



Islamabad POST

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Ethiopia keen to see huge Pak presence in trade fair in Oct

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Players should adopt modern hockey tech

Detailed News On Page-06

No delay in CPEC projects, says Ahsan

Detailed News On Page-08



Briefs

Three new Polio cases raise Pak tally to 17

New cases were detected from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: At least three new cases of poliovirus were confirmed from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh on Sunday, bringing Pakistan’s national count to 17 for the year 2025. The Regional Reference Laboratory for Polio Eradication at the National Institute of Health has confirmed the detection of cases in Lakki Marwat, North Waziristan and Umerkot. According to a press release, the cases were detected in a 15-month-old girl from UC Takhtikhel in district Lakki Marwat, a six-month-old girl

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Interior Minister pays tribute to martyr Major

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited the residence of Shaheed Major Rab Nawaz in Muzaffarabad today. He met with the father, brother, and other family members of the martyred Major. Mohsin Naqvi expressed heartfelt condolences on the martyrdom of Major Rab Nawaz and prayed for the elevation of his ranks. The Interior Minister paid rich tribute to the valor and

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At least 11 die in traffic accidents

Bus veers off into ditch in Chakwal, police blame accident on driver’s negligence

NEWS DESK

CHAKWAL: At least 11 people died and dozens were injured on Sunday in two separate incidents involving passenger vehicles in Punjab’s Chakwal and Sindh’s Jamshoro districts. In Chakwal, nine people were killed after a passenger bus travelling from Islamabad to Lahore veered into a ditch on the motor

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Kashmir issue

Pakistan to welcome US mediation

Deputy PM Ishaq Dar Engages Pakistani-American Community, Welcomes US Mediation on Kashmir

CENTRELINE REPORT

NEW YORK – Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar met with prominent members of the Pakistani-American community in New York, where he highlighted Pakistan’s economic recovery, diplomatic resurgence, and regional priorities—including a significant offer for US mediation on the Kashmir issue. Reiterating Pakistan’s commitment to UN-backed resolutions on Kashmir and Palestine, Dar emphasized the need for peaceful conflict resolution. In a significant statement, he expressed Pakistan’s openness to US mediation on the Kashmir dispute. “Pakistan welcomes any constructive role the United States can play in facilitating dialogue between Pakistan and India to resolve the Kashmir issue in line with UN resolutions,” he declared. This marks a notable shift in Pakistan’s diplomatic outreach, seeking greater international involvement in the longstanding dispute. Dar began by acknowledging the vital contributions of Pakistani-Americans in strengthening US-Pakistan relations and promoting Pakistan’s image abroad. He praised their unwavering support during recent tensions with India and their advocacy for the rights of Kashmiris. “The diaspora has been a bridge between Pakistan and the US, and your role in amplifying the Kashmiri voice on the global stage is commendable,” he said. The Deputy PM shared positive updates on

Pakistan’s economy, noting the successful completion of the IMF program, declining inflation, and restored investor confidence. He mentioned that international credit rating agencies have recognized Pakistan’s improved macroeconomic outlook. “Our goal is to position Pakistan among the top 20 global economies,” Dar stated, emphasizing the government’s focus on sustainable growth through initiatives like the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), which aims to streamline foreign investment in key sectors such as agriculture, IT, and energy. Dar asserted that Pakistan has moved past its previous diplomatic isolation and is now actively engaging in global diplomacy. He highlighted Pakistan’s current presidency of the UN Security Council (UNSC) and its two-year non-permanent membership, secured with overwhelming support from 182 nations. “This reflects the world’s trust in Pakistan’s principled stance on international issues,” he said. On Afghanistan, Dar stressed Pakistan’s efforts to enhance regional connectivity through trade and rail links to Central Asia. However, he reiterated concerns over terrorism emanating from Afghan soil, while acknowledging recent assurances from Afghan authorities. “We expect our Afghan brothers to honor their commitment to prevent their territory from being used against Pakistan,” he said.

Continued on Page 06

‘Export quality’

Donkey meat back on sale as authorities bust illegal slaughterhouse

Booming Chinese demand for donkey hides fuels black market resurgence

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) has dismantled an illegal donkey slaughter operation in the Tarnol area near the federal capital, seizing over one tonne of meat and rescuing more than 50 donkeys destined for unregulated slaughter. The raid conducted in coordination with local police and the district administration also led to the arrest of a foreign national, believed to be linked to a wider illegal network involved in the processing and export of donkey meat. IFA Deputy Director Dr Tahira Siddique confirmed that 25 maunds (1,000 kilograms) of meat were found packed and ready for distribution. “Initial in-

vestigations suggest the meat was not only being sold locally but was also being prepared for export abroad, in violation of health, safety, and export regulations,” she said. “The meat was destroyed on site, and further legal action is underway,” she added. A police case has been registered against the accused, and a full-scale investigation is now focused on identifying the buyers and supply chain networks connected to the operation. The raid comes against the backdrop of soaring international demand for donkey hides and meat, particularly from China, where the animals are not only used in culinary practices but also form

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad— DNA

Naqvi meets PM; briefs about policy of Zaireen

The PM directed the Minister for Aviation to arrange special flights

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Interior Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi Sunday called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. During the meeting, the interior minister briefed the prime minister on the new policy for the Zaireen. The prime minister directed the Minister for Aviation to arrange special flights for the Zaireen, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. The law and order situation in Balochistan province was also discussed during the meeting. The prime minister directed the interior minister to initiate work on the Gwadar Safe City project.

For Arbaeen

Govt bans road travel to Iraq, Iran amid security threat

Arbaeen, which marks the 40th day of mourning following Ashura, sees millions of pilgrims travel to Iraq annually

FARRUKH SHEHZAD

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Sunday said that Pakistani pilgrims would not be allowed to travel to Iran or Iraq by road for this year’s Arbaeen pilgrimage due to security concerns. Each year, around 700,000 Pakistani pilgrims travel to Iraq, particularly for Arbaeen, which marks the 40th day of mourning following the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) at the Battle of Karbala. Taking to his X handle, the interior minister said the decision was taken after detailed consultations with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Balochistan government, and security agencies. “This difficult decision has been made in the interest of public safety and national security,” Naqvi added.

However, the security czar confirmed that pilgrims would still be permitted to travel by air. He added that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had directed authorities to arrange additional flights to facilitate pilgrims in the coming days. The development comes hours after Naqvi held a meeting with PM Shehbaz in Islamabad. The premier directed the authorities to arrange special flights for the pilgrims. In a similar decision in May this year, Pakistan and Iran have agreed to enhance cooperation for religious pilgrims by keeping their shared border open 24 hours a day during the Islamic months of Muharram and Safar, including the period of Arbaeen. The agreement also includes an increase in flights

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Israeli forces intercept Freedom Flotilla ship bound for Gaza

Broadcast shows activists sat on the deck of the “Handala” as Israeli soldiers took control of the vessel

RAMALLAH: Israeli troops boarded a boat which the pro-Palestinian activist group Freedom Flotilla had been sailing towards Gaza on Saturday, according to a live-stream broadcast by the group. The broadcast showed the activists sat on the deck of the “Handala”, holding their hands up and whistling the Italian anti-fascist song “Bella Ciao”, as the soldiers took control of the vessel. The Handala had been on course to try to break an Israeli naval blockade of Gaza and bring a small quantity of humanitarian aid to the territory’s Palestinian residents. Three video livefeeds of the scene, which had been broadcast online, were cut minutes later. In a message on social media, the Freedom Flotilla Coalition declared: “Handala’ has been intercepted and boarded illegally by Israeli forces whilst in international waters.” An online tracking tool set up to plot the Handala’s course showed the boat’s position as roughly 50 kilometres (30

miles) from the Egyptian coast and 100 kilometres west of Gaza when intercepted. There was no immediate confirmation of the operation from the Israeli military, but earlier in the day it had announced it would enforce “the legal maritime security blockade on the Gaza Strip”. The Handala was carrying 19 activists, including European politicians, and two Al Jazeera journalists, who were able to broadcast from the vessel until shortly before its interception. Two French MPs were among those detained, Emma Fourreau and Gabrielle Cathala. Their party leader, Jean-Luc Melenchon of France Unbowed (LFI), condemned Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. “Netanyahu’s thugs boarded Handala. They attack 21 unarmed people in territorial waters where they have no right. A kidnapping in which two French parliamen

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Talha opens free eye surgical camp

ISLAMABAD: Senator Talha Mehmood, on Saturday, inaugurated a two-day free surgical eye camp jointly organized by the National Press Club (NPC) and Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital, Rawalpindi. The initiative aims to provide free eye care services to NPC members and their families on July 26-27, from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Senator Talha Mahmood, while inaugurating the camp, commended the efforts of NPC leadership and the president of the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), Afzal Butt, for organizing the free eye surgical camp with modern facilities. "Organizing a camp-free world-class medical facilities for NPC's members and their families clearly highlights the commitment of leadership regarding the medical care of media professionals," he said. On this occasion, the president of PFUJ, Afzal Butt, said that arranging such facilities for the convenience of the members in this surgical camp is a great achievement of NPC President Azhar Jatoi, Secretary Nayyar Ali, Finance Secretary Waqar Abbasi and others.—APP

Efforts afoot for promotion of tourism sector in GB

ISLAMABAD: The development and prosperity of Gilgit Baltistan were the top priority of the Federal Government, and in this regard, various projects of development had been launched for the promotion of the tourism sector, health facilities, improvement in the education sector, and to mitigate the pressure of unemployment in this area.

An official source told APP that under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, a series of mega development projects for the development of the remote areas of Gilgit-Baltistan had been launched and work on progress.

He said the incumbent regime also focused on developing the road network and connectivity of slum areas with each other to facilitate the local community.

The local government is also upgrading the basic health units in the far-flung areas of the GB.

He underlined that tourism is a lucrative business of the local community, and in this regard, the GB government provides training facilities to the youth of the area. Tourism is the best source of income for the local population, as millions of tourists visit this area every year.—APP

Hospitality Park Murree' project MoU signed

ISLAMABAD: The National Police Foundation (NPF) has launched a new residential project titled NPF Hospitality Park Murree to provide welfare-focused housing solutions for police officers, civilians and especially the families of police martyrs and veterans, with formal MoUs signed during the launch ceremony to mark collaboration with key stakeholders. A public relations officer told on Sunday that the initiative was formally unveiled during an official ceremony, during which memorandums of understanding (MoUs) were signed between the foundation and key stakeholders. The event reflected NPF's commitment to improving the standard of living for police personnel and the general public.—APP

Future of Pak-China ties discussed at CASS seminar

The event concluded with an engaging session, where participants discussed China's evolving role in the global order and its strategic significance for Pakistan's future partnership with China

DNA

LAHORE: The Centre for Aerospace and Security Studies (CASS), Lahore, hosted a guest talk titled "Future of Pakistan-China Relations under China's Model for Global Development and Governance" on 24th July 2025. The event was attended by members of academia, and intellectuals. CASS is an independent think tank that continues to arrange academic events for academia and practitioners interested in National Security in its wider context.

In her opening remarks, Maheera Munir, Research Assistant at CASS Lahore, highlighted China's distinct worldview, which is rooted in sovereignty, long-term planning, infrastructural connectivity and mutual development. She emphasised the need to diversify Pakistan-China relations by expanding cooperation in education and research to further strengthen the partnership between the two countries.

Mr Shakeel Ahmed Ramay, Founding CEO of the Asian Institute of Eco-civilisation Research and Development, underlined that China's policy is based on the principles of non-interference, constructive dialogue and proactive engagement. He noted that China's worldview is shaped by the concept of a 'community with a shared future', with a strong



focus on green growth, market liberalisation and innovation. He explained that China has developed a cycle of progress by prioritising STEM education, which drives knowledge creation, scientific research and innovation. He emphasised that, like China, Pakistan must embrace a market econ-

omy supported by a strong and visible state role.

In his concluding remarks, Air Marshal Asim Suleiman (Retd), President of CASS Lahore, stressed that the China-Pakistan partnership stands as a beacon of strategic trust and mutual respect in a rapidly changing world. He high-

lighted that initiatives like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) are not merely infrastructure projects but symbols of shared vision, regional connectivity and collective prosperity. He urged that both nations must continue to align their strengths, leveraging knowledge, innovation and

cultural exchange to co-create a just, inclusive and interconnected global order.

The event concluded with an engaging session, where participants discussed China's evolving role in the global order and its strategic significance for Pakistan's future partnership with China.

Anti-encroachment drive amid of monsoon rains

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA), under the direction of Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad Muhammad Ali Randhawa, is ramping up efforts to remove illegal encroachments across the federal capital, particularly those obstructing stormwater drains, in a bid to avert flooding during the monsoon season. An important review meeting was held at CDA headquarters on Saturday, where senior officials from the CDA, Islamabad administration, and Directorate of Municipal Administration (DMA) assessed the progress of the ongoing anti-encroachment campaign.

The meeting followed instructions from Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi to intensify action against unauthorized constructions on public land. The officials reaffirmed that illegal structures built over natural drains and water channels pose serious safety risks. "Encroachments on drains are not just illegal—they are a disaster waiting to happen during the monsoon," Randhawa said. "We are taking strict legal action and have begun sealing and demolishing such structures." The meeting was informed that authorities had already issued 24-hour notices for the voluntary removal of illegal constructions on stormwater drains. If owners fail to comply, the encroachments will be sealed and removed forcibly. These measures, officials say, are essential to prevent emergency situations like urban flooding, which has increasingly plagued the city in recent years.—APP

Marka-e-Haq symbol of national unity: Tessori

KARACHI: Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori has said that "Marka-e-Haq" (Battle for Truth) was not just Independence Day event but a vibrant symbol of renewed commitment, national unity and public inclusion. He expressed these views during a meeting with a 66-member delegation of MQM Pakistan Labour Division, led by Rizwan Babar here Sunday. Senior leaders including Dr. Farooq Sattar, Anees Qaimkhani and other officials were also present.

The meeting featured detailed discussions on the Independence Day event Marka-e-Haq", the challenges faced by the working class, employment opportunities, welfare in-

itiatives, and the strategy for future joint actions. The Governor Sindh instructed the participants to ensure active, organized and enthusiastic participation of labourers in the celebrations, so their representation could be highlighted effectively at every level.

Appreciating the role of the working class, the Governor Sindh said that the foundation of national progress lied in the relentless efforts of labourers, and their welfare must be the government's top priority. He assured the delegation of full support in addressing the issues faced by workers. Kamran Khan Tessori told that the Governor House was no longer

merely a government building, but a symbol of public representation, inclusion and partnership. Its doors remain open at all times for workers and all sincere Pakistanis, he added. He further expressed his desire to see Pakistan's labour force become empowered, dignified, and prosperous a class that not only drives the economy but also holds a strong voice and active role in policy making. He termed this meeting as a practical and positive step towards the promotion of labour rights, highlighting their issues at the highest level, and ensuring their robust participation in national celebrations.—APP

Two alleged human traffickers held

LAHORE: Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Lahore Zone claimed on Sunday to have arrested two suspects involved in human trafficking and visa fraud during the targeted raids conducted in Islamabad and Lahore.

FIA spokesperson told the media that the accused identified as Naveed Tahir and Zubair Muhammad were allegedly involved in defrauding innocent citizens by falsely promising overseas employment opportunities. Naveed Tahir is accused of scamming a citizen out of Rs 1.68 million by falsely offering a job in Lithuania and Zubair Muhammad allegedly collected Rs 700,000 from another individual under the pretext of arranging travel to the United States. After collecting large sums of money from their victims, both individuals went into hiding.—APP

Final-year fashion show held

ISLAMABAD: Final-year students of the BS Fashion Design program at the National Textile University (NTU) Faisalabad showcased their creativity, vision, and technical skill during an impressive fashion show held as part of their academic evaluation. Emphasizing themes of sustainability and cultural relevance, the show reflected the growing global trend of conscious and innovative fashion. The event, a key feature of the final semester, drew attention from prominent figures in the fashion and textile industry. A large number of fashion professionals, designers, and academics attended the show, offering praise and encouragement to the graduating batch for their originality and craftsmanship.—APP

Heroic act of police officer widely hailed

SHO Gujjar's heroic efforts have left an enduring legacy, one that will inspire future generations of law enforcement officers to serve with the same passion and commitment

MUMTAZ AHMED BHATTI

ISLAMABAD : On a fateful day in the quiet town of Qaimpur, Punjab, a heart-wrenching incident.Two children found themselves in peril, struggling against the relentless currents of a canal.The distress call came in with urgency, alerting the authorities to the dire situation. Without a moment's delay, the Qaimpur police, under the leadership of Station House Officer (SHO) Ayub Gujjar, mobilized to the scene. Remarkably, the police team arrived before specialized rescue personnel could reach the location, demonstrating their readiness and efficiency in responding to emergencies. This rapid response was the first indication of the exceptional leadership and dedication that would define the events that followed.Faced with the sight of the

canal's unforgiving waters, SHO Ayub Gujjar did not hesitate. Displaying remarkable courage, he plunged into the canal alongside local residents who had gathered at the scene. Together, they battled the currents in a desperate search for the two children.The sight of a police officer, typically seen in the role of maintaining law and order, diving into treacherous waters to save lives left an indelible mark on the onlookers. His actions transcended the expectations of his role, embodying the essence of public service and heroism.The incident has sparked conversations about the role of law enforcement in fostering trust and safety within communities, with SHO Gujjar emerging as a beacon of hope and reliability. SHO Gujjar's heroic efforts have left an enduring legacy, one that will inspire future generations of law enforcement officers to serve with the same passion and commitment.



ISLAMABAD: Incharge Peoples Central Secretariat Syed Sibtal Haider Bukhari, Shakeel Abbasi, Rashid Chohan along with others cutting cake on the occasion of 70th Birthday of President Asif Ali Zardari at Peoples Central Secretariat. DNA

Culture Policy to promote heritage, soft image worldwide

ISLAMABAD: In a major step toward redefining Pakistan's cultural narrative and global image, the federal government is set to unveil a landmark National Culture Policy after August 14.

The comprehensive policy aims to revive the nation's cultural identity, preserve its diverse heritage, and project Pakistan's soft image on the world stage.

This was disclosed by Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture, Aurangzeb Khan Khichi, in an exclusive interview with where he described the policy as "a national commitment to our roots, creativity, and civilizational pride." "This is not just a policy document but a national

commitment to our identity through which we seek to unify the cultural landscape of Pakistan and proudly present our heritage on the global stage", the minister stated.

The policy, currently in its final stages, is being shaped through a broad consultative process involving all provinces, cultural experts, writers, artists, and relevant stakeholders.

Highlighting the main focus of the policy, he said it will work to counter negative perceptions and project Pakistan's true image. "We want to reject narratives that associate our country with bullets and guns. Our land is home to ancient civilizations like Mehrgarh, which is over 12,000 years old, along with

Harappa, Mohenjodaro, and Taxila. We have one of the richest cultural heritages in the world."

He said the policy will offer institutional backing to artists and literary communities and introduce reforms in outdated structures. "For too long, our culture has been ignored or underutilized and now is the high time to rejuvenate our cultural identity and heritage."

The federal minister shared that Pakistan currently has cultural cooperation agreements with 86 countries and is working to increase that number to 125. A dozen ambassadors have visited us in recent weeks, showing keen interest in cultural collaborations, he noted. Highlighting the glob-

al presence of Pakistani artists, he noted that a group of young performers recently visited China, where they received overwhelming acclaim, while another delegation is set to leave for Uzbekistan shortly.

Referring to the growing international engagement, the minister said that last year, six countries participated in the Lok Mela. "This year, around 12 countries are expected to participate by setting up their pavilions". Khichi said the government is also taking concrete steps to promote religious and heritage tourism. A national plan in this regard is being pursued following a high-level meeting chaired by the Prime Minister with participation of culture and tourism

representatives.

As part of this initiative, Pakistan is establishing the first-ever Buddhist Cultural and Information Center at Lok Virsa, Islamabad, while infrastructure at key Buddhist sites such as the Shah Allah Ditta Caves is being upgraded. "These efforts will help Pakistan emerge as a destination for pilgrims, researchers, and tourists interested in Buddhist heritage," he said. He shared that after the 18th Amendment, most archaeological sites are now managed by provincial governments. However, the federal ministry has written to the provinces to upgrade facilities at Buddhist sites, as these attract international visitors.—APP

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

JULY

July 01/Japan Self Defence Day

July 01/Singapore Armed Forces Day

July 01 / Canada National Day

July 01/Somalia Independence Day

July 04/USA Independence Day

July 05/Algeria Independence Day

July 09/Argentine Independence Day

July 09/Mongolia Revolution Day

July 14/France National Day

July 15/Brunei Sultan's Birthday

July 21/Belgium National Day

July 20/TRNC Independence Day

July 23/Egypt National Day

July 26/Cuba National Day

July 26/Liberia National Day

July 30/Morocco National Day

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RGH.....9290301-7

Holy Family.....9290322-7

PIMS.....9261170-79

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Shifa International 4603666

Departments

CDA.....9221334-43

CDA.....9208301-04

Met Office.....9250360-6

RDA.....5555864

TMA.....5770886

Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....9209224

Potohar Town.....9209224

Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: The French ambassador Nicolas Galey hosted a reception to bid farewell to 115 Pakistani scholars heading to the EU under Erasmus program. DNA

Pak to strengthen coop between China, OIC States

The MoU was signed by Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General OIC-COMSTECH and Mr. Li Jinsong, President and Founder of Tang Chinese Education and Technology Ltd., in a ceremony held in COMSTECH Secretariat Islamabad, Gwadar Pro reported

ISLAMABAD: The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Ministerial Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH), Pakistan, and Tang Chinese Education and Technology Ltd., Beijing signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen cooperation in science, technology and education between China and OIC member states. The MoU was signed by Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General OIC-COMSTECH and Mr. Li Jinsong, President and Founder of Tang

Chinese Education and Technology Ltd., in a ceremony held in COMSTECH Secretariat Islamabad, Gwadar Pro reported. The agreement marks a significant step in fostering academic collaboration and knowledge exchange across borders. Under the arrangement, both parties have agreed to collaborate in various areas. These include the launch of China-Pakistan joint education programs under the CCTE Mode in areas of mutual interest and value. School-enterprise cooperation projects will be developed based on market-driven human resource demands, particularly catering to Chinese-funded enterprises operating in Pakistan and

other OIC countries. A Chinese language demonstration program will be introduced through the TANG Cloud Platform for students and faculty of COMSTECH Consortium of Excellence (CCoE) institutions. The agreement also includes faculty training and exchange programs between Chinese universities and CCoE member institutions, sharing of experiences in innovative teaching methods, curriculum design, and the use of modern educational tools. Additionally, both sides will organize joint symposia, conferences, and events such as the China-Pakistan International Industrial-Academic Cooperation Alliance and cultural ex-

change activities. Witnessing the signing ceremony, Ms. Song Jianying, CEO of Tang Chinese Education and Technology Ltd., Islamabad, expressed optimism about the partnership's potential to drive impactful educational cooperation across the OIC region. Coordinator General OIC-COMSTECH, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary reaffirmed COMSTECH's dedication to enhancing science and technology collaboration among OIC member countries. He emphasized that international partnerships like this are vital to building an ecosystem of innovation and achieving sustainable, knowledge-based economic development in the Muslim world.

CDA plans illuminations to mark Independence Day

ISLAMABAD: A high-level meeting was held at the CDA Headquarters under the chairmanship of Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Randhawa. The meeting was attended by CDA board members, concerned Director Generals and other senior officers. The meeting reviewed the preparations being made by the Capital Development Authority (CDA), Islamabad Administration and Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI) in line with the direction of Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and supervision of the Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, to celebrate Independence Day and Marka-e-Haq in a befitting manner. During the meeting, discussions were held regarding the hoisting of the national flag on government buildings across Islamabad, citywide illuminations and decorative lighting on all major roads including Constitution Avenue, Club Road, Srinagar Highway and Jinnah Avenue. Plans were also discussed to beautify the Federal Capital using digital streamers and LED lighting. Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, said that in order to celebrate Marka-e-Haq with national spirit, various events would be organized across Islamabad. These include flag hoisting ceremonies, illumination of roads with colorful lights, cultural programs, fireworks, national song competitions and public events. Additionally, debate contests, painting competitions, national songs contests, and tableau shows will be held among school students. All 279 parks of Islamabad will be beautifully decorated with lights besides football, cricket and peddle courts. Furthermore, branding related to Marka-e-Haq and Independence Day will be displayed on electric and other buses operating within the city. Chairman CDA added that special measures are being taken to enhance cleanliness, ensure security, manage traffic, restore parks activate children's swings and improve the aesthetic environment so that citizens can celebrate Marka-e-Haq and Independence Day with national pride and enthusiasm. Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Randhawa said that stringent security arrangements will be made by CDA and Islamabad Police across the city during the Marka-e-Haq celebrations. These include checkpoints at entry and exit points, CCTV monitoring at key locations and deployment of special security teams to ensure peaceful execution of all events. Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, said that the purpose of celebrating the Marka-e-Haq in a dignified manner is not only to pay tribute to our brave armed forces but also to recognize this battle as the beginning of a new era. He emphasized that the Marka-e-Haq is living proof that the Pakistani nation stands united and resilient in every difficult moment, ready to stand shoulder to shoulder with its valiant armed forces to defeat the malicious intentions of the enemy. —DNA

China-made electric trams to operate in major cities

ISLAMABAD: Following Lahore, Islamabad is now set to introduce Chinese-made electric trams by CRRC, a major supplier of railway equipment to Pakistan, including passenger coaches and locomotives. The move marks a key upgrade in the capital's public transport system, Gwadar Pro reported on Sunday. The decision was finalized during a meeting earlier this week at the Capital Development Authority (CDA) headquarters. Chaired by CDA Chairman and Chief Commissioner of Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Randhawa, the meeting decided to introduce electric tram buses in Islamabad, ensuring citizens have access to advanced transport solutions. Chairman CDA directed the completion of a feasibility study for the tram system to facilitate modern bus services on the busiest routes. The trams will feature multiple compartments to accommodate more passengers and will be designed to be accessible for differently-abled individuals and women. During the briefing, it was informed that a feasibility report covering financial, operational and business models is being prepared. The electric bus project has already exceeded a daily ridership of 90,000 passengers, as these buses are eco-friendly, cost-effective and punctual, attracting appreciation from citizens. Randhawa instructed officers to finalize the feasibility report, particularly focusing on financial sustainability. He emphasized developing a self-sustaining financial model and exploring public-private partnerships. Clear timelines and operational goals for the tram project were also established. The new trams introduced will run on the road instead of rails. This is the world's first train that doesn't need rails to travel; rather it uses virtual dotted lines on the road for transit. —DNA

Urgent call for financial support to QAU

The alumni community also expressed strong support and appreciation for the QAU Coordination Council for its ongoing efforts and advocacy in highlighting the gravity of the issue and seeking sustainable solutions.

ISLAMABAD: The alumni of Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU) Islamabad, Pakistan's top-ranked and internationally recognized higher education institution, have issued an urgent appeal for immediate financial assistance to rescue the university from an escalating budgetary crisis. In a collective statement, QAU alumni called upon the President of Pakistan (in his capacity as Chancellor of QAU), the Prime Minister of Pakistan (as the Controlling Authority of the Higher Education Commission), and the Federal Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training (Pro-Chancellor of QAU) to approve a special bail-out package of PKR 5 billion to address the university's growing financial deficit. QAU stands as a national symbol of academic excellence and has produced generations of leaders, scholars, and professionals contributing to Pakistan and the global community. However, the institution is now facing a critical financial crisis that threatens its ability to maintain core academic functions, sustain research productivity, and support student facilities. "The financial deficit poses a serious risk to the university's infrastructure, academic integrity, and future development," stated a representative of the alumni. "This is a defining moment to reaffirm our commitment to education and safeguard a premier national institution." The alumni community also expressed strong support and appreciation for the QAU Coordination Council for its ongoing efforts and advocacy in highlighting the gravity of the issue and seeking sustainable solutions. As Pakistan aspires to compete globally in science, innovation, and higher learning, the preservation and strengthening of institutions like QAU must remain a national priority. The time to act is now. —APP

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Police launches '1INFO' App for emergency support

ISLAMABAD: In line with the vision of Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Raza Naqvi and the directives of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police has launched a citizen-friendly mobile application titled 1INFO to enhance public safety and facilitate prompt communication between citizens and law enforcement. A police spokesperson told APP on Sunday that the app is available for download through the official Islamabad Police website, the Apple Store, and Google Play Store. The 1INFO app offers two core features: an Emergency Panic Button and an Information Sharing Button. The emergency panic feature allows users to seek immediate police assistance with just one press. Once activated, Islamabad Police's rescue teams are instantly alerted and dispatched to the user's location without delay, he said. —APP

Pakistan to launch advanced Remote Sensing Satellite

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) has announced the upcoming launch of Pakistan's Remote Sensing Satellite (PRSS) on July 31, 2025, from the Xichang Satellite Launch Center (XSLC) in China. This landmark mission marks a significant stride in Pakistan's pursuit of space technology, promising to dramatically expand Earth observation capabilities. Equipped with state-of-the-art imaging systems, —APP

Briefs

Online shopping trends to boost country's digital economy

ISLAMABAD: An e-commerce expert revealed on Wednesday that daily online shopping in Pakistan has skyrocketed by 500 percent, a surge driven largely by the shift in consumer behaviour following the COVID-19 pandemic. In an interview with a private news channel, e-commerce expert Tanveer Tanoli highlighted the growing trend of online shopping in Pakistan. He stated that, in 2024, the country saw \$7.7 billion in online transactions, with projections suggesting this figure will rise to \$10.1 billion in 2025. This surge, he noted, is largely driven by the increasing global popularity of e-commerce. He said that in Pakistan, there are 14 crores of internet users, and now due to social media outlets' awareness, there is easier access to online shopping apps such as TikTok, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, etc., etc. He explained that, in the past, online shopping was largely seen as a trend among the privileged or wealthier segments of society. However, with increasing awareness, it has now become popular among the youth, particularly women, who can conveniently shop from home with ease. He mentioned that starting an online shopping business requires only a modest budget, making it accessible to many. He added that this trend is especially popular among young people, who don't need a large financial investment to get started.—APP

Rawalpindi sewage master plan to be made functional

RAWALPINDI: Secretary for Housing, Urban Development and Public Health Engineering, Punjab Captain (Retd.) Noor-ul-Amin Mengal on Saturday said that Rawalpindi's sewage system would be expanded and made functional up to 100 per cent. Presiding over a meeting to review the city's water supply and sewage master plan, he said that 40 percent of the sewerage existing system in Rawalpindi would be taken to 100 percent under the Punjab Development Program. The Secretary said that 28 million gallons of water would be supplied to the city after the construction of Charah Dam, while the Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) would install water distribution networks and surface water treatment plants. Nurul Amin Mengal said that underground water tanks would be built to conserve rainwater and wastewater treatment plants would be installed at sewage drain locations in Nullah Lai.—APP

Experts call for indigenisation of drone technology in Pakistan

Air Marshal Farooq Habib (Retd), former Senior Director at CASS Islamabad, focused on the strategic transformation driven by drone warfare. His address was structured around three key policy-relevant dimensions

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS), Islamabad, convened a roundtable discussion on 'Unmanned Military Revolution: Contemporary Drone Warfare and Anti-Drone Systems,' as part of CASS Tech Talk series on 23th July 2025. The discussion covered offensive drone capabilities, emerging technologies such as swarm drones and loyal wingmen, and critical anti-drone defence strategies. The event was attended by members of academia and intellectuals. CASS is an independent think tank that continues to arrange academic events for academia and practitioners interested in National Security in its wider context. The moderator of the roundtable, Air Commodore Raza Haider (Retd), Director at CASS, introduced the Tech Talk as a platform to examine evolving drone technologies and their impact on recent conflicts. He reiterated CASS's commitment to shaping strategic discourse on drone warfare through timely and relevant analysis. Setting the stage for discussion, he highlighted three case studies: the Pakistan-India conflict involving Harop drones, Ukraine's Operation Spiderweb that inflicted USD 8 billion in damage to Russian bombers, and Israel's Operation Rising Lion targeting Iran's air defences. Air Marshal



Farooq Habib (Retd), former Senior Director at CASS Islamabad, focused on the strategic transformation driven by drone warfare. His address was structured around three key policy-relevant dimensions. First, he examined the implications of drone warfare for deterrence and escalation and its linkage to traditional deterrence frameworks. Second, he reviewed the trajectory of drone development and the corre-

sponding military adaptations. Third, he highlighted the democratizing effect of drone technology, enabling the mass proliferation of unmanned technology. Citing Ukraine's exponential drone production, from 5,000 units in 2022 to 2.4 million in 2024, he underscored the strategic implications for regional conflicts. He projected that hybrid warfare, complemented by sporadic conventional engagements, will dominate South Asia's

future conflict landscape. Dr. Sohail Malik, Chairman of the Department of Mechanical & Manufacturing Engineering at Pak-Austria Fachhochschule IAST Haripur, provided a technical briefing on counter-drone systems, emphasizing the necessity of integrated frameworks across four operational domains: detection, tracking, identification, and neutralisation. He advocated for multi-sensor integration including radar, EO/IR,

acoustic sensors, and RF scanning for anti-drone systems reliability. In discussing tracking and identification, he outlined the critical roles of AI/ML, sensor fusion, and GPS manipulation technologies in monitoring flight paths and intent analysis. Dr. Malik warned against reliance on singular technologies and called for policy measures to promote the development of an indigenous, innovation-driven ecosystem. Thanking the speakers for their insightful presentations, Air Marshal Javaid Ahmed (Retd), President CASS, said in his concluding remarks that CASS is rigorously examining recent regional conflicts, particularly the Pakistan-India confrontation and the Iran-Israel-US tensions, to extract critical lessons in contemporary warfare. He also highlighted that the Pakistan-India conflict demonstrated Pakistan Air Force's operational excellence and marked a turning point in the integrated use of unmanned systems and advanced technologies. The roundtable was followed by an interactive question-and-answer session with experts from academia and researchers. It concluded with a consensus that Pakistan must take proactive steps to boost its indigenous market of drones and anti-drones systems to stay ahead of its adversaries and to protect its assets and territory from deadly aerial threats.

New Director General of GDA assumes Charge

ISLAMABAD: Moin ur Rehman Khan officially assumed charge as the new Director General of the Gwadar Development Authority (GDA). Later, he chaired a high-level meeting with departmental heads. During the meeting, he was briefed on completed, ongoing, and upcoming development projects across various sectors, Gwadar Pro reported on Saturday. In the meeting, the DG was briefed by Chief Engineer Haji Syed Muhammad on various initiatives under the Gwadar Smart Port City Master Plan. The briefing highlighted that GDA has so far completed 128 development projects, while work on 20 others is currently underway. Ongoing activities under the Old Town Rehabilitation Project were also reviewed. Details of upcoming projects were shared, including the extension of Marine Drive up to Koh-e-Batil, development of facilities for fishermen and the boat-making industry on the Western Padizar (aka Paddi Zirr) Coast, construction of the Northern Bypass, the Smart Environmental Project, expansion of the GDA Pak-China Friendship Hospital, and establishment of a nursing school and a medical college. Additional projects include the renovation of Shahi Bazaar and Jannat Bazaar and the construction of model neighborhoods in the city's old quarters. Addressing the city's water challenges, officials informed the DG that GDA has connected Gwadar with the Shadi Kaur Dam and Sawad Dam through transmission lines, supplying up to 3.5 million gallons of water daily. However, the persistent drought has dried up the Ankara Dam, creating shortages in surrounding areas. GDA is actively working to mitigate the water crisis. Director General Khan issued "strict directives to relevant departments to ensure uninterrupted and improved water supply to residents", according to an official statement adding that he emphasized the importance of efficient and transparent use of development funds provided by the federal and provincial governments to bring Gwadar up to international standards. He stated that new avenues for investment, employment, and business would be created to attract both local and international investors and tourists and urged GDA officials to uphold professional integrity and ensure timely and sustainable completion of development initiatives. "No leniency will be tolerated in the misuse of public resources," he warned. The Director General also reviewed key proposed reforms and initiatives aimed at boosting GDA's performance, ensuring institutional transparency, and accelerating Gwadar's multidimensional growth in the near future.—DNA

Chairman PNP accuses India

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Pakistan Nazriyati Party (PNP), Shaheer Haider Malik Sialvi Saturday exposed India for its cultural and linguistic genocide of Kashmiris, accusing India of distorting the education system by altering school syllabuses, replacing teachers and renaming cities that reflect Islamic heritage. In an exclusive conversation with state news channel, Chairman of the Pakistan Nazriyati Party (PNP) strongly condemned India's ongoing demographic manipulation in Indian-Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK). Sialvi accused India of using systematic educational changes as part of a broader effort to alter the region's demographic composition. He highlighted how India's

policies, such as the implementation of new residency laws and the settlement of non-local populations, are strategically designed to undermine the Muslim-majority identity of the region. These moves, according to Sialvi, are intended to shift the social and political dynamics of Kashmir, making it easier for India to exert control and dilute the region's distinct cultural and religious heritage, he added. Sialvi also linked these demographic changes to the manipulation of Kashmiri children's education, asserting that India is deliberately distorting the curriculum to sever Kashmiris from their roots. By changing textbooks to remove references to Islamic history, culture and the region's indigenous

identity, Sialvi claimed that India is attempting to "reprogram" the minds of young Kashmiris, leading them to adopt a new, alien identity. He argued that this educational manipulation is a calculated part of India's larger agenda to assimilate Kashmiris and erase their connection to their Islamic heritage, making it easier to implement demographic changes without resistance. The Chairman further pointed out that these combined efforts, altering the education system and changing the region's demographic makeup represent a direct threat to the cultural and religious fabric of Kashmir. He warned that the ongoing attempts to change the demographics and educational landscape in IOJK are not only an assault on Kashmiri children's identity but a calculated move to suppress the region's heritage. Sialvi urged the international community to take immediate notice of India's actions, calling for greater diplomatic pressure to prevent the erosion of Kashmir's Muslim-majority status and its cultural heritage.—APP

FPCCI demands reduction of interest rate to six percent

Despite a Decrease in Inflation, 11% Interest Rate is an Obstacle for Businesses: Atif Ikram

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Atif Ikram Sheikh, President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), has demanded that the interest rate be reduced to six percent in the Monetary Policy meeting on July 30. This measure is crucial to tackle the challenges facing the national economy and to boost industrial and commercial activities. The country's inflation rate has rapidly decreased to four percent, which is a welcome development. In such a situation, the current high interest rate of eleven percent is not only inappropriate but has also become a major obstacle for the private sector. Addressing the Chambers of Commerce and Trade Associations, FPCCI President Atif Ikram stated that the State Bank of Pakistan is set to announce its monetary policy on July 30. He urged them to provide strong arguments and statements in favor of reducing the interest rate to six percent. He emphasized that a reduction to six percent is essential for revitalizing industrial activity, enhancing export competitiveness, stimulating private sector investment, and saving the government 3.5 trillion rupees in debt servicing. President Atif Ikram further elaborated that it has become impossible to run businesses at the current interest rate, as the cost of financing has exceeded limits, adversely affecting industrial production, employment, and exports. He stressed that unless the cost of doing business is reduced, the expansion of industrial activities and the investment climate cannot improve.

COMSTech launched Int'l certificate course

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation's Ministerial Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (OIC-COMSTech) and Ningbo University, China, jointly launched an international certificate course on Applied Biomedical Artificial Intelligence in Islamabad. According to an official statement issued on Thursday, the 19-day hybrid-format course, held at the COMSTech Secretariat, has drawn participation from over 1,000 young scientists, researchers, and professionals across 30 countries. According to Gwadar Pro, the program aims to build practical AI skills for biomedical research, with a focus on participants from low- and middle-income OIC member states. "This initiative marks a milestone in international scientific collaboration," said Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Chaudhary, Coordinator General of COMSTech, in his opening remarks. "AI is transforming biomedical research and healthcare—from disease diagnosis and drug discovery to predictive analytics and personalized medicine.—APP

Two million Pakistanis face preventable blindness

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Major General (Retd) Rehmat Khan, President of Al-Shifa Trust, said on Sunday that Pakistan faces a significant eye health crisis, with nearly two million people exposed to preventable blindness, 80 percent of which is curable. Addressing the media at the National Press Club, he stated that last year, Al-Shifa Trust treated more than 1.8 million patients, including 100,000 surgeries. Approximately 83% of patients received treatment at no cost. "Every day we carry out about 450-500 surgical procedures," Khan said, adding that Al-Shifa Trust carries out about 1,000 corneal transplants every year, which is approximately 50% of the total corneal transplants in the country. He stated that Al-Shifa Trust is the only chain of eye hospitals that treats eye cancer patients at no cost. Regarding future endeavours, the president of Al Shifa Trust stated that a modern and the largest eye hospital in the country is being built in Lahore. An American architectural firm is designing the hospital, and the ground-breaking is scheduled to take place in September 2025. What began as a modest initiative in 1985 has evolved into Pakistan's most comprehensive humanitarian eye care network, transforming

countless lives and restoring hope, he underlined. Khan noted that an estimated 12.64 million people, 61 percent of whom are women, struggle with reading and close-up tasks. Limited access to simple reading glasses severely hinders education, work, and overall well-being for many. Major General Rehmat Khan explained that Refractive errors and diabetic retinopathy significantly contribute to vision loss. He also cited poor hygiene, polluted air, adverse

environmental conditions, financial hardships, lack of awareness, insufficient facilities, and entrenched cultural barriers as critical factors. He stated that the Trust's humanitarian mission extends beyond conventional care, encompassing accessible healthcare that transcends economic barriers. Its growth, from treating 25 to 5,000 patients daily over three decades, reflects unwavering commitment. Technological advancements have enhanced Al-Shifa's capacity

to serve underserved communities. The Chakral hospital expansion, for instance, dramatically increased daily patient capacity from 150 to 650 individuals, reflecting an adaptive approach to meeting growing demand. Al-Shifa aims to double its service capacity to 2.5 million patients annually, including 120,000 surgeries, by 2028. Khan emphasized that while many patients cannot afford treatment, those with resources can support the mission.



ISLAMABAD: Patients being treated during the free eye camp organized at the National Press Club by Al Shifa hospital. —DNA

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France decides to recognizes Palestine

In a landmark and historic announcement, French President Emmanuel Macron has declared that France will officially recognize the State of Palestine. This courageous and morally sound decision is already reverberating across Europe and the broader international community. France, a leading voice in global diplomacy and a key member of the European Union and the United Nations Security Council, has taken a stance that aligns with justice, peace, and the long-overdue rights of the Palestinian people.

This recognition is not merely symbolic; it carries immense political and diplomatic weight. For decades, the Palestinian people have been denied their rightful status as a sovereign nation, subjected to occupation, displacement, and dehumanizing embargoes. Macron's move signals a decisive shift in European thinking – one that could catalyze a domino effect among other European nations who, until now, have remained hesitant under American and Israeli pressure. France's recognition comes at a time when the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has reached new levels of tragedy. In the wake of Hamas' attack on Israel, which many Palestinians themselves have criticized as reckless and damaging to the broader cause, Israel launched a brutal military campaign that has left thousands of innocent Palestinian civilians dead. The world has witnessed horrifying images of children buried under rubble, elderly people fleeing bombed homes, and entire neighborhoods wiped out. These actions have been condemned as war crimes by human rights organizations across the globe.

Yet, for too long, the narrative has been monopolized by a simplistic binary: Israel's right to defend itself versus Palestinian "terrorism." Macron's announcement disrupts this narrative. It sends a clear message that the international community must not confuse the actions of extremist factions like Hamas with the aspirations of the Palestinian people at large – a people who yearn for peace, dignity, and self-determination.

President Macron also made it clear that France's recognition of Palestine is not a blank check for extremism. In his statement, he explicitly called for the disbandment of Hamas and all other radical wings that perpetuate violence. This is a legitimate and necessary demand. Extremist elements have indeed harmed the Palestinian cause, offering Israel justification for disproportionate retaliation. However, this does not mean the collective punishment of over two million people in Gaza is justifiable. The principle of proportionality in warfare has been entirely ignored by Israel, and Macron's recognition of Palestine should also be viewed as a condemnation of such barbarity.

The French president is being widely hailed across the Global South and among progressive forces in Europe for this brave decision. Political analysts have termed it a step in the right direction – one that will encourage other EU states, especially those with growing domestic pressure to support Palestine, to follow suit. Spain, Ireland, Belgium, and some Scandinavian countries have already shown a favorable

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tilt. France's move may push them off the fence.

At the same time, as expected, the United States and Israel have expressed displeasure. Washington, in particular, has long acted as a shield for Israeli policies at the United Nations, vetoing resolutions, and providing uncritical military and financial support. For decades, the U.S. has dictated the Middle East peace process, sidelining genuine efforts for justice in favor of maintaining its strategic alliances. Macron's move challenges this status quo. It suggests that Europe, or at least France, is ready to chart its own course – one that prioritizes international law and human rights over geopolitical convenience.

Palestine's recognition should also be accompanied by practical steps. Embargoes and blockades that have crippled the Palestinian economy and turned Gaza into an open-air prison must be lifted. The Palestinian people must be allowed to trade freely, travel without restrictions, and rebuild their war-ravaged cities with international support. Recognition should pave the way for embassies, diplomatic missions, and integration into global institutions – not just empty statements of solidarity. Furthermore, France's recognition must be backed by legal and political measures to hold Israel accountable for its actions. The killing of innocent civilians – including children and the elderly – cannot go unpunished. International courts and human rights tribunals must be activated. The world must send a message that no state, however powerful, is above international law. It is also important to emphasize that Macron's initiative reflects the voices of many Palestinians themselves – voices that are often drowned out by the noise of war and propaganda. Many Palestinians have openly criticized Hamas for its October 7 attack on Israel, recognizing it as a provocation that has brought unbearable suffering upon the broader population. They argue that they did not choose this path, and they should not be punished for decisions made by a militant faction. In this context, the international community has a moral responsibility to differentiate between legitimate political representation and violent extremism. France's move may also help reenergize the Middle East peace process – long dormant and largely co-opted by those with no genuine interest in peace. With France now recognizing Palestine, the two-state solution – though frail and battered – may once again gain traction. Macron's message is simple yet profound: peace cannot be achieved through perpetual occupation, siege, and violence. It must begin with mutual recognition and respect.

The recognition of Palestine is not just a political statement; it is a moral one. It recognizes the humanity of a people who have been dehumanized for far too long. It acknowledges their right to live in freedom, security, and dignity. And it gives hope – however fragile – that justice can prevail. France has made history. The world must not let this moment pass in vain. The time has come for other nations to join in this cause, to rise above political expediency, and to stand for what is right. The recognition of Palestine is not the end of the road; it is the beginning of a new path – one that could finally lead to peace, justice, and coexistence. In conclusion, President Macron deserves praise for a bold, principled, and potentially game-changing decision. While criticism from powerful quarters was expected, history will remember this as a turning point. France has done what many nations have long feared to do – to speak the truth, to recognize the oppressed, and to push the world closer to justice. Now it is up to others to follow suit.

The Global Case for UN Peacekeepers in Gaza

Qamar Bashir



British surgeon Professor Nick Maynard, recently returned from Gaza, described the horror with surgical precision: “One day they have bullet wounds in the legs, the next day in the chest, and then the genitals.” In an emotional interview on Good Morning Britain, he recounted how Israeli forces even confiscated baby formula from his pocket, fearing it might reach Palestinian infants. His testimony is echoed by Doctors Without Borders and the World Health Organization, who have reported waves of targeted injuries, traumatic amputations

In the annals of modern conflict, Gaza has become the epicenter of a humanitarian catastrophe so deliberate, so brutal, that it no longer shocks – it scars. What is unfolding is not war. It is genocide: systematic, intentional, and aimed at the total destruction of a people – biologically, psychologically, and territorially.

British surgeon Professor Nick Maynard, recently returned from Gaza, described the horror with surgical precision: “One day they have bullet wounds in the legs, the next day in the chest, and then the genitals.” In an emotional interview on Good Morning Britain, he recounted how Israeli forces even confiscated baby formula from his pocket, fearing it might reach Palestinian infants. His testimony is echoed by Doctors Without Borders and the World Health Organization, who have reported waves of targeted injuries, traumatic amputations, and sterilization patterns among young boys – unmistakable markers of war crimes. According to UNICEF, more than 13,000 children have been killed and 17,000 orphaned since October 2023. The World Food Programme estimates over 90% of Gaza's population faces catastrophic food insecurity. Infants are dying of hunger. Children are drinking contaminated water. Mothers are giving birth in rubble with no painkillers or antiseptics. In a bid to whitewash this horror, Israeli officials peddle the narrative that Hamas is stealing aid, selling it on the black market, or using starving civilians as human shields. These claims have been categorically denied by UNRWA, humanitarian NGOs, and even foreign observers operating under tight Israeli and U.S. surveillance. If Hamas truly controlled the aid flow under such intense scrutiny, it would reflect a total failure of Israeli and American military management – or more likely, it exposes the narrative as a calculated deflection. Despite the mounting body count and overwhelming global condemnation, the killings continue. Schools, hospitals, libraries, water plants – nothing is spared. Francesca Albanese, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights, labeled Israel's conduct “a textbook case of genocide.” Her detailed report, The Anatomy of a Genocide, outlined the use of starvation, cultural erasure, and mass sterilization. In return, she was sanctioned by the United States, further demonstrating how Washington has become not just a bystander – but an enabler. Yet around the world, momentum is shifting. In May, France declared

recognition of the State of Palestine, followed swiftly by Spain, Ireland, Norway, and Slovenia. Today, over 140 nations formally recognize Palestine. In the UK, more than 100 Members of Parliament have signed a letter demanding their government do the same, alongside supporting tangible actions to stop Israel's war machine. Even in the United States, the tide is turning. A recent Gallup poll shows support for Israel among Americans has dropped below 50% for the first time in decades. Particularly among younger Americans, there is outrage over the use of U.S. tax dollars to fund indiscriminate bombings of civilians, hospitals, mosques, schools, and refugee camps. The American people are demanding answers. Why are their weapons – including bunker-buster bombs – being used to massacre women and children? What accountability exists for a foreign ally accused of crimes against humanity? Yet this raises a central dilemma: Even if the entire international community, including the UN Security Council, agrees to deploy peacekeepers in Gaza – a single U.S. veto can block it all. The United States holds permanent veto power. And history shows it has used this power consistently to shield Israel from international scrutiny, resolutions, and accountability. This is the elephant in the room. The question now is not whether UN peacekeepers are necessary. That case is undeniable. The real question is: What will it take for the U.S. leadership to finally say – enough is enough? What point of horror, what threshold of death and starvation, what loss of moral standing will convince Washington that continued blind support for Israel is not only unjustifiable – it is suicidal for American credibility? The United States, once considered the global guardian of freedom, democracy, and human rights, now faces a new perception: that of co-conspirator in ethnic cleansing, financier of genocide, and obstructionist of peace. The irony is cruel. The nation that prides itself on defending human dignity is now seen globally as the state bankrolling one of the 21st century's worst atrocities. If Washington genuinely wishes to restore its moral leadership, it must reset its mindset. Supporting Israel unconditionally no longer guarantees peace – it guarantees continued war. Israel will not be peaceful until it is reined in. Gaza will not recover until the killing stops. And the world cannot assist in rebuilding until the bombs stop falling. Regional powers now threaten escalation. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has de-

clared that Turkey may intervene militarily if the Gaza massacre continues, comparing Israel's actions to Nazi crimes. He has suspended arms exports to Israel and frozen defense cooperation. Simultaneously, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has issued stern warnings that further Israeli aggression could destabilize the entire region. Egypt, while not threatening force directly, has tightened its grip on the Rafah crossing and coordinated a new ceasefire proposal with U.S. backing. These are no longer symbolic gestures – they are warnings of regional war. Despite these signals, the UN remains paralyzed. Calls for deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping force in Gaza and the West Bank grow louder by the day. The precedent exists – Bosnia, Rwanda, Congo, South Sudan. Under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, the Security Council has the authority to act where there is a threat to peace, a breach of peace, or acts of aggression. Israel's campaign satisfies all three. But unless the United States abstains – or supports such a resolution – no force will ever reach Gaza. And so the world watches, powerless, as its own institutions are neutered by one member state's political fear and moral blindness.

Still, there is a path forward. If the Trump administration – or any future U.S. leadership – truly believes in the principles upon which America was built, then now is the moment to act. Not with words. Not with concern. But with decisive action. Suspend military aid. Support the peacekeeping resolution. Demand accountability. Only one decision is needed to change the trajectory of this genocide: for the United States to say, “No more.” That single shift – a halt in funding and a vote for peace – would send a shockwave through the Israeli leadership and open the path for healing in Palestine. What's at stake is more than Gaza. It is the soul of the international order. It is the credibility of the United Nations. And it is the moral standing of the United States. If America fails now, it may never again be trusted to defend human rights anywhere. If we fail now, we will not just be witnesses to genocide. We will be remembered as its sponsors. If we fail now, we will be remembered not for what we said, but for what we allowed.

—The writer Press Secretary to the President (Rtd) Former Press Minister, Embassy of Pakistan to France Former MD, SRBC | Macomb, Michigan, USA

Mangroves life under threat

Pakistan in ecological terms is divided into 18 habitual types of mangrove forests, mainly in the near Indus Delta Sindh and a few patches westward along the Balochistan coast. Mangroves have significance for the life of various fish species and the environment, providing protection from natural disasters and defending not only marine but also terrestrial life. Mangrove ecosystems play a vital role in Pakistan's environmental landscape

Coastal mangrove ecosystems in our country have been seriously degraded over the last 60 years due to freshwater diversion for agriculture, water pollution, industrial activities, and overfishing. Pakistan has a 1001-km-long coastline and strategic location in South Asia. It has a diverse landscape, with dynamics of high mountain systems, fragile watershed areas, coastal mangroves, and forests covering approximately 4.58 million ha (5.7 percent) of the country. Pakistan in ecological terms is divided into 18 habitual types of mangrove forests, mainly in the near Indus Delta Sindh and a few patches westward along the Balochistan coast. Mangroves have significance for the life of various fish species and the environment, providing protection from natural disasters and defending not only marine but also terrestrial life. Mangrove ecosystems play a vital role in Pakistan's environmental landscape. Mangrove forests act as natural carbon sinks and are the first line of defense for coastal communities against floods and tropical storms. Mangroves are the life of the seaside community; people use them for many purposes and for protecting life. Mangroves are usually planted in the delta areas where fresh and saline water is available. Pakistan has engaged in numerous plantation activities on many occasions, realizing the significance of the species. Mangroves are essential for the protection of marine life and coastal tourism. Mangroves cover approximately 129,000 hectares, as per existing estimates, in the Indus Delta and about 3,000 ha along the Baluchistan Coast in the Kalmat Khor, Miani Hor, and Gwadar Bay areas. The Indus Delta supports 97 percent of the total mangrove forest (37 percent of the Delta area), while the Balochistan Coast

supports the remaining 3 percent (varying from 8 percent of the total area in Gwadar Bay to 21 percent in Kalmat Khor and 25 percent in Miani Hor). On the Sindh side, the Indus Delta covers approximately a coastline of 250 km, bordering the biggest city, Karachi, in the northwest. The Indus Delta shelf is 15 km wide, receiving freshwater during the monsoon season. However, almost 97% of the mangroves located in the Indus Delta are of the species Avicennia marina. The nearly 800-km-long Baluchistan coast, running along the north of the Arabian Sea, includes mudflats, lagoons, bays, alluvial plains, beaches, and marine terraces. The area covered by mangroves includes 7,471 ha at Miani Hor, 10,216 ha at Kalmat Khor, and 26,316 ha at Gwadar Bay. The human population around these mangroves is estimated to be about 1.2 million. Nearly 900,000 reside in the Indus Delta and 300,000 on the Balochistan side. Therefore, over 90% of the residing population is directly or indirectly engaged with the fishing industry, affecting the livelihoods of at least 100,000 people in fisheries.

Nontraditional Issues contributing to biodiversity loss in the mangrove ecosystem are local, domestic, national, and international. Pollution poses another risk; solid waste, like the floating single-use plastic bags surrounding the dinghies at Ibrahim Hyderi, can block water flow to mangroves or break their roots and branches, stunning or killing them. The biggest issue is a scarcity of fresh water and silt in the coastal belt. The equilibrium in the delta region is maintained through freshwater, which is facing a reduction in its amount due to shifts in natural phenomena and contamination through anthropogenic activities. To address such issues, policies, and legal frameworks for water resources, along

with their strict implementation, is the need of time. Secondly, rapid clearing of mangrove land for urban projects and overharvesting are also major issues impacting the healthy existence of mangrove species. These issues also cause the migration of economically viable fish species, hence declining the outputs of the fishing industry.

Public awareness is the most essential step in addressing the problem. Coastal communities lack the essence of realization of the significance of mangrove species. Moreover, research and development in this area will play a key role in the protection and rehabilitation of the coastal region. To focus on the outputs of fisheries, the Sindh Forest Department, Baluchistan Forest Department, and the Ministry of Fisheries should actively engage with fishermen regarding existing laws, fishing zones, illegal fishing nets, etc.

Qualitative assessments of the fishing community indicate the need for a vocational training program to develop resources conducive to protecting the marine environment. It needs efforts to increase awareness about mangroves and their conservation efforts among the masses, which has greatly facilitated the department in sustaining its efforts in terms of forest sustainability. Needed initiatives massive tree-planting projects to enhance terrestrial forest cover, among these at the national level, such as the Ten Billion Tree Tsunami, initiated in 2018 by former Prime Minister. Infrastructure development in coastal areas directly and indirectly affects the mangrove ecosystems. The government should degrade investment efforts in mangrove areas.

Briefs

Pakistan to welcome US mediation

FROM PAGE 01

Dar recalled Pakistan's decisive response to India's 2019 airstrikes, referencing Operation Bunyan al-Marsoos, which led to the downing of six Indian aircraft. "Pakistan will always defend its sovereignty with full resolve," he asserted, praising the nation's unity during the crisis.

Addressing a key concern of overseas Pakistanis, Dar assured that the government is working to restore PIA flights to the US, UK, and Europe in compliance with international aviation standards. He encouraged the diaspora to invest in Pakistan's development, particularly in education, IT, and infrastructure.

Dar reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to engaging the diaspora as strategic partners in national development and strengthening US-Pakistan ties. His remarks underscored Pakistan's proactive diplomacy, economic revival, and willingness to seek international mediation on Kashmir—a move that could reshape regional dynamics. As Pakistan continues its diplomatic and economic resurgence, the role of the diaspora and international partners like the US remains crucial in shaping a stable and prosperous future.

Donkey meat back on sale as authorities bust

FROM PAGE 01

the backbone of the e-jiao industry—a traditional medicinal product made from donkey skin collagen.

The product has 3,000 years of history and is protected as a form of national cultural heritage, according to Chinese state media. China's Shandong province alone accounts for 90% of the world's e-jiao production. To sustain this demand, millions of donkey hides are needed annually, according to a 2024 report by The Donkey Sanctuary, a UK-based animal welfare organization. This demand has triggered a sharp rise in illegal slaughter around the world and Pakistan is no exception.

Israeli forces intercept Freedom

FROM PAGE 01

tarians are victims," he posted on X. Melenchon demanded the French government take action.

Gaza is facing severe shortages of food and other essentials, with the United Nations and NGOs warning of an imminent famine. The Handala's crew said in a post on X that they would go on a hunger strike if the Israeli army intercepted the boat and detained its passengers. The last boat sent by Freedom Flotilla, the Madleen, was intercepted by the Israeli army in international waters on June 9 and towed to the Israeli port of Ashdod.

Govt bans road travel to Iraq, Iran amid security threat

FROM PAGE 01

and other facilitation measures. The two countries agreed to increase the number of available flights for pilgrims and explore the possibility of sea travel to ease congestion at land crossings. Tehran also pledged to provide accommodation and meals for 5,000 Pakistani pilgrims in Mashhad during the peak pilgrimage season. Pakistan has witnessed a surge in terror incidents since 2021, particularly in the bordering provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.

It carried 12 campaigners on board, including prominent Swedish activist Greta Thunberg. These activists were eventually expelled by Israel.

Modern hockey is about smart play: Brunei high commissioner

Rising Stars Hockey Club Celebrates birthday of fellow Player and Brunei High Commissioner Kamal Ahmed

DNA

ISLAMABAD: July 27, 2025 — In a delightful show of camaraderie and sportsmanship, the Rising Stars Hockey Club celebrated the birthday of one of its most respected members, His Excellency Kamal Ahmed, High Commissioner of Brunei Darussalam to Pakistan, following their Sunday morning practice session in Islamabad. The celebration, held at the club's regular training ground, saw an informal yet warm gathering of young and veteran players, coaches, and supporters. The event highlighted the unique bond that transcends diplomatic roles and athletic pursuits, uniting individuals through a shared passion for hockey. High Commissioner Kamal Ahmed, a seasoned hockey enthusiast and former national-level player, expressed his gratitude to the team members for organizing the surprise celebration. Speaking to the players after the practice session, he thanked the Rising Stars for the honor and encouraged them to continue striving for excellence. "I am truly touched by this gesture," he said. "It shows the spirit of unity and respect that hockey builds. I urge all of you to remain committed not just to the game, but to improving your skills, embracing modern hockey techniques, and maintaining peak fitness." Drawing from his vast experience spanning five decades in the sport, Kamal Ahmed offered valuable advice to the club's younger players. "There's no point in exhausting yourself unnecessarily on the field. Modern hockey is about smart play — share the ball, trust your teammates, and keep your energy intact. This approach not only improves the quality of play but also produces better results." He emphasized that individual play is no longer the hall-



mark of modern-day hockey. "The era of solo runs and glory-seeking is long gone. Today's hockey is built on coordination, tactical understanding, and teamwork. If you want to be part of a winning side, you must learn to work together." Kamal Ahmed also encouraged the club to explore advanced training methods, make

use of technology, and study international gameplay trends to stay competitive. "Skill development is key, especially for young players. The world is evolving, and so must we if we want to keep pace with global hockey standards," he added. Club officials praised the High Commissioner not only for his diplomatic achievements but also for his

continuous mentorship and contribution to grassroots hockey development in Islamabad. "Mr. Kamal is an inspiration for all of us," said a club representative. "Despite his diplomatic responsibilities, he regularly joins our sessions and brings a wealth of knowledge, experience, and positivity." The Rising Stars Hockey Club has built a strong reputation in recent

years for nurturing young talent and promoting healthy, competitive sports culture in the capital. The presence and active participation of prominent figures like Kamal Ahmed further strengthens its community spirit. The event concluded with cake-cutting and informal interactions.

Asia Cup 2025 to be held in UAE from September 9

Naqvi said that while a formal announcement will be made soon, the decision to hold the tournament in the UAE has been finalized. He also added that the full schedule, including match venues and fixtures, will be released shortly by the ACC

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) and Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), Mohsin Naqvi, has confirmed that the 2025 edition of the Asia Cup will be hosted by the United Arab Emirates (UAE), with matches scheduled to start from September 9 and conclude on September 28.

Naqvi said that while a formal

announcement will be made soon, the decision to hold the tournament in the UAE has been finalized. He also added that the full schedule, including match venues and fixtures, will be released shortly by the ACC. "There was a difference of opinion regarding the host country. India had expressed interest in hosting the Asia Cup at home, but after consultations and discussions with all member boards, it was mutually decided that the UAE will

serve as the neutral venue," said Naqvi. The Asia Cup, which features top cricketing nations from the continent including Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and others, promises to be a highly anticipated event, especially in the lead-up to the ICC Champions Trophy 2026. This will not be the first time the UAE hosts the tournament. The Gulf nation has previously served as a reliable neutral venue, offering

world-class facilities and infrastructure to host high-profile international matches. Cricket fans across Asia are eagerly awaiting the official schedule, which is expected to feature blockbuster clashes, particularly between arch-rivals Pakistan and India. Naqvi emphasized that preparations in the UAE are already underway and assured fans of a smooth, competitive, and entertaining tournament.

Pakistan wins bronze medal at Physics Olympiad 2025

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has secured a Bronze Medal at the 55th International Physics Olympiad (IPhO), marking yet another significant achievement in the country's scientific journey. The International Physics Olympiad (IPhO) was held in France from July 17 to 25. Daniyal Shahzad Hamid, a student of The Science School, T Chowk, GT Road, Rawat, Islamabad, clinched the Bronze Medal for Pakistan. Additionally, Muhammad Bilal from Sundar STEM School, Lahore earned an Honorable Mention, while Eiman Fatima from Fazaia Inter College, PAF Base Nur Khan, Rawalpindi received the prestigious Thales Solidarity IPhO Award. The award includes a 5,000 educational grant and a one-year mentorship to encourage inclusion in science and technology. The Pakistani team was sponsored by the STEM Careers Program, a collaborative initiative of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and the Pakistan Institute of Engineering and Applied Sciences (PIEAS). The team was trained and led by Prof. Dr. Shahid Qamar and Dr. Muhammad Irfan, both from PIEAS. PIEAS, under the umbrella of the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC), organizes the National Science Talent Contest (NSTC) annually in four disciplines—Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and Mathematics.—DNA

Three new Polio cases raise Pak tally to 17

FROM PAGE 01

from UC Mir Ali-3 in North Waziristan, and a 60-month-old boy from UC Chajro in district Umerkot, Sindh. "With these new detections, the total number of polio cases in Pakistan in 2025 has risen to 17 — including ten from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, five from Sindh, and one each from Punjab and Gilgit Baltistan," read the statement. "Polio is a highly infectious and incurable disease that can cause lifelong paralysis. The only effective protection is through repeated doses of the oral polio vaccine (OPV) for every child under five during each campaign, along with the timely completion of all essential immunisations," it said.

Interior Minister pays tribute to martyr Major

FROM PAGE 01

heroism of Shaheed Major Rab Nawaz and lauded the courage and determination of his father and brother. He said that a nation with such brave parents can never be defeated by its enemies. He highlighted that Major Rab Nawaz laid down his life for the homeland while fighting bravely against the terrorists of Fitna-e-Hindustan. He is a true hero of the nation and will always remain alive in our hearts.

At least 11 die in traffic accidents

FROM PAGE 01

way near Dhok Sial. The accident, which happened due to the negligence of the bus driver as per the police spokesperson, wounded 31 others which were being shifted to Kallar Kahar Trauma Centre and DHQ hospital. Providing details of the accident, the deputy commissioner has said that all possible medical facilities were being provided to the wounded and that those injured were shifted to the Holy Family Hospital in Rawalpindi. The bus driver, as per a police spokesperson, fled after the accident, and a search for him was underway.

PSB bars federations from committing to attend India events
National Sports Federations directed to consult, seek clearance from PSB

LAHORE: The Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) has barred the country's sports federations from committing to participate in any sports event in India. "Keeping in view the prevailing security concerns, the PSB Board in its 34th meeting held on 23rd July 2025 has decided that no National Sports Federation (NSF) shall commit to participate in any sporting event in India without prior consultation," reads the notification issued by the PSB. It further directed all the NSFs to seek clearance from the PSB before considering participation in any event across the border. The move came amid heightened tensions between the two countries, which have often spilled over into the sporting arena.—DNA

PSB forms inquiry committee over irregularities

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) has constituted a three-member inquiry committee to investigate serious irregularities during the FISU World University Games 2025 held in Germany, including the reported disappearance or escape of two athletes, questionable selection of team officials, disciplinary breaches, and logistical issues. The committee, headed by Director PSB Lahore, has been tasked with submitting a comprehensive report within 15 days. According to a notification issued with the approval of the PSB Director General, the Pakistani contingent's participation in the Games revealed significant administrative failures. These included lack of transparency in the selection of team officials, discipline issues, logistical mismanagement, and the alarming disappearance of two student-athletes. All team officials, except for one coach, were officials from the Higher Education Commission (HEC) or affiliated universities — a fact that has raised concerns regarding the transparency and merit

of their selection. As per HEC, two student-athletes were reported missing or suspected of fleeing during the event. Additionally, the Pakistani women's 4x400m relay team was disqualified from the competition, and a judo athlete competed without proper coaching support and without an official competition uniform. In light of these developments, the PSB has established a three-member inquiry committee comprising Director PSB Lahore Noor-us-Sabah as chairperson, with Nasrullah Rana and Saif-ur-Rehman Rao as members. The committee will thoroughly examine the selection process and transparency behind the nomination of athletes and officials by HEC. It will assess whether each official's inclusion in the delegation was in accordance with established procedures and clearly define their responsibilities. The investigation will also focus on the circumstances surrounding the disappearance or escape of the two athletes, develop a timeline of events, and identify any individuals responsible for negligence or misconduct.—DNA

HEC-PMYP cricket trials in Sindh come to an end

Over 48,000 Aspiring Cricketers Participated in the Trials

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Under the umbrella of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP) and executed by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) in collaboration with Lahore Qalandars, the cricket talent hunt trials across Sindh have concluded with overwhelming participation of over 48,000 aspiring cricket players. The trials were conducted at five key locations across Sindh including Karachi, Hyderabad, Shaheed Benazirabad, Larkana and Sukkur, demonstrating the passion and potential of youth in the province. These trials are an important component of the Project, Talent Hunt Youth Sports League, representing a remarkable initiative by the Government of Pakistan aimed at handholding young cricketing talent, providing them a structured and merit-based platform to showcase their skills. Following the successful completion of trials in Sindh, the trials for the youth of the Punjab are started from today, July 25, 2025 onwards. The trials will commence in Bahawalpur, and continue across major cities including Multan, Faisalabad, Sialkot, Lahore, Rawalpindi, and Jhelum.

This initiative is part of a broader effort to revive grassroots sports, particularly cricket, and to offer equal opportunities to

youth from every corner of the country. With the professional support of Lahore Qalandars and the institutional backing of

HEC and PMYP, this talent hunt marks a new era of sportsmanship, inclusivity, and discipline.



Briefs

**Miftah rebuffs
WFP contracts
allegations,
warns of legal
action**

DNA

KARACHI: Former Finance Minister Miftah Ismail has strongly denied allegations that his family's company unfairly benefited from World Food Programme (WFP) contracts tied to Pakistan's Benazir Nashonuma Programme (BNP), calling the claims politically motivated and threatening legal action. "If the minister has evidence of my involvement in any wrongdoing [...] I advise him to proceed against me in NAB or FIA. Otherwise, I intend to take legal action for defamation," Miftah said in a post on X urging Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry to substantiate the claims in court. The controversy emerged during a Senate session on July 25, when Chaudhry alleged that a ex-minister's firm was the sole supplier of specialised nutrition under the BNP and that Pakistan's procurement rules had not been followed. Senator Anusha Rahman of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) further questioned the transparency of the programme's ballooning budget. At the centre of the controversy is a sharp increase in the programme's budget from Rs2 billion to Rs21.5 billion in 2022-23, during Ismail's tenure as finance minister. Ismail Industries, a company owned by Ismail's family, has been a long-time supplier to the World Food Programme (WFP), which procures specialised nutrition products for the BNP.

**Fuel prices
rise in Pakistan
despite global
decline**

ISLAMABAD: Amid global reductions in fuel prices, the Fake News Watchdog has released a 38-page white paper, criticizing the Pakistani government's recent hikes in petroleum product rates. The report claims the current fuel prices in Pakistan are inconsistent with international trends and heavily burdened by unprecedented taxation. According to the report, the government is collecting a record Rs103 per liter as petroleum levy. It highlights that in the year 2000, when crude oil was priced at USD 22 per barrel, petrol in Pakistan was sold at Rs30 per liter. In stark contrast, the 2025 price of crude oil stands at USD 69 per barrel, while consumers in Pakistan are paying Rs272 per liter. The white paper also reveals that petroleum levy collection reached Rs1.02 trillion in the previous fiscal year, extracted directly from the public's pockets. The watchdog describes the ongoing deregulation of the petroleum sector as deceptive, alleging that while OGRA (Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority) only makes recommendations, the final pricing decisions are taken by the government.—APP

**India nearing
free trade deal
with Oman,
minister says
after UK pact**

NEW DELHI: India's free trade agreement with Oman is almost finalized, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal has announced, only days after New Delhi signed a long-awaited trade pact with the UK. Negotiations between India and Oman on a comprehensive economic partnership agreement formally began in November 2023, with the first round in New Delhi and the second in Muscat. When the talks concluded in March 2024, Oman sought revisions on market access terms and the final signature was postponed. "We are in negotiations at an advanced stage with Oman — almost finalized," Goyal told reporters on Saturday evening, two days after he signed a multibillion-dollar free trade deal with the UK. "The free trade agreement between India and UK, the Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement, clearly reflects the growing relevance and importance of India at the world stage." Under the pact, about 99 per cent of Indian goods will get duty-free access to the UK market, and bilateral trade is expected to increase by over \$34 billion in the next decade from the current \$54 billion.—APP

Kyrgyz DPM seeks stronger trade ties with Pakistan

"I shall convey the personal message of our national leader President Sadyr Japarov to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in the upcoming meeting," said the deputy PM of Kyrgyzstan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan, Edil Baisalov on Sunday sought Pakistani chambers' active role in enhancing business-to-business cooperation between the two countries. He was addressing a reception hosted in his honour by Honorary Consul of Kyrgyzstan Republic in Lahore, Meher Kashif Younis and President of Kyrgyzstan Trade House, Dr Shahid Hasan at Serena Hotel. Edil who is leading a high-level delegation said there was a huge scope of bilateral cooperation in pharmaceuticals, textile, energy, tourism and other sectors between the two countries, he said and hoped a number of agreements and MoUs would be signed during the detailed discussions between the two sides. The reception was also attended by prominent Pakistani businessmen, representatives of chambers of commerce & industry. Edil Baisalov expressed gratitude to Meher Kashif Younis and Shahid Hasan for hosting reception in his honour and for the Kyrgyz delegation and for keeping the Kyrgyzstan-Pakistan partnership intact and dynamic. "I shall convey the personal message of our national leader President Sadyr Japarov to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in the upcoming meeting," said the deputy PM of Kyrgyzstan. About Kyrgyzstan's current economic and industrial potential, he said in the last ten years,



Kyrgyzstan has changed. The snow leopard, which is also national symbol of Kyrgyzstan has woken up, he said, saying it is still a cub but it is growing and becoming a force to deal with. I invite the Pakistani businessmen and investors to take

advantage of the investment-friendly climate of Kyrgyzstan and take part in building its national economy, he said. There are huge opportunities for joint ventures on both sides. The visit he said was only the beginning of a long

successful enduring partnership between the two countries. Earlier, in his welcome address Meher Kashif Younis welcomed the Kyrgyz Deputy PM and the members of his delegation to Pakistan and briefed them about a number of initiatives

taken to explore Kyrgyz business, trade and tourism. We have signed MoUs in pharmaceuticals, textile and education with Kyrgyzstan public and private sectors and your visit, excellency will further strengthen the bilateral relations.

PAJCCI welcomes Pak-Afghanistan PTA

KARACHI: The Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI), under the leadership of Chairman Muhammad Zubair Motiwala, warmly welcomes the signing of the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) between Pakistan and Afghanistan on July 23, 2025. Formalized by Pakistan's Commerce Secretary Jawad Paul and Afghanistan's Deputy Minister of Industry and Commerce Mullah Ahmadullah Zahid, this agreement reduces tariffs on key agricultural goods such as Afghan grapes, pomegranates, apples, and tomatoes, and Pakistani mangoes, oranges, bananas, and potatoes from over 60% to 27%, with a special 22% rate for tomatoes and potatoes. PAJCCI acknowledges this progress, which builds on discussions from the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) meeting on December 17, 2024. This milestone reflects PAJCCI's long-standing demands, pursued through persistent efforts and reinforced during the SIFC meeting, marking a significant step toward enhanced bilateral trade. Despite this encouraging step, PAJCCI President Juanid Makda remains concerned about persistent challenges hindering bilateral and transit trade, which has declined from \$2.5 billion at its peak to \$1.2 billion in 2024. As outlined in our recent letter to the Minister of Interior, Mr. Mohsin Naqvi, these issues include the lack of a consistent, long-term trade policy from the Ministry of Commerce (MoC) and State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), creating uncertainty for traders and discouraging investment. Payment disputes, driven by banking inefficiencies, have led to undue pressure from the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on legitimate businesses, affecting trader confidence. Temporary Electronic Import Form (EIF) waivers, without a permanent system, complicate trade planning, while delays in visa issuance for Afghan businessmen are highly discouraging, streamlining the process could foster greater economic collaboration. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's Infrastructure Development Cess (IDC), though reduced to 1%, and continues to burden transit trade, contrary to international commitments, diverting some trade to routes like Chabahar, Iran. Statutory Regulatory Orders (SROs) from October 2023, including a 10% processing fee on Afghan goods, have significantly reduced trade volumes, despite recent relaxations. Frequent Torkham border closures due to security and administrative issues further challenge cross-border commerce. Makda emphasizes the need for private-sector representation from both chapters (Pakistan & Afghanistan) in the newly formed PTA Implementation Committee, led by MoIC (Afghanistan) and MoC (Pakistan). This committee, with representatives from Customs and Agriculture Ministries meeting monthly, would benefit greatly from PAJCCI's insights as a voice for businesses facing these challenges, ensuring practical and effective solutions.—DNA

Pak hosts landmark regional defence chiefs moot

RAWALPINDI, JUL 26 /DNA/ - Pakistan hosted the Regional Chiefs of Defence Staff Conference today in Islamabad, convening senior military leadership from the United States of America, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. This landmark multilateral engagement marked a significant stride toward advancing regional security cooperation, military diplomacy, and strategic dialogue among participating nations. Held under the theme "Strengthening Bonds, Securing Peace", the conference sought to reinforce security collaborations, enhance training initiatives, and facilitate the exchange of best practices in counterterrorism and other defence and security endeavours. Field Marshal Asim Munir, NI(M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS), formally welcomed the distinguished defence delegations and reaffirmed Pakistan's steadfast commitment to peace, stability, and constructive engagement across the region. "In an era defined by transnational threats and complex hybrid challenges, the imperative for deeper military-to-military cooperation, strategic dialogue, and mutual trust is paramount. Pakistan remains fully committed to working with partner nations to build a secure and prosperous regional environment," remarked the COAS.—APP

Govt lauded for confronting ghee cartel exploiting masses

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has commendably taken decisive notice of systematic overcharging by the cooking oil and ghee industry, with consumers paying an excessive Rs 150 to Rs 175 per kilogram, despite international prices plummeting by 25% since December 2024. This government intervention represents a crucial step in protecting household budgets, which are already strained by persistent inflation. The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) has expressed grave concern over the industry's failure to pass on reduced international prices to consumers. Officials are now preparing formal investigations into price manipulation, a clear sign of the government's resolve to challenge monopolistic practices. This intervention holds promise for a more equitable market that benefits consumers. Shahid Rasheed Butt, a veteran business leader and former president of ICCI, stated that the Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) will initiate an investigation into collusive behavior within the vanaspati manufacturing sector. This development mirrors the government's earlier confrontation with sugar mafia, suggesting a broader strategy to dismantle price-fixing mechanisms, he added. Shahid Rasheed Butt stated that data from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) and other sources reveal a stark disparity between international and domestic pricing trends. While international palm oil prices declined 25% since early December 2024, local cooking oil prices remain 4.5% higher than their previous peaks. This corrupt practice has imposed an estimated Rs50 billion additional burden on households over the past six months. The business community leaders have welcomed the government's intervention while demanding swift accountability. The Pakistan Vanaspati Manufacturers Association (PVMA), representing 148 registered members with 450 licensed brands, has maintained that market competition prevents price manipulation. However, industry observers note that despite intense competition claims, the impact of international price decreases has not been passed on to consumers. The market dynamics of this sector reveal concerning concentration patterns. Pakistan imports 89% of its edible oil requirements, totalling 3.842 million metric tons, with 88% sourced from Indonesia and 11% from Malaysia. This import dependency creates opportunities for coordinated pricing strategies that the CCP must thoroughly examine and address. He said that the FBR import data indicates sufficient stock availability, with 375,000 metric tons of palm oil and palm olein available at ports. These inventory levels contradict industry claims of supply constraints, which are often used to justify elevated prices. Consumer rights organizations have expressed concern over the systematic exploitation of middle and lower-income households.—DNA

Zafar Bakhtawari meets British Member of Parliament

Secretary General United Business Group (UBG) paid tribute to Naz Shah for her social services, especially her exemplary struggle for women and the Pakistani community in British politics

DNA

BRADFORD: Secretary General United Business Group (UBG), Zafar Bakhtawari, held a special meeting in Bradford with prominent British Member of Parliament and British-Pakistani politician, Naz Shah. He was accompanied by his brother, Abid Bakhtawari, while Chairman of the Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Council, Raja Najabat Hussain, and renowned journalist Asad Ali were also present at the meeting. The meeting took place in a very cordial and friendly atmosphere, where topics of mutual interest were discussed, including the role of overseas Pakistanis, and trade, economic, cultural, and social relations between Pakistan and the United Kingdom, along with prospects for future cooperation. Zafar Bakhtawari paid tribute to Naz Shah for her social services, especially her exemplary struggle for women and the Pakistani community in British politics. He stated that the Pakistani nation deeply respects British



parliamentarians, particularly leaders like Naz Shah, who have proudly upheld the name of Pakistan in foreign lands. He added that for women to earn a distinguished position in a developed society like the UK is a great achievement, and Naz Shah's continued success is a source of pride. During the meeting, Zafar Bakhtawari also briefed Naz Shah on the activities of the business community in Pakistan, initiatives being taken under the UBG platform, and ongoing efforts to promote investment. Both leaders agreed that the role of overseas Pakistanis is crucial in strengthening bilateral relations and emphasized the need to further harness their talents and capabilities. Naz Shah appreciated Zafar Bakhtawari's efforts and expressed interest in establishing stronger trade, educational, and social links with Pakistan. She noted that overseas Pakistanis, particularly the business community, are a valuable asset for Pakistan, whose experience and global connections can benefit the country.—APP

US passenger plane evacuated due to brake fire

WASHINGTON: Passengers on a US domestic flight were forced to evacuate onto a runway due to a brake fire just ahead of the plane taking off in Denver, the airline said.

American Airlines Flight 3023 was departing for Miami on Saturday but "experienced a mechanical issue" while accelerating ahead of takeoff at Denver International Airport, the airline told AFP, adding all 173 passengers and six crew "deplaned safely."

One passenger sustained a minor injury and was taken to a hospital for evaluation, American Airlines said. Blown tires and the deceleration of the plane while braking resulted in an isolated brake fire, which was extinguished by city firefighters, according to the airline. Social media videos published by US media outlets showed passengers frantically evacuating an American Airlines plane via an emergency slide as smoke billowed from beneath the aircraft. A man held a child as they rushed down the slide, stumbling as he hit the ground.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) said in a statement that the crew onboard the Boeing 737 MAX 8 plane "reported a possible landing gear incident during departure" at around 2:45 p.m. Saturday. The FAA said it was investigating the incident.

It occurred just a day after a Southwest Airlines flight plunged mid-air to avoid colliding with another aircraft while en route to Las Vegas, injuring two flight attendants.—APP

Wildfires threaten Türkiye's fourth-largest city as locals evacuated

ISTANBUL: Wildfires that have engulfed Türkiye for weeks threatened the country's fourth-largest city early Sunday, causing hundreds of people to flee their homes. Overnight fires in the forested mountains surrounding Bursa in northwest Türkiye spread rapidly, bringing a red glow to the night sky over the city's eastern suburbs. Bursa governor's office said in a statement Sunday that 1,765 people had been safely evacuated from villages to the northeast as more than 1,100 firefighters battled the flames. The highway linking Bursa to the capital, Ankara, was closed as surrounding forests burned. Orhan Saribal, an opposition parliamentarian for the province, described the scene as "an apocalypse."—APP

Briefs

Six killed
in Temple
stampede

NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: At least six people were killed in a stampede after a large crowd gathered at the Mansa Devi temple in the northern Indian city of Haridwar, ANI reported on Sunday, citing Garhwal Division Commissioner Vinay Shankar Pandey. The chief minister of India's northern state of Uttarakhand posted on X that local police and other rescue teams have reached the spot and are engaged in relief and rescue operations. "It is extremely distressing to hear about the stampede on the route to Mansa Devi Temple. The Uttarakhand State Disaster Response Force (UKSDRF), local police, and rescue teams are actively engaged in relief efforts. I am in constant communication with the local administration and monitoring the situation closely. I pray for the safety and well-being of all devotees," CM Dhami said in a statement. The injured have been taken to the local hospital, the ANI report added. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Pramendra Singh Dobal told local media that the police arrived promptly at the scene and launched rescue operations. Preliminary investigations suggest the panic was triggered by rumours of an electric current, which led to the chaos.

Greece gets
EU help
to battle
disastrous
wildfires

ATHENS: Greece battled wildfires that have ravaged homes and sparked evacuations for a second day on Sunday, with the help of Czech firefighters and Italian aircraft expected to arrive later. Fires were still raging Sunday morning in the Peloponnese area west of the capital, as well as on the islands of Evia and Kythera, with aircraft and helicopters resuming their work in several parts of the country at dawn. "Today is expected to be a difficult day with a very high risk of fire, almost throughout the territory", fire brigade spokesman Vassilis Vathrakogiannis said Sunday, though he added that the situation was improving. Forecasters predicted the strong winds that have fanned the flames would die down on Sunday in most areas but warned that Kythera, an popular tourist island with 3,600 inhabitants, continued to face "worrying" windy conditions. —APP

Visa-free
entry to UAE
with official
passports

DNA

ABU DHABI: In a positive development, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar announced on Sunday that Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have activated the arrangements at their airports regarding the visa waivers on diplomatic and official passports. The visa waivers on the two categories of passports were mutually agreed upon by both countries via a memorandum of understanding (MoU) last month, which was due to take effect 30 days after its signing. Dar said in an X post, "In my meeting at Abu Dhabi on 24th June 2025 with my brother Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of UAE, His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, we agreed mutual visa waivers on diplomatic and official passports between our two brotherly countries." "[...] and we both signed a Memorandum of Understanding to make this arrangement effective and operative after 30 days of the signing of the said MoU," he added. The foreign minister announced that he was informed by the UAE authorities that the "visa waiver for diplomatic and official Pakistani passports entering the United Arab Emirates has been activated, effective July 25, 2025, at all UAE airports".

Trade summit in Ethiopia

Governor Kundi assures
Amb. Jemal of full support

Ambassador of Ethiopia calls on Governor KPK to discuss bilateral cooperation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Jemal Beker Abdula, Special Envoy and Ambassador Extraordinary of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, was called on Faisal Karim Kundi, the Honorable Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), at the Governor's House in Islamabad to discuss bilateral cooperation across key sectors including trade, tourism, culture, and climate change. Both officials underscored the importance of fostering strong people-to-people relations through exchange of delegations in vital areas such as trade, investment, health, education, and forestry. Ambassador Dr. Jemal extended heartfelt condolences for the lives lost in Pakistan due to recent floods, emphasizing Ethiopia's solidarity with Pakistan, a nation he noted is among the least contributors to climate change. He also briefed the Governor on the Ethiopian Embassy Islamabad's initiatives to raise awareness about environmental conservation and protection. The Ambassador highlighted the Government of Pakistan's decision to twin its Green Pakistan Initiative with the Green Legacy Initiative of Ethiopia which is a brainchild of Ethiopian Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed. He further elaborated on the expanding cooperation between the two countries, particularly in trade, investment, aviation, health, science and technology, and education. The Ambassador urged



the Honorable Governor to mobilize the business community from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for the 5th Pakistan-Africa Trade Development Conference & Single Country Exhibition (PATDC & SCE), for East African countries, scheduled for October 2025 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Governor assured the Ambassador of his full support in mobilizing the business community for the exhibition. He also pledged to launch the Green Legacy Initiative in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to raise aware-

ness about climate change. The Governor highlighted Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's strategic position as the "Gateway to Asia" and its immense potential for religious tourism, particularly its internationally significant Gandhara civilization.

Dar talks to
Iranian FM

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar today spoke with the Foreign Minister of Iran, Seyed Abbas Araghchi. Both leaders discussed the grave humanitarian crisis in Gaza impacting millions of Palestinian residents. The DPM/FM reiterated Pakistan's unwavering support for the Palestinian people and called for immediate and unhindered humanitarian access. He expressed the hope of achieving meaningful outcomes from the high-level international conference on Palestine and implementation of the two-state solution scheduled to be held in New York tomorrow. They also exchanged views regarding an exchange of a high-level visit to Pakistan in the near future.

Thailand, Cambodia
clash despite
ceasefire hopes

Both said they were willing to start talks to end the fighting, after Trump spoke to the two prime ministers late on Saturday and said they had agreed to meet and "quickly work out" a ceasefire

SAMRAONG.): Thailand and Cambodia clashed for a fourth day Sunday, despite both sides saying they were ready to discuss a ceasefire after a late-night intervention by US President Donald Trump. The neighbours, popular destinations for millions of foreign tourists, have been locked in their bloodiest conflict in years over the disputed border, with at least 33 people confirmed killed and more than 200,000 displaced. Both said they were willing to start talks to end the fighting, after Trump spoke to the two prime ministers late on Saturday and said they had agreed to meet and "quickly work out" a ceasefire. But fresh artillery clashes erupted on Sunday morning near two long-contested ancient temples in the frontier region between northern Cambodia and northeast Thailand that has seen the bulk of the fighting. Cambodian defence ministry spokeswoman Maly Socheata said Thai forces began attacking areas around the temples at 4:50 am. — Agencies

Monsoon
death toll
rises to 272

MEHTAB PRIZADA

ISLAMABAD: As monsoon rains continue to wreak havoc across various parts of the country, the death toll in deluge-related incidents has risen to 272, with Punjab reporting the most deaths, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) said in a statement on Sunday.

The development comes as the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast another spell of monsoon rains across the country from July 28-31 and has urged provincial and district authorities to take immediate precautionary measures.

Providing details of the damage and loss of life caused by rains, the NDMA said that 655 people have been injured across the country in various incidents.

Punjab has reported the highest number of deaths, with 145 fatalities, coupled with 514 wounded. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 64 died — including a woman in the past 24 hours — whereas 80 others were injured.

Meanwhile, in Sindh, the tally stands at 25 deaths coupled with 40 injuries; and in Balochistan, 20 people lost their lives in various rain-related incidents, and four were wounded.

In Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), two people were killed, whereas in Islamabad, the death toll stands at eight, coupled with three wounded.

6 killed,
several
hurt as bus
overturns

ISLAMABAD: At least six people were killed and several others injured when a bus overturned due to the negligence of the driver near Dhok Sayal, a village located near Kallar Kahar in the Chakwal district of Punjab on Sunday morning. According to police and rescue sources, the bus overturned due to excessive speed, resulting in a tragic accident, a private news channel reported. The crash claimed the lives of six individuals on the spot, while several others sustained injuries. The victims were immediately rushed to DHQ Kallar Kahar Hospital for treatment. Rescue teams swiftly arrived at the scene to assist the injured and recover the bodies of the deceased. —APP

Japan funds Rs 4.1bn
maternal health center

Ambassador Akamatsu said: "This facility will bring medical services closer to home and provides mothers and babies with the timely and quality healthcare they deserve

ISLAMABAD: Inauguration Ceremony for "The Project for the Extension of Maternal and Child Health Care Facility in Sindh" was held today at Liaquat University of Medical & Health Sciences (LUMHS) at Jamshoro. Dignitaries included His Excellency Mr. Shuichi Akamatsu, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, Mr. Syed Murad Ali Shah, Chief Minister of Sindh, Dr. Azra Fazal Pechuho, Minister of Health, Government of Sindh, and Mr. Naoaki Miyata, Chief Representative of JICA Pakistan Office. A new maternal and child health center has opened at LUMHS, the regional hub hospital in Hyderabad, with a grant of about 4.1 billion yen. The center includes obstetrics and pediatrics departments, a labor room, obstetrics ward, neonatal and maternal-fetal intensive care units, a laboratory, and outpatient consultation rooms, along with medical equipment like incubators and ultrasound devices. This project will benefit around 3.5 million people living in Hyderabad and Jam-

shoro. Ambassador Akamatsu said: "This facility will bring medical services closer to home and provides mothers and babies with the timely and quality healthcare they deserve. We strongly hope that this new center will be effectively utilized in a sustainable manner. Mr. Miyata, Chief Representative of JICA Pakistan Office said: "I am confident that this project at LUMHS will achieve its goal of reducing the mother and child mortality and better accessibility to quality health care services". With limited healthcare facilities for mothers and infants in Sindh, the number of health care facilities to treat mothers and babies with complications is limited in Sindh. This project aims to alleviate the pressure of tertiary hospitals in Karachi and Hyderabad, providing vital services to families across southern part of Sindh, and enhancing lifesaving opportunities. The Government of Japan and JICA emphasize maternal and child health in their strategy for Pakistan and reaffirms their commitment to this cause. —DNA

Honour killing

Court awards police
remand of 3 suspects

Second husband of the deceased also surrenders to police

FAISAL SHEIKH

RAWALPINDI: A Rawalpindi court has awarded remand of three suspects to police custody in connection with the alleged murder and honor killing of a newlywed woman in Pirwadhai. Police have arrested eight individuals, including the woman's husband, her brother, other family members, a gravedigger, a grave-

yard management official, and a rickshaw driver who reportedly transported her body. The suspected honour killing case in Rawalpindi's Pirwadhai area took a new turn after the deceased woman's second husband surrendered to police on Saturday night, police said. The case involves the murder of a 19-year-old woman, reportedly killed in the name of so-called honour following a jirga verdict, and secretly buried in a local graveyard.

Planning minister, Chinese
envoy discuss cooperation

The two sides discussed the progress of ongoing China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects and preparations for the upcoming Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) meeting, where key decisions are expected to further strengthen bilateral relations

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal met with Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong here on Sunday. Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry also attended the meeting, which was joined by senior officials from both countries, a news release said. The two sides discussed the progress of ongoing China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects and preparations for the upcoming Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) meeting, where key decisions are expected to further strengthen bilateral relations. Ahsan Iqbal said the first phase of CPEC has been successfully completed, highlighting that the second phase focused on industrial cooperation, agriculture, information technology and social development. "Connecting CPEC to Central Asian states will contribute to regional economic stability and economic cooperation," he said, and reiterated the government's commitment to improving and ensuring the security of CPEC projects.

The minister asserted that the development of Gwadar and the establishment of Special Economic Zones remained top government priorities, he said, adding that Pakistan was fully committed to utilizing optimally the port's full capacity. He added that the Government was committed to fully capitalizing on the deep seaport's trade potential. He pointed out the vast potential for mineral exploration in and around Gwadar. "With the development of modern infrastructure, its mineral resources can be fully capitalized," he added. The minister also discussed continued collaboration with China in the agriculture sector, noting that agriculture graduates trained in China would play a vital role in helping Pakistan address the impacts of climate change. Ahsan Iqbal said the establishment of the Pakistan Space Centre was of national importance, and that China would play a pivotal role in ensuring the timely completion of this strategic project. Ambassador Jiang Zaidong reaffirmed China's commitment to supporting Pakistan's development efforts. He assured that bilateral cooperation will continue to expand in the coming years.

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