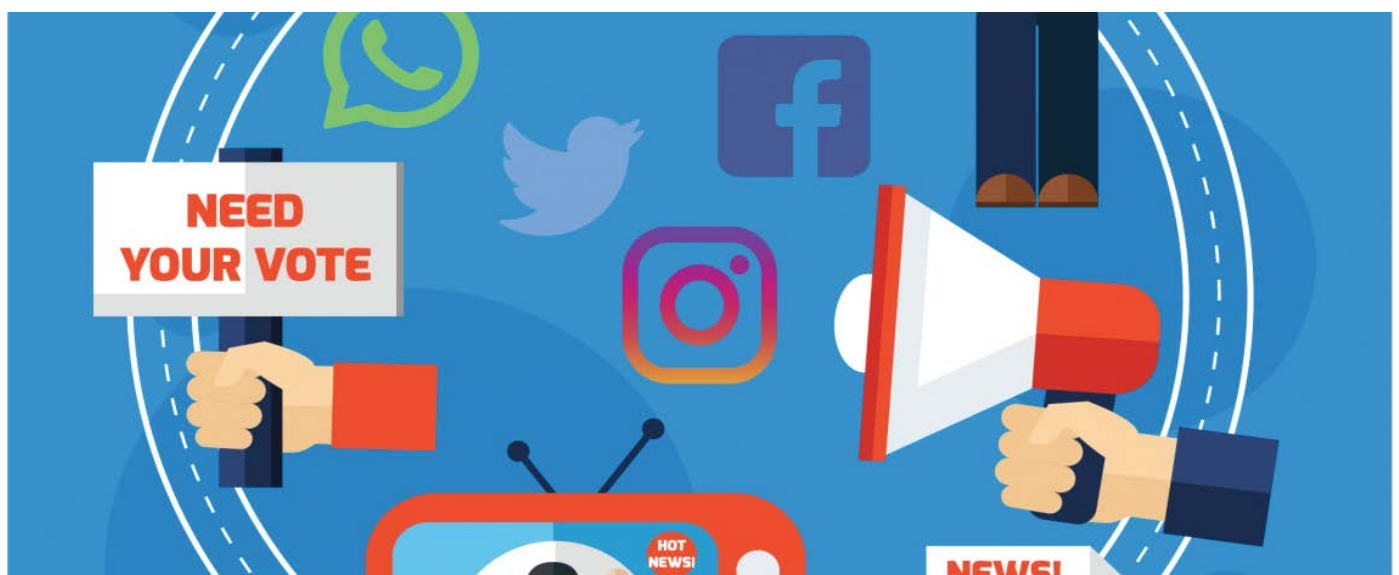
Privacy and data security are also critical concerns related to the use of social media in politics. The collection and use of personal data for targeted advertising and voter profiling have sparked debates about consent and the ethical use of information. The transparency of data practices and the

protection of user privacy are crucial issues that need to be addressed to maintain public trust in social media platforms and political campaigns.

Regulation and censorship of social media content present additional challenges. The question of how to regulate social media while preserving free speech is complex. Governments and platforms grapple with finding the right balance between preventing harmful content and avoiding censorship. Approaches to regulation vary by country, reflecting differing attitudes towards freedom of expression and digital governance. Striking the right balance between preventing harmful content and protecting free speech remains a contentious and evolving issue.

Conclusion

Social media's influence on modern politics is profound and multifaceted. It has transformed how political campaigns are conducted, how public opinion is shaped, and how grassroots movements mobilize. While it offers new opportunities for engagement and activism, it also presents challenges related to misinformation, privacy, and regulation. As social media continues to evolve, its role in politics will likely remain a critical area of exploration and debate, with significant implications for democratic processes and political engagement. Understanding and addressing the impact of social media on politics is essential for navigating the future of democratic governance in the digital age.



Pakistan's surging debt and challenges ahead

From July 2023 to March 2024, Pakistan paid \$8.08 billion in debt servicing for external public loans, according to the Economic Affairs Division quarterly report.



By Javed Mahmood

Pakistan's rapidly growing debt has emerged as a major problem for the government and the people. For example, the Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Jameel Ahmad, announced that Pakistan's total outstanding debt for the fiscal year 2025 (FY25) is \$26 billion. Pakistan has secured significant debt relief from its friendly nations. This support will enable Pakistan to manage its external debt repayment obligations. During a meeting of the National Assembly's Standing Committee, it was revealed that these friendly countries will roll over more than \$16 billion in loans, leaving Pakistan with only \$10 billion to repay by the end of the fiscal year 2024-25, ending June 30, 2025.

For the current fiscal year (FY24), the SBP has already paid \$1.5 billion towards the country's external debt, with \$8.5 billion still outstanding. In the previous fiscal year (FY23), the SBP paid \$12.5 billion, while the country's total external debt reached \$130 billion. Finance Secretary Imdad Ullah Bosal informed the committee that Pakistan would receive its first tranche from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) after securing a \$4.4

billion rollover of Chinese commercial loans.

Additionally, the government has secured a one-year extension for loan rollovers from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, with the SBP Governor noting that \$12.3 billion in deposits from these countries will be rolled over during the current fiscal year. While acknowledging that budgetary measures are likely to increase inflation, the Finance Secretary expressed optimism that the external sector would remain manageable this fiscal year due to the debt rollovers from friendly nations.

The SBP Governor recognized that controlling domestic inflation remains a significant challenge for Pakistan's economy. He projected that inflation could rise to 13.5% due to the impact of budgetary measures and higher energy prices. The governor also warned that rising wheat prices and potential conflicts in the Middle East could further intensify inflationary pressures. However, he expressed optimism that inflation rates would stabilize between 5-7% starting from the next fiscal year.

Regarding foreign exchange reserves,

the governor stated that these could increase to \$13 billion by the end of the current fiscal year. He also outlined a five-year plan to stabilize the economy through a multi-faceted approach, including controlling the current account deficit, maintaining sufficient foreign exchange reserves, and achieving financial stability and transparency.

To boost the economy, the governor emphasized the need to increase domestic exports by 10-15%. He also highlighted efforts to reduce the gap between the open market and interbank dollar exchange rates and to curb illegal activities such as Hundi (informal money transfer) and dollar smuggling. Despite the high interest rates required to control inflation, the governor was optimistic that the policy rate would decrease as the economy stabilizes and inflationary pressures ease.

\$8 billion debt paid in nine months of FY24

From July to March of the 2023-24 fiscal year, Pakistan's government paid a total of \$8.08 billion in debt servicing for external public loans, according to

the Economic Affairs Division (EAD) quarterly report. This amount includes \$5.363 billion in principal repayments and \$2.723 billion in interest payments.

The largest payment was made to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), totaling \$1.7 billion, with \$1.239 billion paid towards the principal and \$461 million in interest charges. Saudi Arabia was the second-largest recipient, receiving a total of \$1.153 billion from Pakistan. This amount included \$1.107 billion in principal repayments and \$46 million in interest.



The Asian Development Bank (ADB) also received significant outflows, totaling \$1.033 billion for the nine months of FY24. The World Bank received \$905 million in external public debt servicing from Pakistan during the same period. Additionally, \$1.062 billion was paid as interest charges to Foreign Commercial Banks, Bonds, China Safe Deposits, and KSA Deposits.

Meanwhile, in a recent detailed briefing, Pakistan's Ministry of Finance revealed a dramatic increase in public debt over the past 16 years. According to Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, the national debt, which stood at Rs6.1 trillion in 2008, has surged to Rs67.5 trillion by 2024. This represents a staggering rise of Rs61.4 trillion during this period. The Finance Minister attributed the substantial increase in public debt to several factors, including a primary deficit of Rs10.2 trillion, interest expenses amounting to Rs32.3 trillion, and adjustments related to exchange rates and accounting practices.

The Ministry of Finance also provided a breakdown of commercial bank loans, revealing that by June 2024, the total loans from commercial banks amounted to Rs38,531 billion, which constitutes 22.8% of the total loans. Of this, Rs27,246 billion were lent to the government sector, while loans to the private sector totaled Rs8,776 billion.

A closer examination of the debt figures shows a significant rise in both internal and external debt. In June 2008, internal debt was Rs3.3 trillion, and external debt was

which increased to Rs5.5 trillion by March 2024.

The Finance Ministry clarified that the borrowing in the fiscal years 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24 had not exceeded the combined figures of the previous two years. Specifically, public debt increased by Rs9.4 trillion in FY 2021-22, Rs13.7 trillion in FY 2022-23, and Rs8.4 trillion in FY 2023-24.

Furthermore, the ministry refuted claims that all tax revenue was allocated to debt repayment. It reported that in 2021-22, Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) tax revenue increased by Rs6.1 trillion, while interest expenses were Rs3.2 trillion. In 2022-23, FBR tax revenue rose by Rs7.2 trillion, and interest expenditure increased to Rs5.7 trillion. For the fiscal year 2023-24, FBR tax revenue surged by Rs 9.3 trillion, with interest expenses rising to Rs 8.3 trillion. As of the end of June 2024, loans to government institutions amounted to Rs 2,139 billion, representing 5.6% of the total loans. The Finance Ministry also highlighted efforts to expand the taxpayer base, with more than 3.5 million taxpayers registered in 2023. The target is to increase this number to 4.5 million by 2028-29.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif disclosed that he had formally requested debt reprofiling from the Chinese government, as part of Pakistan's broader efforts to secure an International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout package. This move underscores Pakistan's commitment to managing its financial obligations effectively in the face of economic challenges. During a briefing to the federal cabinet, PM Sharif confirmed the initiative and emphasized its importance in stabilizing the nation's economic situation.

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, addressing the press following his return from China, elaborated on the matter, revealing that Pakistan had sought reprofiling for over \$27 billion in debt and liabilities with several key international allies, including China, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. The goal is to secure a \$7 billion loan from the IMF, which would be instrumental in stabilizing Pakistan's economy. Debt reprofiling, as defined by the World Bank, involves modifications to the repayment schedule through refinancing, debt substitution, or renegotiations, aimed at easing

Rs2.9 trillion. By June 2024, internal debt had surged to Rs43.4 trillion, and external debt had increased to Rs24.1 trillion. This marks a dramatic rise of Rs40.2 trillion in internal debt and Rs21.3 trillion in external debt.

The details provided by the Finance Ministry indicate that loans have increased by Rs10.2 trillion due to the primary deficit, Rs32.3 trillion due to interest expenses, and Rs18.9 trillion due to other factors. Government debt figures show a consistent upward trend: from Rs6.1 trillion in 2008, it rose to Rs12.7 trillion in 2013, and further to Rs25 trillion in 2018. By 2019, the debt had reached Rs32.7 trillion, and it continued to escalate to Rs49.2 trillion by 2022.

By 2023, the government debt had climbed to Rs62.9 trillion, and by March 2024, it had reached Rs67.5 trillion. The rise in debt has been accompanied by significant increases in interest expenditures. In 2021, interest payments were Rs2.8 trillion,

financial pressures.

In his remarks, PM Sharif highlighted a significant aspect of his discussions with Chinese President Xi Jinping. He mentioned advocating for the use of local coal, specifically from Thar, to reduce reliance on imports and save approximately \$1 billion in foreign exchange. This proposal reflects Pakistan's broader strategy to enhance self-reliance and mitigate import costs.

Addressing the ongoing power crisis, PM Sharif reassured the public that his government is focused on alleviating electricity woes. He criticized political actors for engaging in "politics for the sake of politics" rather than contributing constructively to resolving the crisis.

Additionally, he condemned the recent assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, describing it as a "brutal act of savagery" and reaffirming Pakistan's stance against such violence. The government has announced a special prayer session for Haniyeh and expressed deep concern over the situation in Palestine, calling for global awareness and intervention.

The Prime Minister also discussed progress in the power sector, noting the construction of four state-of-the-art LNG power plants with a combined capacity of 5,000 megawatts. These plants, claimed to be the cheapest ever built, represent a significant investment in Pakistan's energy infrastructure. He criticized the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government for its lack of progress in promised hydropower projects and emphasized the need for a focus on resolving energy issues rather than political posturing.

PM Sharif reaffirmed the government's commitment to reducing electricity prices and addressed criticism of past agreements, urging a focus on problem-solving rather than politics. He also commended Pakistan's strong ties with China, acknowledging the previous government's role in establishing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Furthermore, he announced that starting August 14, Pakistani authorities will exempt Chinese citizens from visa fees as a gesture of goodwill and cooperation. The Prime

Minister concluded by highlighting the potential for joint ventures between Pakistan and China in various sectors, including mining, information technology, and industrial zones, which are expected to bolster Pakistan's economy and enhance bilateral relations.

Debt rollover is linked to IMF package

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb also disclosed that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Executive Board's approval of a new bailout package for Pakistan is closely linked to the country's efforts to re-profile \$12 billion in debt with friendly nations.



According to reports, the minister stated that the re-profiling includes \$5 billion from Saudi Arabia, \$4 billion from China, and \$3 billion from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which is crucial for securing the IMF's staff-level agreement.

During a press conference in Islamabad, Aurangzeb described the external financing gap as "manageable" and emphasized that the government seeks only to re-profile these foreign deposits over a three to five-year period. This move comes as the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif-led government has recently reached a 37-month, \$7 billion bailout program with the IMF.

However, this program is pending approval from the IMF's Executive Board, which Aurangzeb expects to finalize by late August. On the issue of debt related to

Chinese Independent Power Producers (IPPs), Aurangzeb explained that the government has already begun process of re-profiling this debt, seeking an extension in maturity.

He revealed that a Chinese consultant would be hired to assist in this process. The outstanding repayment to Chinese IPPs amounts to \$15.4 billion, with Pakistan requesting an extension of the debt tenor by five to eight years. The finance minister clarified that Pakistan is not seeking debt restructuring or a haircut but only an extension of the maturity period for both foreign deposits and Chinese IPPs' debt.

Aurangzeb also noted that the government is in discussions with Chinese authorities

about re-profiling the power sector debt, which follows a high-level visit to China by a delegation including himself. He acknowledged Beijing's support for Pakistan's efforts to secure IMF loans. He also highlighted the need for Pakistan to engage with China and the United States to tackle the debt issue and to obtain an IMF package.

In addition to addressing debt issues, Aurangzeb discussed the economic challenges faced by the country, attributing them to the previous government's mismanagement, including increased interest rates, electricity prices, and taxes. He criticized the expansionary budget and the derailment of the last IMF program during Imran Khan's tenure, which led to a depletion of foreign exchange reserves and a trust deficit.

Turmoil in Bangladesh and its impacts on the region



By Hina Kashif

Bangladesh as a sovereign nation emerged on the world map on March 26 1971 after separation from Pakistan. The distance and difference in culture, language, and identity between the two regions, and the fact that West Pakistan held more political and economic power, led to strong tensions and eventually protest movements in East Pakistan (Bangladesh) and independence. The early years of Bangladesh were marked by political instability, economic challenges, and natural disasters. The country experienced several coups and assassinations, including the assassination of its founding leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in 1975. Despite initial difficulties, Bangladesh has made significant progress in various sectors, particularly in social development. It has achieved notable success in reducing poverty, improving public health, and expanding access to education. The country has also become a major global player in the textile and garment industry. Nowadays Bangladesh is a parliamentary democracy, with politics often dominated by the rivalry between the Awami League and the

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). The economy of Bangladesh has grown rapidly in recent decades, driven by exports, remittances, and a large working-age population. The country is now classified as a lower-middle-income country. Bangladesh's history and development are marked by resilience and a strong sense of national identity, shaped by its struggles for independence and ongoing efforts to build a prosperous and equitable society.

The July 2024 protests

This year in Bangladesh the quota reform movement began which were a series of anti government and pro democracy protests which were spearheaded by university students and young activists. The protest began in response to the Supreme Court of Bangladesh reinstating a 30% quota for descendants of freedom fighters, reversing the government decision made in response to the 2018 Bangladesh quota reform movement. The students put forward the following

demands to the government:

- Cancellation of the existing quota system for government jobs.
- Provision of the quota at fair rates to minority groups and disabled people.
- Passing a new law in the parliament which establishes a new quota system for a maximum of 5% of total jobs.

While the protests Initially focused on restructuring quota-based systems for government job recruitment they soon changed route as the Bengali government took a more violent approach to the protests.

The protests start becoming violent

In the University of Dhaka, a protest march commenced in front of the library, passed by the Raju Memorial Sculpture, and culminated in the blockage of the Shah Bagh intersection. Members of the law-and-order forces positioned barricades in front of the

students. However on 12 July while students were protesting at Comilla Victoria College, a group of Chhatra League members launched an attack on the protesters. During the situation, a student who was recording a video was taken to a hall and beaten by the Chhatra League members. In response to the controversial statement made by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh during a press conference, where she reportedly referred to students protesting the quota reform movement as traitors in the 1971 Independence War, students organized a midnight demonstration at the Dhaka University campus area. Female students from Rokeya Hall joined the protest by breaking the lock put up by the authorities at the dorm gate. At around 11:30 p.m., leaders and members of the Bangladesh Chhatra League attacked protesters at the University of Chittagong injuring 13 protesters.

In Jessore at around 12:00 p.m. on 15 July, students from Jessore University of Science and Technology and Michael Madhusudan College staged a protest, where a member of the Chhatra League attacked and injured a protester. Later in the evening, Chhatra League members attacked students inside Bijoy Ekattor Hall of Dhaka University, where some of the attackers were seen shooting with pistols and carrying sticks. In response, the protesters also threw brickbats from the inside of the hall to retaliate. While covering the protest at the University of Dhaka, two journalists from The Daily Star and Prothom Alo were assaulted and injured in the attack carried out by the Chhatra League. At 5:30 p.m. 15 July, members of the Chhatra League attempted to attack the emergency department of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where over 200 students injured in the clashes were seeking treatment.

Chhatra League members, some wearing helmets, forcibly entered DMCH around 7:30 p.m. and initiated an attack. Many were observed carrying rods. At around 12:15 a.m. 16 July, members of the Chhatra League attacked Jahangirnagar University students using firearms. Around 300 Chhatra League members, armed with galvanized pipes and sticks, threw bricks and glass bottles at the students. Shots were reportedly fired, injuring two journalists, including one from Dhaka Tribune and

over 50 student protesters. A violent incident involving police and students demanding quota reforms took place in front of Begum Rokeya University in Rangpur between 2:30 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.

Police resorted to lathi charges and firing during the incident. Abu Sayed, a Begum Rokeya University student and quota reform activist, was shot four times by a police officer. He was taken to Rangpur Medical College Hospital where the doctors pronounced him dead on arrival (DOA). Clashes erupted with police after the funeral prayer program organized by the student protesters, the Bangladesh



Nationalist Party (BNP) and other parties to honor six individuals killed on 16 July for the quota reform movement. In the morning of 18 July police clashed with BRAC University students on the streets of Badda. Police also charged batons and fired tear gas canisters at the students and lobbed tear gas shells at the BRACU campus. Approximately 30 students were killed by the Bangladesh police. Throughout the country, calls for quota reform protests largely continued.

Aftermath

In memory of those killed, injured, and tortured by police during the 2024 quota reform movement, the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement announced a nationwide program titled "Remembering the Heroes" on 1 August. On 4 August, thousands of protesters convened at

Dhaka's Shah bag intersection in the morning, obstructing it. This was followed by hundreds of casualties. The following day, the protesters called for the Long March to Dhaka in defiance of a nationwide curfew to press Sheikh Hasina to resign. The protests forced Sheikh Hasina to resign. She, along with her sister Sheikh Rehana, then fled the country to India via military on 5 August 2024. Bangladesh's army chief Waker-uz-Zaman, announced on 5 August 2024 that an interim government will be formed in the country. On 8th August 2024 Muhammad Yunus takes oath as the Chief Advisor of Interim Government of Bangladesh in

Banga Bhaban, Dhaka in the presence of President, Mohammed Shahabuddin.

"A case has been filed against Sheikh Hasina and six others," said Mamun Mia, the lawyer representing a private citizen who initiated the case.

Mia added that the Dhaka Metropolitan Court had directed the police to formally accept the murder case against the accused individuals, marking the first step in a criminal investigation under Bangladeshi law.

The court filing also included Hasina's former home minister, Asaduzzaman Khan, and Obaidul Quader, the general secretary of the Awami League party.

Additionally, it named four top police officers appointed by Hasina's administration who have since left their positions,

including former police inspector general Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun, detective branch chief Harun-or-Rashid, and senior Dhaka Metropolitan Police officers Habibur Rahman and Biplob Kumar Sarker.

After Hasina: Cautious Optimism for Bangladesh's Future

The ousting of Sheikh Hasina represents a significant political victory for Bangladesh's youth, yet the path forward is fraught with challenges. By every measurable standard,

students accomplished with unprecedented speed.

Though the revolutionaries and their supporters have much to celebrate, the challenges that await Bangladesh remain daunting.

What is the next?

Bangladesh's streets have again erupted with political violence. In early July, a university student protest began over Bangladesh's job quota system that disproportionately benefits the descendants of Bangladesh's 1971 liberation war fighters,

drivers of the protests, why they are turning violent and what this tells us about the state of Bangladesh's politics.

What is driving these protests?

Macdonald: Bangladesh's quota system was the spark for these protests. Shortly after Bangladesh's independence in 1971, the government established a system of quotas for government jobs that mandated 30 percent of positions go to liberation war fighters. Over the decades, the benefit was modified to include the children and grandchildren of freedom fighters, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities and others, totaling 56 percent of government jobs. In 2018, a similar student movement successfully compelled the government to scrap the quota system altogether. The issue was mostly settled until this June when Bangladesh's high court ruled that ending the quota system was unconstitutional, effectively reinstating it.

The government appealed the high court's decision, but the prospect of the quota system's return drove students to the street.

Additionally, Bangladesh has not held a transparent and participatory election that establishes the AL's public support since 2008, leaving many to question its legitimacy. Bangladesh's university students have essentially only known AL rule and are consequently directing their frustrations at a ruling party for which elections are no longer an accountability mechanism. The opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and other allies have seized on this youth discontent to revive their own anti-government movement. BNP leaders declared solidarity with the protesters and opposition student wings have joined the streets, morphing an issue-based protest into a broader challenge to the government's authority.

What can be done to resolve tensions?

Macdonald: On the narrow issue of job quotas, the government and protesters are not far apart. After weeks of dismissing the seriousness of protests, the government shifted tact. With turmoil mounting last week, the government called for a dialogue



Hasina, now deposed, was the most entrenched, dominant, and authoritarian leader Bangladesh had seen since its independence. Her regime was marked by the imprisonment, exile, and elimination of political opponents, in a manner unparalleled in South Asian history. Hasina's control over all branches of the state was so complete that she essentially became synonymous with the state itself.

Despite this iron grip on power, a leaderless movement led by college students rose, staging marches with pre-announced dates and venues. In just a few weeks, these young revolutionaries galvanized the nation, bringing people into the streets in numbers so vast that Hasina was forced to flee by helicopter. What the seasoned political opposition had failed to achieve for over a decade, these determined

which many students view as unfair and outdated. Early last week, peaceful protests turned violent as police and ruling party supporters violently dispersed crowds. At least a half-dozen people died in early violence, including one man apparently shot by police with his hands raised, while pro- and anti-government students clashed around the country.

With unrest and violence spiraling out of control on July 18, the government shut down internet and mobile networks, deployed the military and imposed a curfew, which all remained in place through the weekend. As of Sunday evening, news outlets reported that the protest's death toll exceeded 130 and is likely to rise.

USIP's Geoffrey Macdonald discusses the

with protest coordinators and announced that the hearing to appeal the court decision on quotas had been moved up to July 21 from August 7, signaling an eagerness to resolve the issue. On Sunday, the court finally ruled that quotas favoring liberation war veterans' descendants cannot exceed 5 percent, which mostly addresses the original student concerns. The government also announced the creation of a judicial commission to investigate the deaths of protesters. But over the weekend, the protesters' demands expanded, with one faction asking not only for quota reform but also the release of jailed protesters, trials for police officers who killed citizens, and the resignation of prominent government ministers.

Other hardline student factions are reportedly calling for a "revolt" against the government. Even before the internet shutdown, the media's withering coverage of the government's actions had galvanized negative public opinion. Moreover, the newly rejuvenated opposition will surely push its movement against the AL government despite the resolution of the quota issue. The court case alone is unlikely to substantially reduce tensions.

The first iteration of quota protests in April 2018 could provide a roadmap for solving the crisis, but, at this point, is a poor analogy to the present.

The first iteration of quota protests in April 2018 could provide a roadmap for solving the crisis, but, at this point, is a poor analogy to the present. The 2018 quota movement also saw significant street mobilization, BCL violence against protesters and rhetoric targeting the protesters as traitors. After persistent protests, Prime Minister Hasina ultimately agreed to remove the quota system and protests died out. However, the current situation has several important differences. In April 2018, the AL was going into an election year in which the opposition ultimately participated in the polls, the economy was strong, and the protesters mostly avoided politics. Today's protests are occurring seven months after a widely boycotted election and amid economic challenges, a hostile opposition and politically awakened youth, which augers a more resilient protest movement.

What are the political implications of this protest movement and surrounding violence?

Macdonald: Political forecasts are difficult in these rapidly evolving conditions with little available information. Up until these protests, Bangladesh appeared politically fragile but stable in the immediate post-election period. Despite clear public frustration over the state of the economy and politics, few citizens turned out to protest the outcome of January's parliamentary

presents a serious challenge to the ruling party.

What should we watch for moving forward?

Macdonald: The government has moved quickly to address the matter of quotas, but the broader political issues will be much harder to tackle. Three factors will be important to watch when the internet is restored and the full scope of the situation emerges: the protest's momentum, the government's actions moving forward and the international response.



elections and the political opposition was marginalized. Although Bangladesh's de facto single-party state was likely to face structural problems with corruption and lack of accountability, these looked like medium-term problems.

The government's response to the protest movement has shaken the status quo. A previously quiescent populace is now roused and the opposition, which had been struggling to mobilize supporters after the election, is revived. Perhaps most importantly, Bangladesh's university students, who have been at the forefront of nearly every successful political movement, are activated. The informal federation of government critics appears deeper and wider than before the election, which

The streets of Bangladesh's major cities are reportedly in a tenuous calm. Additional acts of government contrition and accountability would likely satisfy some segment of the student protesters, but other hardline factions are likely to push on. Over the weekend, reports of protesters staging a jailbreak and setting fire to a metro station suggest many are committed for further confrontation. The opposition likely hopes to use this wave of popular anger to expand its anti-government movement, but the public's appetite for a clash with the government is not yet apparent. It seems certain that the protests will continue, but their size and composition are difficult to predict.

Iranian President Unveils New Cabinet Featuring Moderates and Female Ministers



By Ayesha Shaebran

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has introduced his new cabinet, highlighting a notable emphasis on moderates and female appointees. In a live broadcast on state television, Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf presented the 19-member cabinet nominated by Pezeshkian.

This announcement marks a significant change following the tragic death of former hardline President Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash in May. Among the key appointments, Pezeshkian has selected Abbas Araghchi as the new foreign minister. At 61, Araghchi brings extensive experience in international negotiations, having served as chief negotiator in the nuclear talks from 2013 to 2021. His previous roles include ambassador to Japan and Finland and deputy to former Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, who played a crucial role in the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

Farzaneh Sadegh, nominated for roads and urban development minister, is set to become only the second woman to hold a

ministerial role in Iran since the 1979 revolution. If confirmed, the 48-year-old Sadegh will join Marzieh Vahid Dastjerdi, who served as health minister in 2009. However, Sadegh's nomination has faced resistance from some lawmakers during the parliamentary session.

This cabinet announcement comes at a critical time as Iran experiences heightened tensions with Israel following the assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran. Iran has accused Israel of orchestrating the killing and has pledged severe retaliation, raising international concerns about potential escalation. Western leaders have urged restraint to prevent further destabilization.

In addition to Araghchi and Sadegh, Pezeshkian has nominated General Aziz Nasirzadeh, a former Iranian Air Force commander, as defense minister, and General Eskandar Momeni, a former IRGC member and police commander, as interior minister. Mohsen Paknezhad, an experienced executive in Iran's energy sector, has been selected as oil minister.

Pezeshkian's cabinet appointments reflect his commitment to improving international relations and easing domestic social restrictions while coordinating with Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has final authority on state matters. Additionally, 14 of the 19 nominees are new to ministerial roles, promising fresh perspectives in governance.

Here is a summary of the proposed ministers:

- **Ministry of Education:** Alireza Kazemi (born 1965, Mashhad) is a faculty member at Farhangian University with a background in religious studies and education, having supervised the Ministry of Education of Iran in 2021.
- **Ministry of Communication and Information Technology:** Sattar Hashemi (born 1976, Yasuj) is a professor at Shiraz University with a Ph.D. in Computer Engineering and previous experience as Deputy Minister of Technology and Innovation.

- **Ministry of Intelligence:** Esmail Khatib has been serving as the head of the Intelligence Ministry since 2021. He has a long career in intelligence within the IRGC and other key positions.
- **Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance:** Abdolnaser Hemmati, former Governor of the Central Bank of Iran, has also served as Vice President of IRIB and Governor of the Central Insurance of Iran.
- **Ministry of Foreign Affairs:** Abbas Araghchi is a veteran diplomat known for his role in Iran's nuclear negotiations and various positions in the Foreign Ministry.
- **Ministry of Health and Medical Education:** Mohammadreza Zafarghandi, a vascular surgeon and professor, has served as Secretary-General of the Islamic Association of Iranian Medical Society and led the Iranian Medical System Organization during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Ministry of Cooperatives, Labour, and Social Welfare:** Ahmad Meydari, an economist with previous roles as Deputy for Social Welfare and advisor to the Deputy Minister of Economy, brings a diverse background in government and academia.
- **Ministry of Agriculture Jihad:** Gholamreza Nouri Ghezelchah, with a Master's in Agricultural Engineering and a PhD in Agricultural Policy and Development, has held various positions related to economic development in the region.
- **Ministry of Justice:** Amin Hossein Rahimi, with over 35 years of experience, has served in various high-level judicial roles and is nominated for a consecutive term.
- **Ministry of Defence:** Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, has extensive military experience and leadership roles.
- **Ministry of Roads and Urban Development:** Farzaneh Sadegh, a career-long expert in urban planning, is poised to become the second female minister since the 1979 revolution.
- **Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade:** Mohammad Atabak, with a Master's in Civil Engineering, has held leadership positions in various industrial sectors and is currently Chairman of the National Cement Association.
- **Ministry of Science, Research and Technology:** Hossein Sarraf, a legal expert with a PhD in Private Law, has served in various roles within the Ministry of Science and the Judiciary.
- **Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance:** Abbas Salehi, with extensive experience in academia and cultural institutions, currently heads the Ettela'at Institute and Newspaper.
- **Ministry of Interior:** Brigadier General Eskandar Momeni, with a PhD in National Security, has a strong background in law enforcement and security.
- **Ministry of Sport and Youth:** Ahmad Donyamali, a sports administrator and Parliament representative, holds a Ph.D. in Urban Planning and has led various sports organizations.
- **Ministry of Energy:** Abbas Aliabadi, a professor with a Ph.D. in Control Engineering, has held significant academic and executive roles, including CEO of the MAPNA Group.
- **Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts:** Seyyed Reza Salehi Amiri, with a Ph.D. in Public Administration, has served in multiple public service roles, including Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance.
- **Ministry of Petroleum:** Mohsen Paknejad, with degrees in Electrical and Industrial Engineering, has held key positions in the petroleum sector and the National Iranian Oil Company.



Israel pressures ICC to delay arrest warrants for Netanyahu, Gallant



By Ayesha Shaeban

Israel is actively exerting diplomatic pressure on the International Criminal Court (ICC) to postpone the issuance of arrest warrants against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, Israeli media sources report. The move comes in response to the ICC's recent developments concerning potential charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity related to the ongoing conflict in Gaza.

On May 20, ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan formally requested arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant. The request is rooted in allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the recent escalations in Gaza. This action is part of the ICC's broader investigation into potential violations of international law in the Palestinian territories.

Israeli officials are reportedly engaging in intense diplomatic efforts to influence the ICC's decision-making process. They have been lobbying The Hague-based court to delay or potentially dismiss the arrest

warrants. Despite these efforts, it remains uncertain how effective these diplomatic measures will be in swaying the judges' decision. As Haaretz noted, "It is hard to predict how these measures will influence the judges' decision."

The current situation has led Israeli officials to scrutinize the ICC's jurisdiction over issues related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Israel, which is not a member of the ICC, questions whether the court has the authority to rule on matters involving Israeli officials. Conversely, Palestine has been a member of the ICC since 2015, and the court's jurisdiction covers the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967.

The ICC, established in 2002, operates as an independent international body. Its decisions are binding and not subject to the influence of the United Nations or other international organizations. This autonomy allows the ICC to prosecute crimes committed in territories under its jurisdiction, including those alleged to have occurred in the Palestinian territories.

The request for arrest warrants is now under review by a panel of ICC judges. This review process involves evaluating legal opinions submitted by various countries and international organizations. However, there is no clear timeline for how long this review process will take, leaving the outcome uncertain for both Israeli officials and the broader international community.

In an interview with CNN on May 21, ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan disclosed that he had faced threats while conducting his investigation into Israeli officials. This revelation underscores the high-stakes and contentious nature of the ICC's inquiry into the conflict.

Israeli responses to Khan's actions have been strongly negative. Current and former Israeli officials have denounced the ICC's efforts as politically motivated and have accused the court of anti-Semitism. They argue that the ICC's focus on Israeli actions while disregarding alleged violations by other parties reflects a biased agenda. Additionally, there have been calls from

some Israeli quarters for the dismantling of the ICC or for its allies to withdraw support and funding.

The situation reflects broader tensions between Israel and international institutions that seek to hold it accountable for its actions in the Palestinian territories. The ICC's investigation and the potential arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant represent a significant escalation in international scrutiny of Israeli military conduct.

In parallel, Israeli diplomacy continues to seek support from its allies, hoping to counterbalance the pressure from the ICC. This includes leveraging geopolitical relationships and engaging in diplomatic dialogues aimed at mitigating the impact of the court's proceedings.

The ICC's role in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict remains a contentious issue, illustrating the complexities of international law and its enforcement in conflict zones. As the review process unfolds, the international community will be closely watching how these developments will influence the broader dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the international legal landscape.

Overall, the push by Israel to delay the arrest warrants reflects its broader strategy of challenging international accountability mechanisms while seeking to protect its

officials from potential legal consequences. The outcome of this diplomatic and legal struggle will have significant implications for the future of international criminal justice and the ongoing conflict in Gaza.

Israel prepares for potential arrest warrants by ICC

Israel is preparing for potential arrest warrants by the International Criminal Court (ICC) against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Yoav Gallant. The Hague-based court reposted a notice in Hebrew, Arabic, and English explaining its procedures.

"After gathering evidence and identifying a suspect, the prosecution requests ICC judges to issue an arrest warrant, which national authorities enforce, or a summons to appear, where suspects appear voluntarily," the notice reads.

This marks the fourth time since the beginning of June that the ICC has shared this post on its social media accounts.

On May 20, ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan announced that he had requested arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant on charges of crimes against humanity and war crimes in Gaza. No official decision from the court has been made as of yet. While

Israel has condemned and rejected the prosecutor's request, it remains unclear how Tel Aviv will respond if arrest warrants are issued.

"Discussions are under way in Israel regarding a defence strategy for Netanyahu, Gallant, and the state of Israel in case the ICC issues arrest warrants," the Israeli public broadcaster KAN said.

"The preparations aim to ensure that Israel is ready if such a decision is made by the ICC judges," it added. KAN said it remains unclear whether Israel will present a legal defence at The Hague as Tel Aviv does not recognise the court's authority. "Israel prefers to prepare for the worst-case scenario, which includes potential arrest orders, and is thus discussing a possible defence stance against such a decision," it added.

Israel is not a member of the ICC, whereas Palestine was accepted as a member in 2015. The ICC, established in 2002, is an independent international body not affiliated with the United Nations or any other international institution, and its decisions are binding.

Despite Israel's rejection of the ICC's jurisdiction, the court's authority extends to the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, allowing it to prosecute Israeli officials accused of committing crimes in these areas.



London Mayor Sadiq Khan enhances security of mosques after far-right racist attacks

During a visit to Al Manaar, the Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre in West London, the mayor met with mosque leaders to offer support and encouragement.



By Nayab Waheed

London Mayor Sadiq Khan has reaffirmed the city's dedication to combating racism, anti-Muslim hate, and anti-Semitism by announcing increased support for security training at mosques throughout the UK capital. This move follows recent incidents of violence and unrest that have heightened fears among minority communities.

The mayor's commitment includes funding for four additional security training sessions at London mosques as part of a larger initiative to bolster community safety and address hate crimes. This comes in the wake of troubling events earlier this month.

"London demonstrated last week that the capital stands firmly against racism and Islamophobia," Mayor Khan remarked. "Our goal is to ensure that all Londoners feel secure and supported in their communities. There is no room for hate in our city."

Khan has been collaborating with the Metropolitan Police, local partners, and community leaders to enhance the safety of London's diverse populations.

In a supportive move, the government has revived its mosque security scheme to provide quick assistance to buildings at risk of hate crimes. This complements the existing Protective Security for Mosques Scheme, which has allocated up to £29.4 million (\$37.7 million) for upgrading security at mosques and Muslim faith schools.

During a visit to Al Manaar, the Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre in West London, the mayor met with mosque leaders to offer support and encouragement. The first of the new security training sessions, led by Faith Associates, experts in mosque security, took place at Al Manaar. The session offered practical advice on protecting congregations and facilities, covering topics such as protective security, hate crime, and online safety, with representatives from the Metropolitan Police also present to share their knowledge.

Mayor Khan underscored the importance of remaining vigilant and proactive, stating, "We cannot afford to be complacent. It is essential that we stay united and active in

ensuring the safety of our communities, especially during these challenging times."

Thousands rally across UK to condemn the racist approach of the far-right groups

Meanwhile, Thousands of anti-racism protesters have rallied in cities and towns across England following a week of anti-immigrant riots and unrest. In areas where anti-immigration protests were anticipated—such as north London, Bristol, and Newcastle—demonstrations were largely peaceful, with counter-protesters, chanting "refugees are welcome here," forming the majority of the crowds.

Police were prepared for further violence, deploying thousands of officers across the country as more than 100 events were expected. The riots were initially sparked by misinformation online, falsely claiming that the suspect in the fatal stabbing of three young girls in Southport on July 29 was a Muslim asylum seeker.

During the unrest, mosques and hotels housing asylum seekers were targeted, with some shops being burned and looted. On Wednesday, shop owners across England boarded up windows and closed early in anticipation of more violence. Immigration lawyers were advised by police to work from home after lists of solicitors' firms and advice agencies were circulated in chat groups as potential targets.

Despite these concerns, only a few arrests were reported during the evening as demonstrations across England remained largely peaceful:

- In Liverpool, hundreds gathered outside an asylum services office, which had been boarded up as a precaution, to show support for refugees and immigrants.
- In London, the Metropolitan Police reported that thousands attended protests in Walthamstow and North Finchley, which "passed without major incident."
- About 1,500 counter-protesters gathered in Bristol, where the streets were filled with trade unionists, anti-fascists, and members of the Black and Asian communities.
- In Brighton, eight protesters who gathered outside a building believed to

house a lawyer specializing in nationality and refugee law were surrounded by 2,000 counter-protesters and had to seek shelter against a building, protected by police.

- In Newcastle, about 1,000 counter-protesters, mostly Muslims, occupied the pavement in front of the Beacon Centre, where an immigration service business was expected to be a target.

One verified video from Accrington showed pubgoers embracing Muslims on the town's streets. In Southampton, between 300 and 400 people gathered at Grosvenor Square, chanting "racists go home" and "racism off our streets." About ten anti-immigration protesters also arrived, but the two groups were kept apart by police, with only one arrest made.

In total, more than 400 arrests have been made in connection with the riots that began last week. Over 140 people have been charged, with some already convicted and sentenced. Three men received jail sentences for their involvement in violent disorder in Southport and Liverpool.

The largely peaceful scenes on Wednesday evening raise questions about whether the earlier arrests and sentences, as well as the desire of others to oppose the violence, had a deterrent effect on those intending to start new riots.

Disorder was reported in Croydon, but the Metropolitan Police said it was not linked to the protests. Around 50 people gathered, throwing objects down the road and bottles at officers, leading to eight arrests. Police also came under attack in Belfast, where fires were lit, and objects were thrown at officers.

Earlier on Wednesday, Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner visited the Holiday Inn Express in Rotherham, a hotel housing asylum seekers that had been attacked by rioters on Sunday. She vowed that those involved in the riots would be "met with the law" and urged people to "stay away from it." When asked if protesters had legitimate concerns about immigration, she responded, "Coming on the streets, throwing missiles at the police, attacking hotels like this one is not a legitimate grievance. It's not the way we do politics in this country. And nobody should be condoning that. This is thuggery. This is violence."

Riot police are expected to remain on standby for the "foreseeable future," including through the weekend and beyond, according to Assistant Chief Constable Mark Williams. King Charles is being kept updated daily on the public disorder across the country, according to Buckingham Palace, but he is not expected to make any immediate interventions or visits to the affected areas.



Germany issues warrants for the arrest of a Ukrainian diver involved in exploding Nord Stream gas pipeline

German investigators have also reportedly identified two other Ukrainians, a man and a woman, who are suspected of being divers involved in the attack. However, no arrest warrants have been issued for them yet.



TTI Report

German prosecutors have issued an arrest warrant for a Ukrainian diver suspected of involvement in the 2022 Nord Stream gas pipeline explosion, as reported by German media on Wednesday.

The diver, identified as Volodymyr Z., is believed to have been part of a team that planted explosives on the pipelines. The arrest warrant was issued in June, with his last known address reportedly being in Poland. Polish authorities confirmed on Wednesday that they had been informed of the arrest warrant by Berlin. However, they were unable to apprehend the suspect.

“Ultimately, Volodymyr Z. was not detained because, at the beginning of July, he left Polish territory, crossing the Polish-Ukrainian border,” said Anna Adamiak, a spokeswoman for Poland’s National Public Prosecutor’s Office, as quoted by Reuters.

Adamiak explained that Polish border guards had “no knowledge and no grounds

to detain Volodymyr Z.” because German authorities had not listed him in the international database of wanted persons. Sweden’s Expressen daily identified the man as 44-year-old Volodymyr Zhuravlyov, who is suspected of “anti-constitutional sabotage and causing an explosion.” German investigators believe he was one of the divers who planted the explosives on the Nord Stream pipelines.

The Russian Telegram channel Shot, which is believed to have ties to Russia’s security services, claimed that Zhuravlyov had previously served in the Ukrainian army and had unsuccessfully attempted to obtain a Russian passport in 2009. German investigators have also reportedly identified two other Ukrainians, a man and a woman, who are suspected of being divers involved in the attack. However, no arrest warrants have been issued for them yet.

In September 2022, four major gas leaks were discovered on the Nord Stream

pipelines near the Danish island of Bornholm. Seismic institutes recorded two underwater explosions shortly before the leaks were detected. The pipelines had been a focal point of geopolitical tensions, with Russia suspected of cutting gas supplies to Europe in retaliation for Western sanctions imposed over its invasion of Ukraine.

Although the leaks occurred in international waters, two were within Denmark’s exclusive economic zone and two in Sweden’s. The pipelines were not operational at the time of the explosions, but they still contained gas, which leaked into the water and atmosphere. Denmark, Sweden, and Germany each launched investigations into the explosions. However, Denmark and Sweden have since closed their investigations.

Meanwhile, The area surrounding the Nord Stream pipeline leaks in the Baltic Sea will be sealed off, according to Swedish prosecutors, while the suspected sabotage is being looked into.

The prosecutor in charge made the decision to “seal off the area in order to undertake a crime scene investigation” to forward the investigation into “aggravated sabotage,” according to a statement from the Swedish Prosecution Authority.

Mats Ljungqvist, the public defender, stated that “the inquiry continues; we are at an intensive stage.”

I am aware of the strong public interest, but since the preliminary inquiry is still in its early stages, I am unable to comment on specifics on the investigative steps we are doing.

The prosecutor’s decision to prohibit access within five nautical miles (9.26 kilometres) of the pipeline was enforced beginning on Monday, according to a statement from Sweden’s coastguard.

The coast guard explained that the prohibition included “a ban on driving ships, anchoring, diving, fishing, operating underwater vehicles, or carrying out geophysical mapping.”

All four of the leaks, which were found on September 26 off the coast of Bornholm in Denmark, are in the Baltic Sea. The Swedish exclusive economic zone contains two of the leaks, while the Danish zone contains the other two. Although bubbles from a smaller leak could still be visible above Nord Stream 2 on Monday afternoon, the Swedish coastguard stated that it could no longer monitor gas from the Nord Stream 1 pipeline breach.

The pipes were constructed to carry Russian gas to Germany. The explosions were most certainly intentionally set off, according to the Swedish government, which has so far refrained from speculating about who might be responsible. According to a joint letter sent by the governments of Sweden and Denmark to the United Nations Security Council, the explosions were most likely caused by hundreds of kilograms of explosives, Danish TV2 reported on Friday.

The detonations must be regarded in context of the security policy position, according to Swedish Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson, who stated this at a press conference on September 28. The Swedish Security Service announced that it

had started a criminal investigation into “gross sabotage” in a news release that same day.

American CIA had already warned its concerned officials, including Europeans, weeks ago that the Nord Stream pipes could be attacked. Explosions have caused three huge fissures in two key gas links that Western leaders say are the result of sabotage.

Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 pipelines supply Russian gas to different European countries. CIA Agents sent a ‘strategic warning’ to European allies including Germany over the summer that the pipes were at risk. The warning, however, was not time specific and did not pinpoint a location for an attack.



The main suspicion for the attack has fallen on the Kremlin – with European officials claiming that ‘no-one is thinking this is anything other than Russian sabotage’. But allies currently lack enough hard evidence to publicly blame Moscow.

Nord Stream exploded

European nations hurried to look into mysterious leaks in two Russian gas pipelines that cross the Baltic Sea close to Sweden and Denmark. These pipelines are at the centre of an energy crisis that has existed since Russia invaded Ukraine. Some European officials said that Russian officials, who developed the network, did not completely rule out the possibility of

sabotage.

Terje Aasland, the Norwegian minister of petroleum and energy, stated on Tuesday that the early evidence of the leaks pointed to “acts of sabotage.” Both the Swedish and Danish prime ministers, Magdalena Andersson and Mette Frederiksen, acknowledged the incident was probably “planned,” but they downplayed the likelihood of military danger.

“No possibility can be ruled out right now,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters in Moscow. Both pipelines have been focal points in an ongoing energy spat between Moscow and European cities that has wreaked havoc on the biggest economies in the West, driven up gas prices, and triggered a search for other energy sources.

According to pipeline operator Nord Stream AG, it is presently impossible to predict “a timeframe for rebuilding the gas transport infrastructure.” It said that pressure drops in the pipeline suggested there had been physical damage in the statement on Tuesday evening.

German Economy Minister Robert Habeck stated that the German energy supply had not been impacted while stating that German, Danish, and Scandinavian security officials were actively monitoring the leaks in the Baltic Sea and inquiring into their cause.

Trump bashes Kamala Harris's economic record

TTI Staff Report

Republican US presidential candidate Donald Trump sought to tie his Democratic rival Kamala Harris to the Biden administration's economic record on Thursday during a meandering, 80-minute press conference at his New Jersey golf club, his latest effort to blunt her momentum.

Flanked by tables stacked with assorted grocery items, Trump blamed Harris, the US vice president, for the inflation that caused everyday goods to rise during President Joe Biden's term in office.

"Harris has just declared that tackling inflation will be a day one priority for her," he said. "But day one for Kamala was 3.1/2 years ago. Where has she been?"

The event aimed to draw a contrast with Harris, who has rarely answered questions from reporters since replacing Biden at the top of the Democratic ticket in late July.

But the press conference quickly became reminiscent of a Trump rally, with the former president leveling many of the same false claims he typically unleashes on the campaign trail and speaking for 45 minutes before taking his first question.

He insulted Harris repeatedly, saying she is "not smart." When a reporter noted that some Republicans have urged him to focus on policy, rather than personal attacks, he said, "I think I'm entitled to personal attacks."

"She certainly attacks me personally," Trump said.

Trump noted that Harris has called him and his running mate JD Vance "weird," a criticism made viral by Democratic vice presidential candidate Tim Walz.

He also dismissed the suggestion that he alter his approach, telling reporters, "I have to do it my way."

Harris' entry into the race has galvanized Democrats, and polls show she has erased the lead Trump had enjoyed over Biden.

The Harris campaign sent out a mock "media advisory" ahead of Trump's press



conference with the headline, "Donald Trump to Ramble Incoherently and Spread Dangerous Lies in Public, but at Different Home," a reference to his Bedminster estate.

Harris is scheduled to deliver a speech on economic policy on Friday in North Carolina.

The grocery staples Trump used as props included household brands like Wonder Bread, Oreo cookies, Folgers coffee, and Campbell's soup.

Bread and coffee prices have actually fallen over the last year, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' monthly Consumer Price Index. Food costs more broadly are now experiencing an inflation rate comparable to when Trump was president - between zero and 2% a year.

However, their substantial price rises in 2022 and 2023 have pushed them about 20% to 30% above their levels when Trump left office.

Trump allies return to campaign

Earlier on Thursday, the Trump campaign

announced five hires, including Corey Lewandowski, who served as Trump's first campaign manager during his successful 2016 campaign. Lewandowski voiced his excitement, posting on X: "Let Trump, Be Trump!"

A campaign official, who requested anonymity to discuss internal personnel matters, said the campaign needed more "soldiers" in the race's closing months and that the hires were not indicative of any broader shakeup.

Other than Lewandowski, who will be part of the senior leadership team, the hires will largely work in communications and rapid response, according to another person familiar with campaign operations. The person added the campaign had been severely understaffed in that area.

Lewandowski was forced out of Trump's 2016 bid in the months before the election, though Trump later said he regretted it. Lewandowski was later forced out of a pro-Trump super PAC in 2021 after a donor's wife accused him of unwanted sexual advances. At the press conference, Trump said the new hires did not signify a shift in strategy and praised his co-cam-

paign managers, Chris LaCivita and Susie Wiles.

"It's a sign that we want to close it out," he said.

Kamala Harris is leading in polls

It has been over three weeks since Joe Biden withdrew from the 2024 presidential race and endorsed Kamala Harris as the Democratic Party's presumptive nominee. Initially, Harris experienced a quick boost in the polls as the fresh, younger contender against Donald Trump. However, this surge appears to be more than just a temporary bounce—it's evolving into a consistent trend.

According to FiveThirtyEight's national polling averages, Harris is currently leading Trump by 2.7 percentage points (46.0% to 43.3%), with Robert F. Kennedy Jr. polling at 4.9%. When Biden exited the race, he was trailing Trump by 3.2 points in the same averages. This six-point swing in such a previously static race is significant, though it's worth noting that Harris's current lead is not much larger than the margin Hillary Clinton achieved in the popular vote during her 2016 loss to Trump. Additionally, Harris's 46% polling average is six points higher than any achieved by Biden since March.

The trend in national polls further supports a pro-Democratic shift. For example, a YouGov-Economist poll on July 16 showed Trump leading Harris by 5 points (44% to 39%). After Biden's withdrawal, the same pollster reported a narrower gap, with Trump leading Harris by only 3 points (44% to 41%) on July 23. By July 30 and again on August 6, Harris had pulled ahead, leading Trump by 2 points (46% to 44% and 45% to 43%, respectively). Similarly, RMG Research and Morning Consult polls show Harris gaining ground, with the latter reporting a shift from a 2-point Trump lead to a 4-point Harris lead between July 22 and August 4. CBS's YouGov poll also reflected this trend, with a three-point Trump lead on July 18 turning into a one-point Harris lead by August 2.

Comparisons between the Harris-Trump matchup and the earlier Biden-Trump matchup consistently show a shift towards

the Democratic side. For example, on July 16, Reuters-Ipsos reported Trump leading Biden by 2 points (43% to 41%). By July 23, the same poll gave Harris a 2-point lead (44% to 42%). Similarly, the New York Times-Siena and Wall Street Journal polls from early July showed Trump leading Biden by six points, but Harris narrowed the gap significantly or even led slightly in later polls.

In battleground states, where polling data has been slower to arrive, Harris has also shown consistent improvement over Biden's previous performance. Emerson-The Hill polls from late July indicated that Harris had tied with Trump in Wisconsin and had narrowed the gap in other key

performing better than Biden among young, Black, and Latino voters. The latest national Times-Siena poll shows Harris leading Trump among under-30 likely voters by 59% to 38%, among Black voters by 72% to 19%, and among Latino voters by 60% to 36%. Other polls, like the Axios-Generation Lab survey and Morning Consult's tracking poll, show Harris expanding her lead among younger voters and maintaining strong support among Black voters. A new BSP Research survey of Latino voters across several battleground states shows Harris leading Trump by a solid 55% to 37%.

Overall, Harris's popularity is rising compared to Biden's. FiveThirtyEight's



states like Arizona and Georgia. More recently, Bloomberg-Morning Consult polls showed Harris leading Trump by 1 point across seven battleground states, with notable gains in Arizona, Nevada, Wisconsin, and Michigan.

During the week of July 31 to August 7, Ipsos resurveyed voters in battleground states, finding Harris leading Trump by 2 points (50% to 48%), a significant improvement from a 3-point Trump lead over Biden in June. Additional polling from Split Ticket-Data for Progress and New York Times-Siena also showed Harris leading Trump by narrow margins in key states like Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.

In terms of demographic support, Harris is

favorability averages currently show Harris at 43.2% favorable to 48.6% unfavorable, an improvement from a 36/54 ratio a month ago, and better than Biden's 38/54 margin when he exited the race. Trump's favorability ratio, in comparison, is 43.4% favorable to 51.6% unfavorable.

With Harris still benefiting from the successful unveiling of her running mate, Tim Walz, and with the Democratic convention beginning on August 19, it's likely that this positive momentum will continue—provided she avoids major missteps and the Trump-Vance ticket continues to struggle in adjusting to the new dynamics of the race.

Sizzling weather killed nearly 50,000 Europeans in 2023: Study

In Europe, the heatwave has renewed calls for urgent climate action. However, in the U.S., particularly in Republican-led states like Texas—known for extreme weather—political leaders remain reluctant to acknowledge climate change as the cause



By Harry Javed

High temperatures, exacerbated by human-driven carbon emissions, were responsible for nearly 50,000 deaths in Europe last year, according to a study published in August 2024. The study conducted by the Barcelona Institute for Global Health estimated that 47,700 deaths were linked to heat during the world's warmest year and Europe's second-warmest year on record.

The report, published in the journal *Nature Medicine*, analyzed temperature and mortality data from 35 countries across Europe. It found that 2022 was particularly deadly, with more than 60,000 heat-related deaths, making it the deadliest year in the past decade. The study emphasized that older individuals were most vulnerable, with southern European countries being the hardest hit by the extreme heat.

More than half of the deaths occurred during two intense heatwaves in mid-July and August, a period during which Greece also faced devastating wildfires. Temperatures reached 44 degrees Celsius (111 degrees Fahrenheit) on July 18 in Sicily.

While the study estimated a total of 47,690 deaths, it acknowledged a 95 percent confidence interval, suggesting the mortality burden could range between 28,853 and 66,525. However, the study also noted that the number of heat-related deaths would have been 80 percent higher if not for actions taken by European governments to adapt to hotter summers in the 21st century.

"Our findings underscore the significance of historical and ongoing adaptations in saving lives during recent summers," the authors stated. The report also stressed the urgency for more effective strategies to further reduce the mortality burden of increasingly hotter summers, calling for proactive measures to combat global warming.

Europe, where temperatures are rising faster than the global average, has seen a growing number of deadly heatwaves since the beginning of the century. Scientists warn that climate change is making extreme weather events like heatwaves more frequent, longer-lasting, and more intense.

Factors triggering hot weather in Europe

Europe is enduring a scorching summer, with heatwave conditions expected to persist into August. The extreme weather has been particularly devastating in Western Europe, where wildfires, drought, and hundreds of heat-related deaths are raising alarms about an impending climate crisis.

While Europe has experienced hot summers in recent years, rarely have temperatures soared so high across so many regions simultaneously. On July 19, the U.K. recorded its highest temperature ever, surpassing 40°C, prompting the government to issue its first-ever red alert for extreme heat. Parts of France, Spain, and Portugal reported temperatures ranging from 42°C to 46°C. Across Europe, dozens of towns and regions have suffered under what has been described as a "heat apocalypse," causing widespread destruction this year.

In southwestern France, wildfires fueled by

extreme heat and dry conditions have ravaged 19,000 hectares of forest, forcing thousands of people to evacuate to temporary shelters. Portugal experienced more than 250 fires in just two days, with 650 deaths attributed to heat-related illnesses within a week. Spain lost 14,000 hectares to fires, with an estimated 360 heat-related deaths, mostly among the elderly. Meanwhile, Italy has been grappling with severe drought, as the Po River basin, one of Europe's key agricultural areas, has gone without rain for more than 200 days. Across the Atlantic, with temperatures reaching 43°C in some regions, around 69 million Americans are at risk of exposure to dangerous heat levels and heat-related illnesses.

What is causing these extreme heatwaves?

Scientists are nearly unanimous in attributing these heatwaves to climate change driven by human activity. Global temperatures have already risen by more than 1°C, and studies in the U.K. have shown that even a one-degree rise increases the likelihood of 40°C temperatures by tenfold. This year, deviations from normal temperatures—up to 15 degrees in Antarctica and over 3 degrees in the North Pole—have also disrupted established wind patterns. These shifts have created a "heat dome" over Western Europe, a low-pressure area that

draws hot air from northern Africa.

In the U.S., record temperatures are linked to changes in the jet stream, a narrow band of westerly air currents circulating several kilometers above the Earth's surface. A traditionally strong jet stream would bring cooler air from the northern Atlantic, but in recent years, the jet stream has weakened and split, leading to more intense and frequent heatwaves across the American continent.

All affected nations have issued heat alerts and health advisories, as their populations are not accustomed to such extreme temperatures.

How will the extreme heat impact Europe and the U.S. long term?

In Europe, the heatwave has renewed calls for urgent climate action. However, in the U.S., particularly in Republican-led states like Texas—known for extreme weather—political leaders remain reluctant to acknowledge climate change as the cause. Some local politicians have even urged prayer over recognizing the role of fossil fuels in triggering extreme weather.

In terms of adaptation, the U.S. is somewhat better positioned, with most households equipped with air conditioning. In contrast, only a small minority of homes

in the U.K. and Western Europe have air conditioning. As the frequency and duration of heatwaves increase this summer, Europe's energy demands have surged at a time when fuel costs are rising due to a ban on Russian gas in response to the Ukraine invasion. In Germany, despite widespread acknowledgment of the need to reduce carbon emissions, even Green Party politicians are considering replacing Russian gas with domestic coal.

The increasing frequency, intensity, and duration of heatwaves have also been linked to growing droughts across Europe. Shorter winters mean vegetation begins growing before winter snow has replenished water tables and rivers, leading to progressively drier soil and shallower rivers. Reduced soil moisture makes forest fires more likely, while drying rivers—essential for agriculture and hydropower—threaten harvests and energy security.

What is the way forward?

The economies of both Europe and the U.S. remain heavily dependent on fossil fuels. While Europe has been more vocal about reducing emissions and has invested heavily in renewables, these efforts have been disrupted by the Ukraine war. World leaders now face a stark choice: collective action or collective suicide.



Saudi Arabia is set to host space tourism test flight of Halo Space in September 2024



TTI Staff Report

Halo Space, a space tourism company, announced that Saudi Arabia will host its upcoming test flight. The sixth test flight, scheduled for September, will feature a life-size prototype capsule called Aurora, which will ascend to 30 km above Earth's surface.

This flight, conducted in collaboration with Saudi Arabia's Communications, Space, and Technology Commission (CST), aims to validate the integrated operation of critical systems developed over the past three years.

Alberto Castrillo, Chief Technology Officer at Halo Space, emphasized that the timing and location were chosen to ensure the reliable operation of equipment and the safety of ground teams.

Since the beginning of the year, the CST has been actively supporting Halo Space, working closely with other government bodies like the General

Authority of Civil Aviation to meet regulatory requirements for the flight.

The decision to establish Halo Space's flagship operational base and final assembly site in Saudi Arabia highlights the Kingdom's favorable conditions for space exploration and its ambitions in the space tourism industry.

These prototype capsule test flights are a precursor to manned missions, which Halo Space plans to launch in 2025, followed by commercial flights in 2026.

Frank Salzgeber, acting deputy governor for the space sector at CST said, "This innovative project represents a significant step forward in space tourism, and in support of such technological advancements and investment opportunities in Saudi Arabia, CST is always committed to providing regulatory frameworks that foster innovation

among companies and projects like Halo Space while ensuring the safety of personnel and materials."

Carlos Mira, CEO of Halo Space said, "Collaborating closely with private and public institutions to adopt safety standards and certification procedures is key to our mission. Our collaboration with CST underscores our commitment to creating the safest near-space flight experience possible."

Halo Space plans to start manned and commercial flights next year in 2026. These flights will fly passengers to an altitude of up to 35km in a balloon-lifted capsule over six hours to witness the Earth's curvature and space.

Halo Space revealed the design of its capsule and other details of its project at an event in London, UK earlier this year.

Advancing Artificial General Intelligence: Singularity NET's Supercomputer Network and the Path to Superintelligence



By Romana Afsheen

Artificial intelligence (AI) refers to the simulation of human intelligence in machines designed to think and learn like humans. It encompasses a range of technologies, from machine learning to advanced generative systems, and aims to replicate or enhance human cognitive functions. In a significant stride towards the next frontier in AI, researchers are launching an ambitious project to develop artificial general intelligence (AGI)—a theoretical AI that would surpass human intelligence across diverse fields and continually improve its own capabilities. Central to this effort is the establishment of a global network of state-of-the-art supercomputers, with the first scheduled to go online in September. Spearheaded by SingularityNET, this initiative seeks to create a "multi-level cognitive computing network" that will support and advance the architectures necessary for AGI. By integrating cutting-edge AI components, such as deep neural networks, large language models, and multimodal systems, this project aims to lay the groundwork for AGI, which promises not only to excel in specific tasks but to achieve a level of cognitive flexibility

and self-improvement far beyond current AI systems.

Researchers are set to boost the development of artificial general intelligence (AGI) with a global network of highly advanced computers, starting with a new supercomputer launching in September.

Artificial intelligence (AI) encompasses various technologies, including machine learning and generative AI systems like GPT-4. These systems provide predictive capabilities based on extensive data training and can often exceed human performance in specific tasks. However, they struggle with cognitive reasoning and cannot apply their abilities across different domains.

In contrast, AGI is a theoretical concept of a system that would surpass human intelligence in multiple areas, with the ability to self-improve and enhance decision-making by accessing more data.

SingularityNET is building these supercomputers to create a "multi-level cognitive computing network" intended to host and

train the necessary architectures for AGI. This network will include advanced AI elements such as deep neural networks, which replicate brain functions; large language models (LLMs), which are extensive data sets for AI training; and multimodal systems that integrate human behaviors like speech and movement with multimedia outputs, similar to AI-generated videos.

Developing a New Network of AI Supercomputers

The first supercomputer is scheduled to go online in September, with the entire project expected to be completed by late 2024 or early 2025, depending on supplier delivery timelines, according to LiveScience.

The modular supercomputer will include cutting-edge components and infrastructure, such as Nvidia L40S graphics processing units (GPUs), AMD Instinct and Genoa processors, Tenstorrent Wormhole server racks equipped with Nvidia H200 GPUs, and Nvidia's GB200 Blackwell

systems. These elements collectively represent some of the most powerful AI hardware currently available.

“This supercomputer will mark a significant step toward AGI. While the novel neural-symbolic AI methods developed by SingularityNET’s team reduce the need for data, processing, and energy compared to traditional deep neural networks, substantial supercomputing resources are still required,” SingularityNET CEO Ben Goertzel explained to LiveScience.

“Our goal with this computing machine is to facilitate a shift from relying on large datasets and reproducing contexts from neural network semantic memory to developing non-imitative machine thinking. This will involve multi-step reasoning algorithms and dynamic world modeling through cross-domain pattern matching and iterative knowledge distillation. We are witnessing a transformative shift towards continuous learning, seamless generalization, and reflexive AI self-modification.”

Charting the Path to AI Superintelligence

SingularityNET aims to advance AI, AGI, and potentially artificial superintelligence—an advanced future system surpassing human cognitive abilities—by providing extensive data access. To achieve this, CEO Ben Goertzel and his team are implementing a unique software system to manage their federated compute cluster.

Federated compute clusters are designed to abstract and protect user data while enabling large-scale computations. This system handles highly sensitive data, such as personally identifiable information (PII), while allowing for detailed analysis.

The software framework utilized is OpenCog Hyperon, an open-source tool specifically developed for AI system architecture. Goertzel emphasized that the new hardware infrastructure is tailored to support OpenCog Hyperon and its associated AGI environment.

Access to the supercomputer will be facilitated through a tokenized system, a common practice in AI. Users acquire tokens to access the supercomputer and contribute data to existing datasets, which others can use for testing and developing AGI concepts. This token system operates similarly to arcade game tokens, where players purchase tokens for a certain number of game plays. However, in this case, the data collected from the usage benefits all users across different locations.

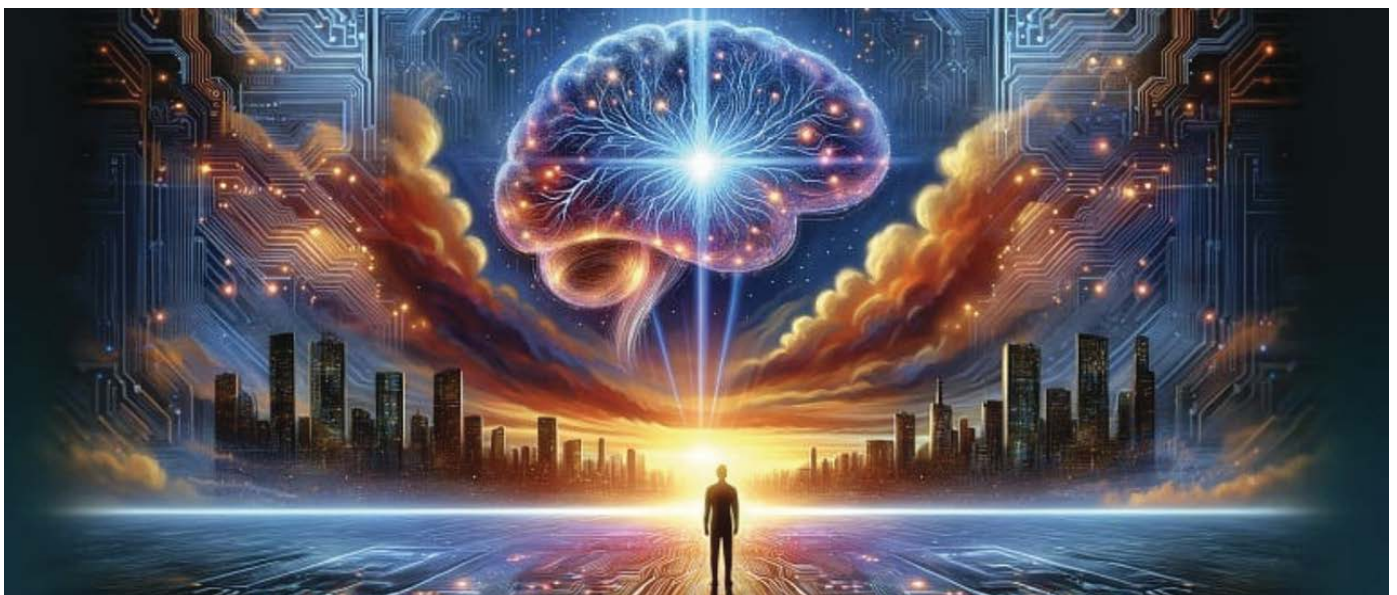
For context, GPT-3 was trained on 300 billion tokens (including words, parts of words, and punctuation), while GPT-4 utilized 13 trillion tokens. Self-driving cars are trained on extensive video footage, and OpenAI Copilot was developed using millions of lines of code from Github.

Experts in AI, such as DeepMind co-founder Shane Legg, predict that systems could achieve or exceed human intelligence by 2028. Ben Goertzel estimates this milestone

could be reached by 2027, while Mark Zuckerberg is investing heavily in AGI development, having allocated \$10 billion to build advanced AI infrastructure.

SingularityNET, a member of the Artificial Super Intelligence Alliance (ASI)—a group dedicated to open-source AI research and development—plans to expand its network and computing power in the future. Other ASI members, like Fetch.ai, have recently invested \$100 million in a decentralized computing platform for developers.

As the initiative by SingularityNET unfolds, the ambitious development of a global network of advanced supercomputers marks a significant milestone in the quest for artificial general intelligence (AGI). By leveraging cutting-edge hardware and innovative software frameworks like OpenCog Hyperon, this project aims to bridge the gap between current AI capabilities and the envisioned superintelligent systems of the future. The tokenized access system further democratizes participation, allowing a broader community to contribute to and benefit from this transformative technology. As experts predict that AGI could become a reality within the next decade, the progress made through this global network not only propels the field of AI forward but also sets a new benchmark for the capabilities and applications of intelligent systems. The successful realization of AGI will undoubtedly revolutionize multiple industries and redefine our understanding of intelligence itself, underscoring the profound impact of ongoing advancements in artificial intelligence.



The Rise of Robotics in the Energy Sector

In the wind energy sector, robots are increasingly used for equipment maintenance, a task that previously required large vessels and significant manpower. Thanks to advancements in robotics, wind turbines can now be serviced by robots, which are more precise and efficient, reducing the time, resources, and potential for errors.



By Harris Javed

Innovations in robotics have significantly advanced energy operations in recent years, playing a crucial role in both fossil fuel and renewable energy production. In the oil and natural gas sector, robotics have enhanced safety by minimizing the need for personnel to work in hazardous environments. Additionally, the ability to conduct many energy operations remotely has been a game-changer, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic, when movement was restricted. As robotics technology continues to evolve, it is expected to not only support ongoing fossil fuel operations but also accelerate the transition to green energy.

Robots are now essential across a broad spectrum of energy operations, including oil, gas, wind, and solar power. During the pandemic, engineers leveraged robots to monitor offshore oil operations, ensuring minimal disruption to the global energy supply despite global travel restrictions. On

oil platforms, robots have taken over some of the dirtiest and most dangerous tasks, reducing the risks faced by human workers. As a result, energy companies have increasingly embraced new technologies like robotics, artificial intelligence (AI), and machine learning, recognizing their value, especially during the pandemic. Looking ahead, renewable energy companies are actively seeking to integrate these technologies to make operations safer, more efficient, and cost-effective.

In the wind energy sector, robots are increasingly used for equipment maintenance, a task that previously required large vessels and significant manpower. Thanks to advancements in robotics, wind turbines can now be serviced by robots, which are more precise and efficient, reducing the time, resources, and potential for errors.

Beyond maintenance, many modern robots

are equipped with monitoring and diagnostic technologies that help prevent turbine breakdowns by identifying issues before they escalate. The use of robots also decreases the need for human presence in offshore environments, as they can often be operated remotely, enhancing safety and lowering costs. As a result, energy companies are now employing skilled engineers to manage robotic operations remotely or to focus on higher-value tasks onshore.

In the U.K. wind sector, one of the cutting-edge technologies being employed is the robotic crawler developed by British robotics company BladeBUG. This robot is designed to perform detailed inspections of wind turbine blades and other components, making turbine inspections more efficient, accurate, and safer. Another innovative technology being developed for the wind energy industry is Honuworx's subsea robotic system, Ridley. This submersible

platform is intended to deploy and operate large subsea robots, potentially replacing large vessel-based systems. Ridley reduces the risks associated with crane-based deployments, can be operated remotely, and provides real-time operational data. As the global wind energy sector rapidly expands, the development of more advanced robotics technologies holds great potential to accelerate the deployment of wind farms worldwide.

In the solar energy sector, robots are being utilized for a variety of tasks. In 2023, researchers at Osaka University published a study showcasing the potential of an automated system to identify semiconductor materials for photovoltaic solar energy, which are both highly efficient and low in toxicity. The researchers developed a unique robotic measurement system capable of performing photoabsorption spectroscopy, optical microscopy, and time-resolved microwave conductivity analyses. They used this system to evaluate 576 different thin-film semiconductor samples, a process that could lead to the discovery of new materials to enhance solar panel efficiency.

Robots are also now playing a crucial role in the installation of solar panels on solar farms. In the U.S., energy companies face a

shortage of skilled workers needed to build new solar farms at the pace required to meet the growing demand for solar power. In July, AES Corporation, one of the largest renewable energy companies in the U.S., introduced a groundbreaking robot named Maximo. This robot, equipped with a large extendable arm, uses suction cups to lift solar panels and AI-driven computer vision to position them accurately in rows. Maximo can install solar panels twice as fast as humans and at roughly half the cost.

Increased investment in robotics is expected to accelerate the rollout of renewable energy projects, making them safer, more efficient, and more cost-effective. While robotics have already become integral to the oil and gas sector, their application is rapidly expanding in the wind and solar energy industries. As robotics technology continues to improve, the use of robots is likely to become more widespread across a broad range of energy operations globally.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia is expected to reduce its crude oil exports to China next month following an increase in official prices for September. The Kingdom, which is the world's largest exporter of crude oil, is set to ship around 43 million barrels to China in September, down by approximately 3 million barrels from the 46 million

barrels estimated for August, according to trade sources cited by Reuters on Monday.

This reduction in exports comes after Saudi Arabia raised the official selling price (OSP) of its flagship Arab Light crude for Asia, marking the first price increase in three months. Starting in September, Arab Light will be priced at \$2 per barrel above the Oman/Dubai average for Asian buyers. Although this represents a \$0.20 per barrel increase over the Oman-Dubai benchmark, it is smaller than analysts had anticipated.

Asian refiners had expected a more significant hike of between \$0.50 and \$0.80 per barrel, leading to a premium of between \$2.30 and \$2.60 per barrel over the Oman/Dubai average. However, weak refining margins in Asia may limit the impact of Saudi Arabia's price increase for September.

The modest increase in the price of Arab Light may be influenced by sluggish demand for gasoline and diesel in China, stemming from lower-than-expected GDP growth and ongoing challenges in the property sector. Despite the smaller-than-expected price hike, the cost of Saudi crude under term agreements—preferred by the Kingdom—remains higher than the prices of other Middle Eastern crude grades traded on the spot market.



Deforestation and illegal poaching keep population of wild parakeets on the edge

By Aamir Latif/Anadolu

Pakistan's wild parakeet populations are facing a severe crisis, with experts warning that the iconic birds could soon disappear from the country's forests and plains altogether.

High demand for the illegal pet trade, coupled with gradual habitat loss, has led to a dramatic decline in parakeet numbers over the past decade, making them prime candidates for extinction in the years to come.

"The extent of the illegal trade of Parakeets is quite large in Pakistan because of their high demand for keeping them as pets, which leads the poachers to trap them from the wild in bulk quantities," said Rab Nawaz, a senior official at World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Pakistan.

Speaking to Anadolu, he said that over the past 10 years, the high demand for illegally traded wild parakeets has led to a significant decline in the numbers of the birds, once a common sight in the wild.

Echoing this, Anis Rehman, a wildlife expert based in the capital Islamabad, described the smuggling of parakeets as "massively rampant" — stretching across the border regions with India in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, or Azad Jammu and Kashmir, along with central and southern parts of Punjab province.

He said that parakeets captured in these areas are sold into the local and international pet markets for significant sums of money, including by local communities, which are actively participating in the poaching and trafficking,

Many leave their regular jobs during the peak season to capture and sell the birds, maintained Rehman.

Risk of extinction

Habitat loss is another major factor driving the parakeets' decline. The birds rely on old, dead trees with hollows to build their nests, but these are often indiscriminately cut down by people unaware of their vital



ecological role.

"Old dead trees are cut down as they are considered to be useless but people are unaware about their ecological importance as they provide nesting sites to many bird species including parakeets," explained Mubeenullah Mobeen from the Himalayan Wildlife Foundation.

Pakistan is home to four parakeet species, with the Alexandrine parakeet being the most common. However, its population, along with those of its rose-ringed, slaty-headed, and plum-headed cousins have seen a steep plunge.

"Parakeets were once commonly found in large numbers in plains and mountainous regions of Punjab, Sindh and Azad Kashmir. But now, their population has reduced and their distribution is restricted to (a) few border areas only," said Nawaz.

Nawaz noted that all four native species had become locally endangered, though no recent surveys have been conducted to estimate their exact population.

Rehman, who is also the founding chairman of the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board, warned that, barring serious efforts to recover the parakeet population, they would "soon" face imminent risk of extinction.

"The current number of parakeets is just a fragment. It is just a small percentage of the

number of wild parrots we had about maybe 25-30 years ago," he observed.

Experts warn that if urgent action is not taken to curb poaching and smuggling, as well as protect the parakeets' dwindling habitats, the birds could soon vanish from the wild altogether.

"If we don't do something now, the chances are that we will not find parakeets in the wild anymore," cautioned Rehman.

Crucial for habitat

Highlighting the crucial role parakeets play in their ecosystems through seed dispersal and natural forest regeneration, the experts are calling for stringent measures against poaching and smuggling to recover their populations.

"Their droppings carry the seeds from one place to other, causing the natural spread of original forests," Rehman said of the birds, which mainly eat wild fruits.

He warned that the extinction of the parakeets could leave "no natural forest spreading anymore" in the country.

For Nawaz, the solution lies in a "strict" ban on poaching and smuggling of parakeets until their population recovers.

"If the poaching pressure is contained, the (parakeet) population can be recovered in a few years," he said.

Fear of Happiness: Understanding the Phenomenon

Fear of happiness is a complex psychological phenomenon that can significantly impact an individual's emotional and psychological well-being. Understanding the nature of this fear, its potential causes, and its effects can provide valuable insights into how to address and overcome it.



By Ayesha Shaeban

Fear of happiness, also known as “cherophobia,” is a psychological condition where individuals experience anxiety or apprehension at the prospect of being happy or experiencing joy. While it may sound counterintuitive, this fear is a real and complex phenomenon that can impact a person's mental health and overall well-being. Let's delve into the nature of this fear, its potential causes, and its effects.

What is Fear of Happiness?

Fear of happiness refers to an irrational or excessive fear of experiencing positive emotions, such as joy, contentment, or satisfaction. This fear can manifest in various ways, including avoidance of activities that might lead to happiness, self-sabotage, or a general sense of unease when positive events occur. Individuals with cherophobia may worry that their happiness will lead to negative consequences, or they may feel unworthy of experiencing joy.

Psychological and Emotional Aspects

Cognitive Distortions: People with a fear of happiness may have cognitive distortions that lead them to believe that good things are not meant for them or that happiness is inherently dangerous. These distortions can include all-or-nothing thinking, catastrophizing, or personalization.

Self-Sabotage: To avoid the fear of being happy, individuals might engage in self-sabotaging behaviors. For example, they might deliberately avoid opportunities that could lead to happiness or success, or they might engage in actions that undermine their own well-being.

Guilt and Worthiness: Some people feel guilt or shame about their happiness. They might believe that they do not deserve to be happy, or they might fear that their happiness will make others feel inadequate or envious.

Expectations of Repercussions: There

is often a belief that happiness will be followed by a negative event. For instance, an individual might think that if they allow themselves to be happy, something bad will inevitably happen as a consequence.

Potential Causes of Fear of Happiness

Past Trauma or Negative Experiences: Individuals who have experienced trauma or significant negative events in the past might develop a fear of happiness. They may associate happiness with subsequent pain or loss based on their past experiences.

Cultural and Familial Influences: Cultural and familial beliefs can contribute to cherophobia. In some cultures or families, expressing happiness might be discouraged or seen as inappropriate, leading individuals to internalize these beliefs and fear their own joy.

Mental Health Conditions: Certain mental health conditions, such as

depression or anxiety disorders, can contribute to the fear of happiness. Individuals with depression, for example, might struggle to believe that happiness is attainable or that they deserve it.

Cognitive and Behavioral Factors: Cognitive factors, such as negative self-beliefs or a history of perfectionism, can contribute to cherophobia. Behavioral factors, such as habitual avoidance of positive experiences, can reinforce the fear.

Effects on Life and Well-Being

Emotional and Psychological Impact: Fear of happiness can lead to emotional distress and psychological discomfort. Individuals might feel chronically anxious or on edge, even when positive events occur. This ongoing tension can contribute to feelings of dissatisfaction or unhappiness.

Interpersonal Relationships: Cherophobia can affect relationships, as individuals may distance themselves from others to avoid situations that could lead to happiness. This distancing can strain relationships and lead to social isolation.

Personal Growth and Achievement: Avoiding happiness can hinder personal growth and achievement. By not allowing themselves to experience joy or success, individuals might miss out on opportunities

for personal development and fulfillment.

Quality of Life: The fear of happiness can negatively impact overall quality of life. Constantly avoiding or fearing positive experiences can lead to a diminished sense of well-being and hinder one's ability to fully engage with life.

Coping Strategies and Treatment

Therapy and Counseling: Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) is often effective in addressing fear of happiness. CBT can help individuals identify and challenge irrational beliefs and cognitive distortions related to happiness. Therapy can also help individuals develop healthier coping strategies and learn to accept and embrace positive emotions.

Self-Awareness and Mindfulness: Practicing mindfulness can help individuals become more aware of their thoughts and feelings related to happiness. Mindfulness techniques can also help individuals manage anxiety and develop a more balanced perspective on positive experiences.

Gradual Exposure: Gradual exposure to positive experiences can help individuals become more comfortable with happiness. By slowly and progressively allowing themselves to experience joy, individuals

can work through their fears and build resilience.

Support Systems: Engaging with supportive friends, family members, or support groups can provide encouragement and validation. Sharing experiences and receiving support from others can help individuals feel more comfortable with their own happiness.

Self-Compassion and Acceptance: Cultivating self-compassion and accepting that it is okay to experience joy can help individuals overcome their fear. Learning to value oneself and one's own happiness is an important step in addressing cherophobia.

Conclusion

Fear of happiness is a complex psychological phenomenon that can significantly impact an individual's emotional and psychological well-being. Understanding the nature of this fear, its potential causes, and its effects can provide valuable insights into how to address and overcome it. Through therapy, self-awareness, gradual exposure, and support, individuals can work towards embracing and accepting happiness, leading to a more fulfilling and enriched life. As we continue to explore and understand the intricacies of human emotions, addressing fears like cherophobia becomes crucial in promoting overall mental health and well-being.



Legal Education Reforms: A crucial pathway



By Habib Hanzalah

Education has long been recognized as a fundamental pillar for the development of any nation. In the case of Pakistan, a country with a burgeoning population of 231.4 million and diverse socio-economic challenges, education reforms have become a necessity and a crucial pathway towards progress and transformation. Over the years, various initiatives and strategies have been put forth to address gaps in the education system, aiming to enhance access, quality, and relevance. One notable aspect of this evolving landscape is the External LLB Program offered by the University of London, which stands as a unique and impactful endeavor in the realm of legal education. Pakistan's education system faces significant challenges. Around 22.8 million children in the country are out of school, according to a report by Alif Ailaan.

This highlights the urgent need to improve enrolment rates and access to education. Moreover, UNESCO reports that Pakistan spends only about 2.8% of its GDP on education, falling short of the recommended 4-6% for

developing countries. These challenges collectively hinder the realization of a well-rounded and effective learning environment, leaving a substantial portion of the population without access to quality education. To address these challenges, Pakistan has undertaken several education reforms aimed at tackling issues from primary to higher education.

The introduction of policies like the National Education Policy and initiatives such as the Prime Minister's Education Reforms Program signal the government's commitment to improving educational outcomes across the board. These reforms emphasize teacher training, curriculum enhancement, and technology integration to create a more engaging and inclusive learning experience. Among these reform efforts, the External LLB Program offered by the University of London holds a distinct place. The program's unique structure allows Pakistani students to pursue a law degree from a prestigious international institution without having to relocate. This is particularly relevant in a country where the legal profession plays a pivotal role

in shaping governance, human rights, and justice.

The External LLB Program is designed to align with the requirements of Pakistan's legal education system. According to recent statistics, over 2,000 Pakistani students are enrolled in the program, benefiting from its flexible nature. This flexibility caters to individuals who may be working or pursuing other commitments, enabling them to enhance their legal knowledge and qualifications at their own pace. The significance of the External LLB Program extends beyond the acquisition of legal knowledge. It represents a model of collaboration between international academic institutions and Pakistan's education sector.

This collaboration not only introduces global perspectives into local legal education but also offers students exposure to diverse legal systems and practices. This exposure enhances critical thinking, cross-cultural understanding, and the ability to navigate complex legal issues in an interconnected world. While the External Program offers a unique opportunity,

there are also several aspects that have drawn criticism over time. One of the primary criticisms of the program is the lack of direct supervision and oversight by local institutions. The absence of on-ground faculty and mentors can sometimes result in varying quality of education delivery and limited academic support for students.

Legal education requires not just theoretical knowledge but also practical skills and exposure to local legal practices. The program might not adequately provide the practical experience that is crucial for a well-rounded legal education, especially in a country with its unique legal framework. The program's curriculum may not be tailored to the specific legal context of Pakistan. This can result in graduates having theoretical knowledge that might not seamlessly translate into the practical legal challenges of the country. The program's cost and entry requirements might limit accessibility for many students, particularly those from less privileged backgrounds. This could potentially contribute to a lack of diversity among graduates and legal professionals.

The online nature of the program can sometimes lead to a lack of interaction with peers and professors. Legal education often benefits from the lively discussions and debates that occur in traditional classroom settings. Additionally, the program does not offer facilities for qualifying exams like



the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE) or the Bar exams in Pakistan, nor does it provide representation or exam centers for these crucial professional milestones. This can pose significant challenges for graduates who wish to practice law in Pakistan or the UK.

Moreover, the financial burden of paying tuition fees in pounds from Pakistan is another significant challenge for students. This economic strain is exacerbated by the lack of guaranteed job prospects upon graduation, which can make it difficult for students to justify the high cost of the program. Education reforms in Pakistan are an ongoing journey, aiming to transform the nation's future through knowledge and empowerment. The

External LLB Program of the University of London stands as a symbol of innovation and collaboration in this endeavor.

As Pakistan navigates the path to progress, initiatives like this hold the promise of creating a generation of skilled legal professionals who can contribute meaningfully to the country's legal and societal landscape while enriching their own intellectual horizons. It is essential to address the criticisms and challenges to maximize its impact. By doing so, Pakistan can ensure that its legal education system produces professionals who are not only knowledgeable but also equipped with the practical skills and local expertise needed to drive the nation forward. (Writer is an Islamabad-based advocate).



Imane Khelif: Olympic Gold and a Cyberbullying Controversy



By Romana Afsheen

At the Paris Olympics, Algerian boxer Imane Khelif achieved a historic milestone by winning gold in the women's 66kg weight class, making a significant mark in the world of sports. Her victory, celebrated passionately at Roland Garros stadium, not only elevated her status as a groundbreaking athlete but also highlighted her resilience amidst considerable controversy. Alongside her triumph, Khelif has been embroiled in a high-profile cyberbullying case involving notable figures such as J.K. Rowling, Elon Musk, and Donald Trump. This case intertwines with broader discussions on gender identity and fairness in sports, providing a complex backdrop to Khelif's remarkable journey and achievements both inside and outside the ring.

Algerian boxer Imane Khelif made history at the Paris Olympics by clinching gold in the women's 66kg weight class, overcoming significant gender-related controversies that had marred her career. Khelif's landmark achievement, secured at the renowned Roland Garros stadium, was a triumph

of perseverance and skill amidst a charged atmosphere.

Khelif's victory over China's Yang Liu by unanimous points decision was met with exuberant celebrations. The arena erupted as Khelif was hoisted onto her team member's shoulders, the crowd roaring in jubilation. This win was more than just a personal triumph for Khelif; it marked a groundbreaking achievement for Algerian sports. She became the first Algerian woman to win an Olympic boxing gold medal and the first Algerian boxer to secure gold since Hocine Soltani's victory at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics.

The significance of Khelif's victory is further underscored by the controversies surrounding her Olympic participation. Prior to the Games, Khelif faced significant hurdles related to gender eligibility. She was disqualified from the 2023 World Championships due to issues with gender eligibility, sparking considerable debate. The International Boxing Association (IBA) rules led to her exclusion from the competition, a situation that fueled

intense scrutiny and controversy.

However, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) later adopted different eligibility criteria for the Paris Games, which did not include gender testing. This change allowed Khelif and Taiwanese boxer Lin Yu-ting to compete, marking a critical turning point in the narrative surrounding gender in sports.

Reflecting on her historic achievement, the 25-year-old Khelif expressed profound joy and relief, stating, "I'm very happy. For eight years this has been my dream, and now I'm the Olympic champion and gold medallist. I've worked tirelessly for eight years, with no sleep and constant fatigue. Now I'm the Olympic champion." Her performance in the final was impressive; Khelif's height and strength advantages played a decisive role as she effectively neutralized Yang's challenges, showcasing superior skill and determination.

Khelif's gold medal win was not only a personal triumph but also a moment of

national pride for Algeria. It was the country's second gold medal at the Paris Games, and the enthusiastic support of Algerian fans at the stadium highlighted the significance of her victory as both a personal accomplishment and a symbol of national honor and resilience.

Despite the celebration of her achievement, Khelif's victory has been overshadowed by a new controversy. French prosecutors have launched an investigation into a cyberbullying claim filed by Khelif. The complaint, submitted by Khelif's lawyer Nabil Boudi, accuses several high-profile figures—including author J.K. Rowling, X owner Elon Musk, and former U.S. President Donald Trump—of participating in online harassment related to Khelif's gender.

The complaint targets social media platforms like X rather than specific individuals, a common approach under French law that allows investigators to identify responsible parties. The prosecutor's Office for the Fight against Crimes against Humanity and Hate Crime is examining the case on charges of "cyber harassment based on gender," "public insults based on gender," "public incitement to discrimination," and "public insults based on origin."

The controversy intensified after Italian boxer Angela Carini withdrew from a bout

with Khelif, citing safety concerns. False claims that Khelif was transgender or male began circulating online, exacerbating the situation. Rowling referred to Khelif's match as "a male punching a female," Musk commented that "men don't belong in women's sports," and Trump shared a photo of the fight with the caption, "I will keep men out of women's sports."

In response to the misinformation, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) defended Khelif and condemned those spreading false claims. The IOC's stance was crucial in reaffirming Khelif's legitimacy as a female athlete, especially given the previous gender eligibility issues she had faced.

Khelif has been vocal about her identity and the unfair treatment she has received. "I am a woman like any other. I was born a woman, lived a woman, and competed as a woman," she asserted. Her statement reflects her frustration and confusion over the hostility she has encountered.

Upon her return to Algeria, Khelif was met with a hero's welcome at Algiers airport, greeted with cheers of "tahia Imane," meaning "long live Imane." The reception highlighted the immense national pride and support she garnered. An editorial in the government daily **El Moudjahid** praised her victory as a triumph for the oppressed and a stand against the powerful who

impose double standards.

Khelif's coach, Mustapha Bensaou, emphasized that the complaint should underscore the need to defend athletes' rights and honor globally. He vowed that those responsible for the attacks on Khelif would face prosecution, asserting that the attacks were intended to undermine her morale. "All those involved will be prosecuted for violating Imane's dignity and honour," Bensaou said. "The attacks on Imane were designed to break her and undermine her morale. Thank God, she triumphed."

Imane Khelif's Olympic gold medal is a monumental achievement that transcends sports. It represents a significant victory for Algeria and a personal triumph for Khelif, who has overcome considerable challenges. The ongoing investigation into cyberbullying and the controversy surrounding her participation reflect broader debates about gender, identity, and fairness in sports. As Khelif looks to the future, she remains a figure of inspiration and strength, having surmounted both personal and professional obstacles to secure her place in Olympic history. While navigating the ongoing challenges of cyberbullying and public scrutiny, Khelif's story continues to inspire and provoke important conversations about gender and fairness in sports. Her legacy, forged in the heat of competition and the face of adversity, will undoubtedly resonate for years to come.



Why Arshad Nadeem reminds us of a legendary Greek Warrior



TTI Staff Report

It's not yet clear if Arshad Nadeem, a man who has emerged from the Pakistani hinterland to hit global headlines, has heard of Achilles. There is a bigger chance, though, of him knowing who Brad Pitt is. The Hollywood superstar's portrayal of the legendary Greek warrior in *Troy* may not have earned him widespread acclaim, but with his chiselled body, he still cut an imposing figure in that movie. Now a week has passed since Nadeem waltzed into the history books. But the more you think of that jaw-dropping, Olympic record-breaking 92.97-metre throw into the Parisian sky, the more you are reminded of Achilles. Or, rather, of Pitt who hurls the spear from a seemingly impossible distance, knocking a soldier off the horseback, killing him instantly, as Hector, the Trojan prince, played wonderfully by Eric Bana, looks at the fallen man in horror.

With one menacing spear throw, Achilles showed the Trojans what they were up against as the Greeks prepared for the mother of all conflicts.

It's quite tempting now to draw a parallel between the scene from an epic, historical drama and an unprecedented feat from a South Asian athlete at the Olympics, ironically the birthplace of which was ancient Greece.

Nadeem hasn't just become the first individual Olympic gold medallist from Pakistan, he's created a new world order in the fight for the javelin honours on the biggest of stages.

His rivals, including Neeraj Chopra, the poster boy of Indian track and field who went into the Paris event as the overwhelming favourite, having made history by winning the gold at the 2020 Olympics and the 2023 World Championships, now have a giant task at hand.

Despite his medal-winning exploits, Chopra has yet to hit the 90m mark in his career, a feat Nadeem achieved twice in the space of 60 minutes in Paris — less than two years after he threw 90.18m to grab the 2022 Commonwealth Games gold in Birmingham.

With his big height, broad shoulders and huge forearms, Nadeem has all the physical ingredients to put daylight between him and his rivals.

But the real question was about his mental strength: could he cope with the enormous pressure of throwing farther than his rivals in an Olympic final?

He did win the silver at the World Championships last year, which had an equally

strong field. But the Olympics is a different beast altogether — this is where even the fourth-place finisher can become a folk hero (remember Milkha Singh, the Flying Sikh?) and champions gallop into the realm of immortals.

For Nadeem, this was the moment that could catapult him into the sphere of Olympic icons.

In front of him were all world-class athletes, most of whom were backed by great sporting cultures. Even India's eco-system for Olympic sports is far better now than what it was until 2008.

So, against this backdrop, Nadeem stepped up and unleashed a throw that sent shivers down the spine of every one of his rivals.

The look on Chopra's face said it all. It was not just a defeat by a wide margin of three metres (the Indian athlete managed 89.45m), rather, the 26-year-old now has the unenviable task of stretching his physical limits to try and stand up to the might of Nadeem when the two of them clash again on a track.

Only a few athletes in history have crossed the 90 metres barrier and Nadeem, brimming with confidence, has already stated his desire to eclipse 98.48m — the

world record of Czech legend Jan Zelezny.

Now, can Nadeem come anywhere close to matching Zelezny, the three-time Olympic and world champion, and an absolute force of nature who once threw over 90 metres five times in a single event?

Nadeem's massive throws in Paris — 92.97m on his second attempt and 91.79 m on his sixth and final attempt — prompted every sports analyst to consider his potential to deliver even bigger numbers in the future.

But the story of Nadeem, an athlete from a very humble background who had no exposure to world-class training facilities until he won a bronze at the 2016 South Asian Games in Guwahati, is not about the numbers alone.

It's his perseverance and desire to dream big that have now made him the first individual Olympic champion from Pakistan, a cricket-obsessed country where the champion hockey teams and squash legends of the past now seem like mere footnotes in history.

Ramiz Raja, a key member of Pakistan's 1992 World Cup-winning cricket team, admitted that Nadeem's Paris achievements exceeded all sporting expectations of an average Pakistani sports lover.

"It's a world class achievement, the biggest individual performance, and a great story of human perseverance. It's an achievement that will spur on budding athletes (in Pakistan) to achieve the impossible," the former Pakistan Cricket Board chairman told the Khaleej Times.

"The GPS to greatness has been set by Arshad. It's now for others to follow and occupy the podium of dreams!"

It's easy to understand why Nadeem mania has now gripped Pakistan, a country so proud of its rich cricket heritage.

Tariq Butt, a veteran cricket umpire in the UAE who played first-class cricket in Pakistan, felt the greatest sense of joy in his life when he saw Nadeem on the Paris podium with the gold medal around his neck.

"I have been involved with cricket for more than 60 years and I was also an official at

the Sharjah cricket stadium where I witnessed many famous Pakistan matches. But I can tell you one thing, no other sporting achievement from Pakistan has given me as much happiness and joy as Arshad Nadeem's gold medal at the Olympics," he said.

Zaman Perviaz, another Pakistani expat, still looks back on the night of August 8 in disbelief.

"It's unbelievable what he has achieved. You know in my country, many people didn't know that a sport called javelin throw even exists," Perviaz said.

"And then when you think of all the struggle he had to go through, no proper training facilities, no funds, I really don't know how to put this in words!"



Nadeem has now been showered with millions of Pakistani rupees by the federal government as well the state governments for putting the country on the Olympic track and field podium.

The sudden influx of wealth is ironic for a man who reportedly needed financial support from the neighbours in his village until a few years ago to go for training and tournaments abroad.

"The lack of support from authorities, lack of funds, a lot of such stories are floating around now. Some of these stories are true, but I know he received good support from the government in the last two to three years," said Shahid Hashmi, a veteran Pakistani sports journalist.

"But what I haven't liked is the excessive cash rewards given to him by the authorities after he came back from Paris. Don't forget we as a country are reeling under huge debts. Yes, Nadeem deserves the rewards, but the funds should also be carefully spent on training facilities for future athletes."

Hashmi's other big concern is that even for a generational talent like Nadeem, it could be difficult to keep his feet on the ground amidst the frenzy in Pakistan.

Could that turn out to be Achilles' heel?

Butt, who witnessed how cricket stars handled fame and adulation during his time as an official at Sharjah's famous matches, believes Nadeem's modest upbringing and

strong family values will always help him stay on the right path.

"I just saw the news that he wants to use the money he has received to go on Haj (the annual Islamic pilgrimage to Makkah) with his family. I was really touched by it," he added.

"He came from a very humble background, he knows that apart from his talent and hard work, this Olympic gold is the result of the blessings and prayers of his parents, his family and even the neighbours in his village who always helped him. So now, it's a beautiful way for him to show his gratitude to all of them."

Two more Japanese climbers found dead: Murad Sadpara also passes away



By Aamir Latif

Two Japanese climbers who fell from K2, the world's second-tallest mountain, have been officially declared dead, raising the number of the country's mountaineers who died in Pakistan this year to five, a tour operator told Anadolu on Wednesday. Kazuya Hiraide and Kenro Nakajima, who traveled to Pakistan's northern Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) region to take on the challenge of the west face of K2, using the alpine style approach, fell from a height of 7,500 meters (24,606 feet) off the 8,611-meter (28,251 ft) peak K2 on July 28.

"Their death certificates have been issued (by Pakistani authorities) to their families, who (family members) arrived in Pakistan a few days ago, and are leaving today (Wednesday)," said Naiknam Kareem, the head of Naiknam Tours arranged the deceased climbers' expedition. The climbers' bodies were spotted last week but could not be recovered due to the "extremely" dangerous nature of the K2's west face terrain, he added.

Waliullah Falahi, the deputy commissioner of Shigar district of G-B, which is home to K2, however, told Anadolu that a ground operation could not be launched due to the difficult terrain.

A Pakistan army helicopter could not land to pick up the mountaineers because of the high altitude, he added. Hiraide, a renowned mountaineer, had won three Piolets d'Or awards, the most prestigious accolade in the field of alpinism. G-B is home to five of the 14 highest peaks in the world. It has seen several mountain accidents involving Japanese climbers in recent months.

Apart from the fresh casualties, three Japanese climbers have been killed while trying to scale the 7,027-meter Spantik Peak, also known as Golden Peak, in alpine style since June.

Alpine style, characterized by minimal use of fixed ropes and support, emphasizes speed and efficiency and is known for its high level of difficulty and risk.

Murad Sadpara dies on top of K2 while waiting for his rescue

Pakistani mountaineer Murad Sadpara has tragically passed away, as confirmed by Ayaz Shigri, Vice President of the Alpine Club. Sadpara died on top of K2 while

waiting for his rescue.

Sadpara sustained severe injuries during an expedition to Broad Peak, which stands at 8,047 meters in Skardu. He was waiting for rescuers at Camp 1 after being struck on the head by a falling stone.

The Pakistan Army deployed four expert mountaineers to the base camp to assist in the rescue operation. Mirza Sadpara had previously successfully summited Nanga Parbat for the second time.

Shigri mentioned that the rescuers would attempt to retrieve Murad Sadpara's body and bring it back to the base camp.

Pakistani climber Naila Kiani had also appealed on social media for the Pakistan Army to dispatch a team from Skardu to the Broad Peak crampon point to bring back Ali Sadpara safely.

Sadpara had earlier summited Nanga Parbat for the second time.

Sajid Sadpara

Meanwhile, famous Pakistani Mountaineer Sajid Sadpara climbed the ninth-highest peak Nanga Parbat. He achieved this

milestone without using supplementary oxygen.

Sajid Sadpara confirmed the news via his Twitter account. He had already scaled the six highest peaks without using artificial oxygen. He said that his ascent to the mount's summit, at an altitude of 8,126 meters, was a part of the rope-fixing expedition with the leading team.

Meanwhile, he pointed out that it was his first summit of the mountaineering season in Pakistan.

History created

Earlier, Sajid Ali Sadpara created history by becoming the first mountaineer from his country to reach the summit of Mount Manaslu, the eighth-highest peak in the world. The climber was stuck in the afternoon by a huge avalanche around C4, according to Sadpara's team, who confirmed that he reached the summit of Manaslu before that.

Manaslu's "real summit" gained notoriety when renowned Nepali climber MingmaG asserted that all previous summit attempts at the peak were not the true summit and that there was still a distance to travel before reaching the mountain's peak.

Following Mingma's confession, some

climbers—among them Pakistani climbers Sirbaz Ali and Shehroze Kashif—aiming for various records—announced that they would attempt to summit Manaslu again. The climbers who wanted to reach a real summit this season included Sajid Ali Sadpara, the late Ali Sadpara's son. Sajid's successful ascent of Mt. Manaslu, 8,163 metres, without the use of extra oxygen, was confirmed by his team on Monday afternoon.

Naila Kiani's Team

In a remarkable achievement, a team of eight mountaineers led by Naila Kiani has successfully recovered the body of Muhammad Hassan Shigri from an 8,200-meter peak on K2, the world's second-highest mountain.

This recovery mission, which took three days to complete, from the bottleneck to the base camp, marks the highest-ever body retrieval on K2.

Muhammad Hassan Shigri's death last year had captured global attention due to the ethical concerns surrounding the incident.

Reports revealed that, at the time of his critical condition, other climbers had passed him by without offering assistance. This lack of aid during his final moments

stirred significant debate and drew widespread criticism.

Naila Kiani, who was approached by Hassan's family, swiftly assembled a skilled team to undertake this challenging mission.

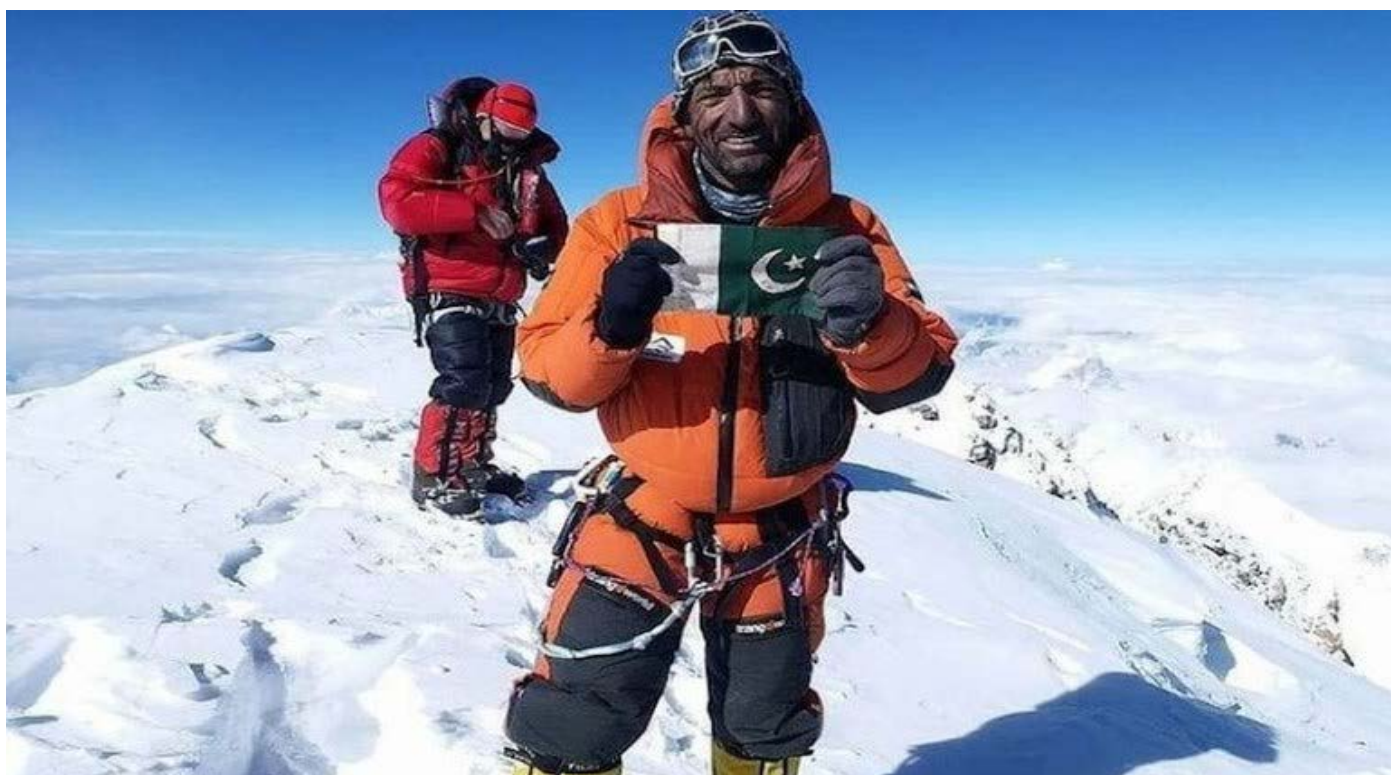
The team, comprising experienced high-altitude climbers including Dilawar Sadpara, Akbar Hussein Sadpara, Zakir Hussein Sadpara, Mohammed Murad Sadpara, and Ali Mohammed Sadpara, along with a logistics manager, worked under arduous conditions to retrieve the body. Their expertise and determination were crucial in navigating the treacherous terrain of K2.

This mission was particularly noteworthy not only for its success but also for its timing. It coincided with the 70th anniversary of the first successful summit of K2.

Kiani's leadership in this unprecedented rescue operation underscores the exceptional capabilities and dedication of Pakistani high-altitude climbers, who often undertake dangerous and costly missions with little recognition.

Previous attempts to recover Hassan's body had faced significant challenges, including high costs and lack of official support.

Many of these attempts were deemed too risky or expensive, which contributed to the



delay in the retrieval efforts. Kiani's team overcame these hurdles, reflecting both their remarkable skills and their commitment to providing Hassan with a dignified burial.

Naila Kiani, who had already made headlines in May 2024 by scaling Makalu—the world's fifth-highest peak—and becoming the first Pakistani woman to conquer 11 of the world's 14 highest mountains, has further solidified her legacy with this successful recovery mission. Her accomplishment on K2 not only highlights her personal achievements but also brings attention to the vital work of Pakistani climbers in the global mountaineering community.

The Pakistan Army has rescued over six mountaineers from the United States, Chile, Macedonia, and Nepal who were stranded on K2. The mountaineers were struck by high-altitude sickness during an expedition at the K2 base camp.

The climbers, who were at the base camp to attempt to summit K2, contacted the Pakistan Army for rescue. The mountaineers expressed their gratitude to the Pakistani Army for their assistance. Despite treacherous routes and inclement weather conditions, the Pakistani Army successfully saved the lives of the foreign mountaineers. The rescued climbers are now receiving

medical assistance.

Similarly, on August 19, 2023, Pakistan Army aviation helicopters rescued five foreign mountaineers and a local guide who were stranded at peaks near K2 base camp, Concordia, and Shigar in Gilgit-Baltistan, according to the Inter-Services Public Relations.

Meanwhile, two Japanese climbers, Kazuya Hirade and Kenro Nakajima, have gone missing while attempting to summit K2, the world's second-highest peak at 8,611 meters. The incident occurred on Saturday morning as the climbers were navigating the treacherous slopes of K2, located in Pakistan's Karakoram range.

According to Shigar Deputy Commissioner Waliullah Falahi, the climbers fell from an altitude of approximately 7,500 meters, west of K2. Despite a swift response, including a search operation by the Pakistan Army, the situation remains dire. Helicopters dispatched from Skardu located the climbers below the 100-meter mark, but both appeared to be motionless. Due to the high altitude, the helicopters were unable to land or hover, complicating rescue efforts. A ground team is being prepared to undertake the challenging task of retrieving the climbers, though their current condition remains uncertain. In contrast to this tragedy, the day saw other notable achieve-

ments in high-altitude climbing. A group of 12 Pakistani climbers, along with one Russian and two Nepalese mountaineers, successfully reached the summit of Broad Peak, which stands at 8,051 meters.

The ascent took place in a brief period of favorable weather. The climbers included members of the Karakoram Expeditions team, led by renowned climber Mirza Ali, who expressed immense pride in their accomplishments. The team, which had battled through deep snow and challenging conditions, fixed ropes to the summit, showcasing their resilience and mountaineering prowess.

Mirza Ali's team was joined by a four-member expedition from Pakistani Broadboy Adventures, led by Shehroze Kashif, the youngest Pakistani to summit K2. Kashif and his team reached Broad Peak at 11:30 a.m., and expressed satisfaction with their achievement despite the narrow weather window. Sunu Sherpa of Nepal set a world record by climbing Broad Peak for the third time, a remarkable feat in the mountaineering world.

Summit Karakoram CEO Iqbal Qadri praised Sunu's exceptional skills and determination, highlighting his ongoing efforts to scale all 14 of the world's eight thousands.







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