



# Islamabad POST

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**Pakistan greatly values relations with ASEAN states, says foreign Secy**

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**Zelensky says meeting with Putin possible**

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**Acting US ambassador appointed**

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## Field Marshal visit

# Pak, China vow to jointly tackle threats

During his visit to Beijing, the COAS held a series of high-profile meetings with the top echelon of Chinese political and military leadership

ANSAR M BHATTI/DNA

RAWALPINDI: Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS) of Pakistan, embarked on an official and strategically significant visit to the People's Republic of China. The visit marked a new milestone in the enduring and time-tested friendship between Pakistan and China, reaffirming their "ironclad" partnership across political, military, and economic domains. During his visit to Beijing, the COAS held a series of high-profile meetings with the top echelon of Chinese political and military leadership. These engagements reflected both sides' commitment to further strengthening bilateral cooperation amid an evolving regional and global geopolitical environment. Field Marshal Asim Munir called on His Excellency Han Zheng, Vice President of the People's Republic of China, and His Excellency Wang Yi, Foreign Minister of China. The discussions delved into a broad spectrum of strategic matters, including the shifting contours of international diplomacy, regional security dynamics, and the enhancement of connectivity under the flagship China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Both sides reiterated their unwavering support for sovereign equality, non-interference, and a multipolar world order based on mutual respect and multilateralism. The Chinese leadership reaffirmed China's long-standing solidarity with Pakistan and acknowledged Islamabad's stabilizing role in South Asia. In return, Field Marshal Munir expressed gratitude for China's steadfast

diplomatic and economic support, particularly during challenging regional transitions. On the military front, the COAS held extensive consultations with key figures in China's defence hierarchy, including: General Zhang Youxia, Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), General Chen Hui, Political Commissar of the PLA Army, General Cai Zhai Jun, Chief of Staff of the PLA Army. Upon arrival at the PLA Army Headquarters, Field Marshal Munir was accorded a ceremonial guard of honour, reflecting the deep military camaraderie and mutual respect shared between the armed forces of the two nations. Both sides emphasized the urgency of coordinated responses to hybrid and transnational threats, particularly in the face of growing regional volatility. The Chinese military leadership hailed the Pakistan Armed Forces as a bastion of stability in South Asia and a trusted partner in maintaining peace across the region. Field Marshal Asim Munir expressed appreciation for China's unwavering support and reaffirmed Pakistan's resolve to elevate military-to-military ties to new heights. He highlighted the importance of institutionalizing defence cooperation mechanisms to respond effectively to emerging threats, while also exploring avenues for technological collaboration and joint defence production. The Chinese leadership responded positively, affirming full confidence in the strategic nature of the bilateral defence partnership and commending Pakistan's contributions to international peacekeeping and regional conflict resolution. This high-level visit comes

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ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar met US Secretary of State Marco Rubio in Washington on Friday, marking a rare high-level interaction between the two countries.—DNA

## FM Ishaq Dar meets Marco Rubio

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio acknowledges Pakistan's unmatched sacrifices in war on terror

DNA

WASHINGTON: Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar met US Secretary of State Marco Rubio in Washington on Friday, marking a rare high-level interaction between the two countries. The ties between Islamabad and Washington have seen improvement following a prolonged diplomatic chill. There has been a visible thaw, marked by US President Donald Trump's warm reception of Field Marshal Asim Munir at the White

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**Pak seeks ban on accounts linked to banned outfits**

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has identified at least 481 social media accounts linked to banned terrorist organisations, calling upon global tech platforms to cooperate in blocking these networks. This was stated by state ministers Talal Chaudhry and Barrister Aqeel Malik at a joint presser in the federal capital on Friday. Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry said the identified accounts were being operated under anonymous names and unverified IDs. He noted that all the accounts belonged to

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## France to recognize Palestine

# Pak strongly condemns Israel's illegal annexation attempt in West Bank

Reaffirming Pakistan's unwavering commitment to the Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination, the spokesperson said

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Friday unequivocally condemned the Israeli parliament's unlawful attempt to assert "sovereignty" over the Occupied West Bank, calling it a grave violation of international law reflecting Israel's persistent disregard for Palestinian rights and established international norms. "Such deliberate and provocative actions highlight the occupying power's systematic attempts to undermine efforts for peace and entrench its illegal occupation. These unilateral measures represent a dangerous escalation that jeopardizes regional stability and prospects for a just and lasting settlement," Foreign Office

spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan said in a statement. He called upon the international community to take swift and decisive action to hold Israel accountable for its violations of United Nations Security Council resolutions and international humanitarian law. These measures will neither be recognized nor alter the internationally acknowledged status of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, he added. Reaffirming Pakistan's unwavering commitment to the Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination, the spokesperson said, "We steadfastly advocate for the establishment of an independent, sovereign, and viable Palestinian state based on the

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## Briefs

### Elizabeth appointed acting U.S. envoy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Kathryn Horst has assumed the role of Acting U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan, temporarily taking over

diplomatic responsibilities in the absence of Natalie Baker, who is currently on leave. Horst, a seasoned career diplomat, will serve in this acting capacity for a brief period. Her appointment comes at a time when U.S.-Pakistan relations continue to navigate regional challenges and bilateral cooperation across security, trade, and climate issues. This posting holds a special personal significance for Horst.

She began her diplomatic career in Pakistan as a junior officer, marking her return to the country after nearly two decades. Over the years, she has held several important positions, including assignments in Ukraine, Central Asia, and Moscow. Her extensive experience in managing sensitive geopolitical dynamics is expected to contribute positively during her short tenure in Islamabad. Sources in the U.S. Mission described her appointment as a "continuation of strong diplomatic engagement," emphasizing that her familiarity with Pakistan's political and cultural landscape will enable smooth functioning in the ambassador's absence. While her stay is expected to be brief, Elizabeth Horst's return to Pakistan reflects the depth of institutional ties between the two nations, where seasoned diplomats with prior on-ground experience are trusted to manage crucial postings, even temporarily.



## Attack on police case

# Court summons Imran, arrest warrant for Shibli

Case linked to alleged attack on Islamabad police personnel deployed outside ex-PM's Zaman Park residence

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: A Lahore court on Friday issued a non-bailable arrest warrant for Senate opposition leader Shibli Faraz and issued summon orders for PTI founding chairman Imran Khan in a case linked to an alleged attack on Islamabad police personnel deployed outside the latter's Zaman Park residence. The case was registered at Lahore's Race Course police station in 2023 against the former premier and other party leaders following clashes between the PTI supporters and police. The deposed prime minister, who was ousted from power via the opposition's no-confidence motion in April 2022, has been facing a slew of charges ranging from corruption to terrorism since his removal as premier. Imran Khan has been behind bars since August 2023 after he was sentenced in multiple cases. During the hearing at Lahore's Cantt Kutchery today, the



court issued a summon order for former prime minister Imran Khan through jail authorities, as he is currently incarcerated in Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail. Subsequently, the court adjourned the further proceedings till July 30. Today's development follows recent anti-terrorism court rulings that handed down prison sentences of up to 10 years to senior PTI leaders in connection with the May 9, 2023, riots. An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Tuesday sentenced several PTI leaders, including

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# PM Shehbaz reaffirms govt's commitment to GSP Plus scheme

Outgoing Ambassador of European Union calls on PM Shehbaz Sharif



FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday underscoring the significance of the European Union as one of Pakistan's largest trading part-

ners, reaffirmed the government's commitment to the GSP Plus scheme, which had proved to be mutually beneficial for both sides. The prime minister said this in a meeting with Ambassador of the European Union in Pakistan Riina Kionka who paid a fare-

well call on him at the Prime Minister's House. While congratulating the ambassador on the successful completion of her tenure in Pakistan, the prime minister thanked her for making important contributions towards the strengthening of Pakistan-EU relations. He particularly appreciated the ambassador's efforts in ensuring significant support from the EU during the 2022 floods in Pakistan. He also conveyed his good wishes for EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and said that he looked forward to meeting her at a convenient opportunity in the coming days. During the meeting, they also discussed the important issues between Pakistan and the EU, including domestic political developments. Ambassador Riina Kionka thanked the prime minister for all the support she had received during her stay in Pakistan

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# Murad, Elizabeth vow for boosting USAID partnership

The CM said that his government seeks USAID's assistance in addressing post-2022 flood reconstruction needs, with over 20,000 schools fully or partially damaged

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KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah met with Ms. Elizabeth Horst, Chargé d'Affaires of the United States of America to Pakistan, to discuss the progress and future of U.S. development assistance in the province. The meeting was held at CM House and was attended by provincial ministers Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, Principal Secretary to CM Agha Wasif, Chairman P&D Board Najam Shah. The USA delegation members were Consul General Scott Urbom, Deputy Consul General Jai Nair, Chief Political & Economics Section Shelley Saxen, Political Officer Trevor Earnshaw, Political Specialist Saleh Shah and Staff Assistant Charles Besnard. The two sides reviewed completed initiatives and explored future collaboration opportunities in the fields of education, water and sanitation, health, climate resilience, and municipal services. Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah reaffirmed his government's commitment to deepening its partnership with USAID. He outlined several areas where USAID's continued support is critical: The CM said that his government seeks USAID's assistance in addressing post-2022 flood reconstruction needs, with over 20,000 schools fully or partially damaged. The province aims to restore educational infrastructure and scale up quality teaching through ICT and teacher training. Murad Shah said that under the WASH project, there is a dire need for im-

mediate rehabilitation of 799 water supply schemes, 444 drainage systems, and 1,212 RO/UF plants is underway. He proposed an additional 504 filtration units for schools and health facilities. Climate-Resilient Settlement Planning: The CM said that his government is launching GIS-based planning in 3,000 rural villages, aiming to benefit 264,000 households and protect 1.5 million people living outside high-risk flood zones. The Chief Minister sought co-financing with USAID for constructing new Basic Health Units (BHUs), Rural Health Centres (RHCs), and Mother & Child Health Centres in underserved areas. Upgrades of existing BHUs and hospitals to modern standards are also planned, including solar energy systems and telemedicine support. Laboratory Expansion and Disease Surveillance: Ms. Elizabeth Horst, US Chargé d'Affaires, was told that was expanding its lab network, including BSL-III level facilities in Karachi and BSL-II labs in all district headquarters hospitals. USAID's technical and financial assistance is requested for equipment, personnel training, and lab information systems development. The Chief Minister appreciated USAID's long-standing partnership, highlighting the successful completion of several transformative programs. Municipal Services Delivery Program (MSDP): The CM said that the MSDP concluded in June 2025, the project revitalised water supply, sewage disposal, and solid waste management

systems in Jacobabad. Equipment and infrastructure have been handed over to local councils. "However, the Government of Sindh (GoS) awaits the reimbursement of the remaining committed amount of \$3.501 million from USAID," he said. Improved Access to Water and Sanitation Services (WASH), The WASH implemented in District Umerkot and District Tank (KP) with a cost of \$7.6 million, the project successfully improved WASH infrastructure and community engagement. Rehabilitation of non-functional water supply schemes has been completed. Pakistan Climate Financing Activity (PCFA): A \$ 10 million USAID initiative being executed by Chemonics is supporting Sindh in mobilising climate finance. A dedicated Climate Planning & Development Unit (CPDU) is being proposed to institutionalise these efforts. Concluded in August 2024, the SBEP program constructed 106 schools in 10 districts for \$165 million, enhancing access to quality education for thousands of students. The Chief Minister praised USAID's instrumental role in supporting Sindh's development journey and expressed hope that the collaboration will continue to grow in scale and impact. "USAID has been a transformative partner in advancing inclusive, resilient, and people-centred development in Sindh," he stated. Elizabeth Horst acknowledged the Sindh government's proactive role and reiterated the United States' commitment to supporting Pakistan's sustainable development through focused and effective cooperation.



KHANPUR: People enjoying paragliding during pleasant weather at Khanpur dam.

## KP police rendered unmatched sacrifices for peace

ABBOTTABAD: Former speaker KP Assembly and sitting MPA Mushtaq Ahmed Ghani Friday said that the officers and personnel of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police have rendered unmatched sacrifices for the restoration and maintenance of peace in the province. "Their efforts and bravery will always be remembered," he stated while addressing the completion ceremony of a professional training course at the Abbottabad Police School of Intelligence. The ceremony was organized by the Director of the School, Arif Javed Khan, to mark the successful conclusion of the training program. Senior police officers, including SSP Traffic Qamar Hayat Khan, SSP Investigation Tahir Iqbal Khan, SSP Special Branch Khabir Khan, and others, were present at the event. The program began with the recitation of the Holy Quran, followed by a welcome address by Director Arif Javed Khan, who also thanked MPA Mushtaq Ahmed Ghani for gracing the occasion. In his keynote address, the chief guest congratulated all course participants on completing their training and lauded the efforts of the Director and staff of the School of Intelligence. He reiterated the vital role of KP Police in ensuring public safety and peace, and appreciated the department's continued focus on training.—DNA

## Head constable held for allegedly filming women in toilets

GUJAR KHAN: Gujar Khan police have arrested a head constable for allegedly recording women in the toilets of the Tehsil Headquarters Hospital and have begun an investigation, officials said on Friday. Speaking to media, Assistant Superintendent of Police Syed Danyal said, "The police received a complaint from a resident who said that the suspect — a serving head constable posted in Lahore office of Punjab Police — was allegedly involved in filming women while they were using the toilets in the hospital's wards." The police arrested the suspect from the hospital and also recovered his cell phone, he said. "It was

during a preliminary investigation that police discovered that the suspect was a serving officer." Police said that several compromised videos of women using the toilets had been found on his cell phone, which have been sent for forensic verification. Gujar Khan Station House Officer Nazeer Ahmed Ghaeba told Dawn.com that police would investigate the case on merit and no favour or leniency would be exhibited. The police have registered the case under sections 354 (Assault or use of criminal force to a woman and stripping her of her clothes) and 292 (Sale etc. of obscene books, etc), and Section 509 (Insulting modesty or

causing sexual harassment) of the Pakistan Penal Code. When approached for comment, Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Medical Superintendent (MS) Dr Sarmad Kiyani said there were no cameras in the hospital's restrooms. "The only cameras in the hospital are in the corridors, not in the toilets. We don't know what kinds of videos they found on his phone. It's up to the police to investigate the matter," he said. According to the first information report (FIR) of the 2020 casethe suspect had allegedly raped a widow and was booked under Section 452 (House-trespass after preparation for hurt.—APP

## Books donated to Thal University Bhakkar Library

ISLAMABAD: Director General of the National Language Promotion Department (NLPD), Professor Dr. Muhammad Saleem Mazhar, presented books published by the department as a gift to the library of Thal University Bhakkar. Professor Dr. Muhammad Saleem Mazhar handed over the books to two representatives of Thal University Bhakkar, Faisal Shehzad and Rimsha Malik, for the university's library. Both representatives were nominated by the Principal of the university to visit the NLPD and receive the books for the university's library from the department, according to a press release issued here on Friday. Speaking on the occasion, the Director General said that the department has a rich collection of valuable books which it wishes to deliver to libraries of public educational institutions across the country so that the love for books continues among the new generation, and they also become familiar with Urdu language and literature through these works. "Knowledge is a treasure that grows when shared, and no knowledge is complete without the learning of language and literature," he added. Executive Director of NLPD Dr. Rashid Hameed said that language and literature play a vital role in the development of any society. He further stated that the initiative to supply the department's books to public college libraries is ongoing and will continue in the future. He added that students would also have access to the department's books in digital format, as the new publications will be available on the department's website.—APP

## \$850m export potential in Gwadar's value-added seafood

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry on Friday stated that with consistent investment, strategic policymaking, and improved infrastructure, Gwadar Port has the potential to generate over \$850 million annually through value-added fisheries and date exports. Chairing a high-level meeting on Gwadar Port operationalization attended by officials from the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and representatives from relevant ministries and organizations including Gwadar Port Authority, Commerce, Industries, and Communication through Zoom, the minister laid out a comprehensive strategy to boost economic

activities in Gwadar. The minister reaffirmed the government's commitment to utilizing local resources and empowering local businesses to operationalize Gwadar Port and stimulate the regional economy. He emphasized that fisheries and dates are the key economic drivers of the region. "Gwadar has a rich fish catch potential, and we must focus on local value addition to maximize benefits," he said. He pointed out that 34 fish processing units are currently operating in Balochistan, but most require technological upgrades to meet export standards. "Transforming these units to add value through packaging and processing before exporting is critical for uplifting the sec-

tor," he added. The minister pointed out that Balochistan's coastline makes up 76.2% of Pakistan's total coastal length, yet its fish production significantly lags behind its actual potential. "Balochistan has an estimated annual fish catch potential of around 300,000 tons. With proper value addition, this could generate approximately \$645 million each year. However, current production is nearly half of that due to limited fishing capacity, obsolete technology, and regulatory hurdles," he stated. Turning to dates production, the minister stated that Panjgur and Turbat (Kech) districts together produce over 225,000 tons of dates annually—more than half of Pakistan's —APP

## Chairman CDA reviews progress on anti-encroachment campaign

ISLAMABAD: An important 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 Member Administration and Estate, Talat Mahmood; Member Planning, Dr. Khalid Hafiz; Member Finance, Tahir Naeem; Member Environment Esfandiyar Baloch, Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, Director General (DG) Building Control and Housing, DG Urban Planning, Deputy DG Enforcement, Director DMA, and other senior officers. The meeting reviewed the progress of actions taken by CDA so far against illegal encroachments in Islamabad, particularly on government lands, following the directives of Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi under the supervision of Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa. CDA's anti encroachment drive specifically focuses on demolishing illegal encroachments on government land according to the law and reclaiming it from illegal occupants, as well as removing illegal encroachments built over waterstream drains (nullahs) in Islamabad as well as in residential and commercial area across the board in accordance with law. The meeting was briefed that Directorate General of CDA's Building and Housing, Enforcement Directorate, the Islamabad Administration, DMA, MCI are working together to seal and demolish encroachments built over nullahs in order to save lives in case of any flooding and emergency so that sealing and demolishing of nullahs from in all sectors of Islamabad was necessary. Chairman CDA directed that all buildings constructed over nullahs in various areas of Islamabad without a hydraulic study as well as CDA's approval should be immediately sealed and declared dangerous. He emphasized that residential and commercial buildings built over drains are not only illegal, but they could also collapse during any major flooding as during the current moon soon season, Islamabad has witness heavy rainfall since 2001. CDA has advised the public, at large in their own interest, to voluntarily remove all encroachments built over nullahs. Otherwise, law will take its own course of action, thus all residential and commercial buildings constructed over nullahs will not only be sealed after being declared dangerous but legal action will also be initiated against all those responsible for illegal encroachments, for which the encroachers themselves will bear full responsibility. Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad Muhammad Ali Randhawa stated that while CDA is taking indiscriminate action against all illegal encroachments, they have also decided to establish a permanent monitoring system to prevent re-encroachment on cleared lands. Under this system, drone footage of relevant areas will be regularly captured, and Google Earth will also be utilized for further guidance and assistance.—DNA

## PAC recovers nearly Rs 16b in just 4 months amid widespread corruption in Sindh

Over Rs 836 billion in financial irregularities uncovered across various departments of Sindh: Report

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Chairman Public Accounts Committee (PAC), Nisar Khuhro has claimed that nearly Rs.16 billion have been recovered in just four months through audits exposing corruption and illegal financial irregularities. Unfortunately, rampant corruption and irregularities continue unchecked across all departments of the Sindh government. Audit findings show scams ranging over Rs. 20-60 billion each in various provincial departments. Khuhro's recovery of more than Rs. 16 billion from these departments has been termed a historic achievement, possibly unmatched by any previous PAC told Spokesman. Recently, the audit of Rs. 8 billion in hospital medical equipment supplies by the Labour Department's SESSI was being obstructed. Khuhro strongly criticized the lack of transparency, stating that SESSI had never undergone a proper audit since its inception. He emphasized that no compromise would be made on billions worth of irregularities, as per constitutional obligations.

During the session, when senior journalists attempted to question Secretary Labor Department Rafiq Ahmed Qureshi, he responded with harsh remarks and displayed an attitude of influence, despite his responsibility to cooperate with PAC, NAB, and Anti-Corruption on past discrepancies. Khuhro had pointed out that corruption involving billions has been revealed in the audits of multiple departments and that PAC has taken firm action something rarely seen before. He stressed that this is public taxpayers' money, and such massive corruption cannot be tolerated in a democratic setup. He demanded that all looted public funds, including those misused in SESSI and other departments, be returned immediately to the Sindh government. Khuhro had also initiated some institutions were refusing audits to hide their irregularities. He made it clear that no institution, including SESSI, is above the Constitution. Meanwhile, the Auditor General of Pakistan has exposed financial irregularities worth over Rs. 836.43 billion in various departments of the Sindh government.

The provincial audit report uncovers widespread corruption and irregularities across multiple districts. According to Shakil spokesperson of Chairman PAC Nisar Khuhro has continued intensify scrutiny of various departments and projects across the province, uncovering multiple cases of irregularities, embezzlement, and misuse of public funds. The recovered amount includes funds reclaimed from dormant schemes, overpaid contracts, and fraudulent claims within government bodies. The chairman of the PAC emphasized that accountability is being pursued regardless of political or bureaucratic influence. "This recovery reflects our determination to restore transparency in public spending," he stated. The revelation has sparked public and political debate, especially amid growing concerns about endemic corruption and lack of oversight in provincial institutions. The PAC has pledged to continue its audit investigations and expects further recoveries in the coming months.

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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

Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15

Bomb Disposal.....15

Fire Services Rawalpindi/Islamabad.....1122 & 16

Emergency Ambulance.1122

& Rescue Services.4451122

Motorway Police...9266044

Motorway Police.9270601-20

Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596

Rawalpindi.....9270601-20

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Edhi Ambulance.....115

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Railway Inquiry.....117

Railway Exchange9270831-5

WASA Rawalpindi..5555489

CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111

MH.....561116

Cannt Hospital...9270907-11

DHQ.....5556311-4

RGH.....9290301-7

Holy Family.....9290322-7

PIMS.....9261170-79

Polyclinic.....9218300-09

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

# Re-tendering of G-14/1 directed, contract expected by Nov 2025

According to the official reply submitted in response to a question regarding delays in G-14/1 plot possession, the court directed that compensation be released to affectees and all acquired properties vacated and demolished within the stipulated timeframe

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Housing and Works Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada on Friday stated that re-tendering for the G-14/1 sector had been directed and hoped that the contract would be awarded by November 2025, with ground development expected to begin shortly thereafter and be completed within one year. Responding to the questions of Senator Masroor Ahsan and others, regarding delay in G-14/1 plots possession, Minister for Housing and Works Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada confirmed that the Islamabad High Court, in its judgment dated March 13, 2022, had directed Federal Government Employees Housing Au-

thority (FGEHA) to conclude land acquisition and grant possession to allottees within 6 to 8 months, along with ensuring development and provision of amenities. The Minister also noted that out of 1,718.15 kanals of project land, FGEHA has gained possession of 738.04 kanals and the project will be executed in two phases. According to the official reply submitted in response to a question regarding delays in G-14/1 plot possession, the court directed that compensation be released to affectees and all acquired properties vacated and demolished within the stipulated timeframe. FGEHA was instructed to implement the scheme to ensure timely possession of plots to allottees and provision of amenities. It was further informed that

the High Court had been updated on the latest developments on June 25, 2025, and that infrastructure development contract details were currently being processed. It was further stated that the High Court was apprised of the latest developments on June 25, 2025 and that details of the infrastructure development contract were under process. Earlier, Senator Syed Masroor Ahsan voiced concerns in the Upper House over the prolonged delay in handing over possession of plots to allottees in Islamabad's G-14/1 sub-sector. He questioned the implementation of Islamabad High Court (IHC) orders issued in 2022 and criticized the Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) for its continued inaction despite repeated

assurances. During a supplementary question, Senator Syed Masroor Ahsan sharply criticized the 21-year delay since the original plot allotments in 2004, noting that possession has yet to be handed over despite clear directives from the Islamabad High Court (IHC). He highlighted that while the technical evaluation was completed in November 2024 and financial bids were opened in December, the tender was subsequently cancelled. No fresh bidding has taken place in the seven months since, raising further concerns over administrative inertia. Senator Syed Masroor Ahsan further questioned when the remaining land—still under illegal occupation—would be retrieved and when rightful allottees would finally be granted possession.

He expressed frustration that, despite the launch of new housing projects, those allotted plots decades ago continue to be deprived of their rightful property. Several senators joined the debate, highlighting planning flaws, a lack of flood management in nullahs, and absence of accountability for land encroachments and official negligence. They also raised concerns over urban development moving ahead without securing essentials like water supply and proper drainage—especially in light of recent flooding in areas. The Chair acknowledged the senators' concerns and urged the Ministry to accelerate the resolution of pending issues, emphasizing that prolonged delays erode public trust in government-managed housing schemes.

## Senate Chairman, Ethiopian envoy discuss bilateral ties

Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani emphasized that Pakistan places great value on its relations with Ethiopia and remains committed to strengthening economic ties

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of Ethiopia, H.E. Jemal Beker Abdula, called on Chairman Senate, Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani, at his residence. The meeting featured in-depth discussions on bilateral relations, economic and trade cooperation, defense collaboration, and other matters of mutual interest. Chairman Senate welcomed the launch of direct flights between Karachi and Addis Ababa, noting the significant potential for further collaboration in the aviation sector between Pakistan and Ethiopia. Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani emphasized that Pakistan places great value on its relations with Ethiopia and remains committed to strengthening economic ties. He noted that both countries are cooperating on key global issues, including climate change, and enjoy excellent collaboration at international forums. He also extended an invitation to his Ethiopian parliamentary counterpart to visit Pakistan. The Chairman highlighted the importance of increasing bilateral trade and investment, suggesting the import of Pakistani rice to Ethiopia and noting



Pakistan's status as home to some of the world's finest rice varieties. Re-affirming Pakistan's commitment to enhanced cooperation with Ethiopia—particularly in the areas of economy, trade, and agriculture—he said that the exchange of parliamentary delegations would further deepen mutual ties. Pakistan, he added, is eager to expand its multifaceted cooperation with Ethiopia. Chairman Senate also shared that an Inter-Parliamentary Speakers' Conference is scheduled to be held in Pakistan this November, and he expressed hope that Ethiopia's parliamentary leadership would participate. He underscored that fostering people-to-people

contacts is essential for bringing nations closer, and highlighted the role of Parliamentary Friendship Groups in advancing parliamentary diplomacy. Ambassador Jemal Beker Abdula welcomed the Chairman's remarks and reaffirmed Ethiopia's commitment to strengthening trade and bilateral cooperation with Pakistan. He mentioned that the expansion of air connectivity to Islamabad and Lahore is under active consideration. The Ambassador also stressed the importance of mutual support on global platforms and emphasized the significance of bilateral collaboration on climate change initiatives.

## Safe city AI system slashes crime by 28%

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Haroon Joya announced on Friday that the Safe City AI system has led to a 28% reduction in crime, with the installation of 3,300 new cameras providing 97% coverage, significantly improving safety for vulnerable groups. While in exclusive conversation with a local news channel, DIG Haroon Joya described the inauguration of "Police Stations on Wheels" by the Prime Minister as a historic first-time step. He emphasized that this initiative will bring law enforcement closer to communities, particularly in remote areas, improving

access to police services. The mobile stations are expected to enhance response times and provide immediate support where needed. DIG Haroon Joya also praised the Interior Minister for embracing technology to modernize law enforcement. He highlighted that initiatives like the Safe City AI system and "Police Stations on Wheels" are transforming policing, improving service delivery and enhancing citizen security. The DIG pointed out additional advancements in public safety, including the installation of safety cameras along trails, at F-9 Park and in other high-pri-

ority locations across the city. These efforts are part of a larger strategy to enhance surveillance and ensure the safety of citizens. He further stated that over the past six months, approximately 35% of the camera coverage has been successfully expanded, with plans to increase this coverage even further in the coming months. During the recent Muharram period, the Safe City cameras successfully covered over 900 events in various majalis, ensuring a secure environment for attendees and enabling effective monitoring of public gatherings. —APP

## BTW students shine in matric exams

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD :Two students, supported by the Benazir Taleemi Wazaif (BTW) initiative have secured top positions in the recent matriculation examinations, defying all odds and emerging as symbols of hope for millions. Maryam Bibi and Momina Fatima, both residents of Multan and beneficiaries of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), have brought immense pride to their families and communities. Maryam Bibi clinched the first position with an outstanding score of 1164 marks, while Momina Fatima stood third with 1139 marks. Their success stories are rooted in the transformative impact of the Benazir Taleemi Wazaif, a flagship initiative under BISP, which provides conditional cash stipends to encourage school enrollment

and attendance among children from low-income households. The mothers of Maryam and Momina credited the educational stipends with playing a pivotal role in their daughters' achievements. They expressed heartfelt gratitude to the government for enabling their daughters to pursue education with dignity and determination. "This support kept us going," said the mother of Maryam Bibi. "It was not just about the money, it was a sign that someone believed in our children's future." The success of these students underscores the importance of sustained investment in human capital, particularly through targeted social safety nets. The Benazir Taleemi Wazaif initiative is currently benefiting millions of children, with a strong focus on ensuring retention and performance, especially among girls who face additional socio-economic challenges.

## SAPM chairs meeting on modernization of companies act 2017

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan on Friday chaired a high-level meeting on the Modernization of the Companies Act 2017. The meeting was attended by Scott Jacobs, representatives from the Board of Investment (BoI), Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), and the Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce (OICC), said a news release. The participants held detailed discussions on regulatory reforms and the modernization of the Companies Act 2017. Haroon Akhtar Khan stressed the need for simplifying the registration process of unlisted companies, noting that delays, excessive regulation, and the lack of ease in doing business have become serious challenges for the business community. He emphasized that the corporate governance of unlisted companies should be determined through corporate by-laws and the Articles of Association. He pointed out that several restrictions and structural hurdles in the current Act are obstructing innovation in emerging corporate models. "Due to rigid laws, many people refrain from registering their companies," Haroon remarked. The Board of Investment presented a set of recommendations for the modernization of the Companies Act, which will be taken up for final approval for the proposal in the next meeting, it added.—APP

## COMSTECH, Tang Chinese edu to promote educational coop

ISLAMABAD: The OIC Ministerial Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH), Pakistan, and Tang Chinese Education and Technology Ltd., Beijing, China, have 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. The agreement marks a significant step in fostering academic collaboration and knowledge exchange across borders. Under the MoU, 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 exchange activities.—DNA

## ANF seizes over 1076 kgs drugs

ISLAMABAD :Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF ) while conducting 29 operations across the country managed to recover over 1076 kgs drugs worth more than over Rs 302 million and arrested 33 drug traffickers during last five days. According to an ANF Headquarters spokesperson, in an operation at Faisal Bus Terminal near Islamabad, 2.5 kgs heroin, 2.4 kgs hashish, & 1 kg ice were recovered from the possession of three suspects. ANF also recovered 56 kgs hashish from a vehicle checked near University Road, Peshawar, and a drug trafficker was rounded up. In an operation near Garh Mor Road, Muzaffargarh, 7 kgs ice was recovered from two suspects, traveling in a truck while in another operation near DG Khan Road in Loralai, 168 kgs heroin hidden for smuggling was recovered. In a crackdown against drug traffickers near Toll Plaza Road, Mansehra, 18 kgs hashish was recovered from a vehicle and a drug smuggler was rounded up. The spokesperson further informed that in an operation, 2 kgs hashish and 7 kgs suspicious material were recovered from a parcel sent to Karachi at a Cargo Office in Rawalpindi. Near RCD Road, Hub, 24 kgs hashish was recovered from a vehicle and two accused were arrested while in an operation near RCD Road, Hub, 64.8 kgs hashish was recovered from the secret cavities of a vehicle. In a raid at a warehouse located on Adam G. Dawood Road, Karachi, 384 kgs potassium permanganate was recovered from the possession of a person. ANF in a crackdown against drug traffickers near a school on Adiala Road, Rawalpindi, recovered 1.2 kg hashish from two motorcyclists. The arrested suspects confessed selling drugs to the students of educational institutions. —AAPP

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## Briefs

## Senator decries poor mobile connectivity

ISLAMABAD :Senator Shahadat Awan on Friday raised alarm over widespread mobile connectivity issues affecting users across Pakistan, particularly in areas like Daman-e-Koh, Islamabad, due to the decade-long delay in implementing the 2015 Right of Way policy for telecom infrastructure. Speaking in Senate during question hour, he underscored the urgent need for the policy's enforcement to facilitate the expansion of fiber optic networks and installation of signal towers. He criticized telecom providers for failing to improve coverage and urged authorities to hold them accountable. "The public is extremely frustrated by weak signals and unreliable service," he said. Senator Awan pointed out that entities such as Pakistan Railways and the National Highway Authority (NHA) benefit from uninterrupted right-of-way access nationwide, enabling efficient infrastructure development. He called for similar support for telecom companies, noting that the lack of access often results in land disputes with private owners and revenue departments, stalling network expansion.—APP

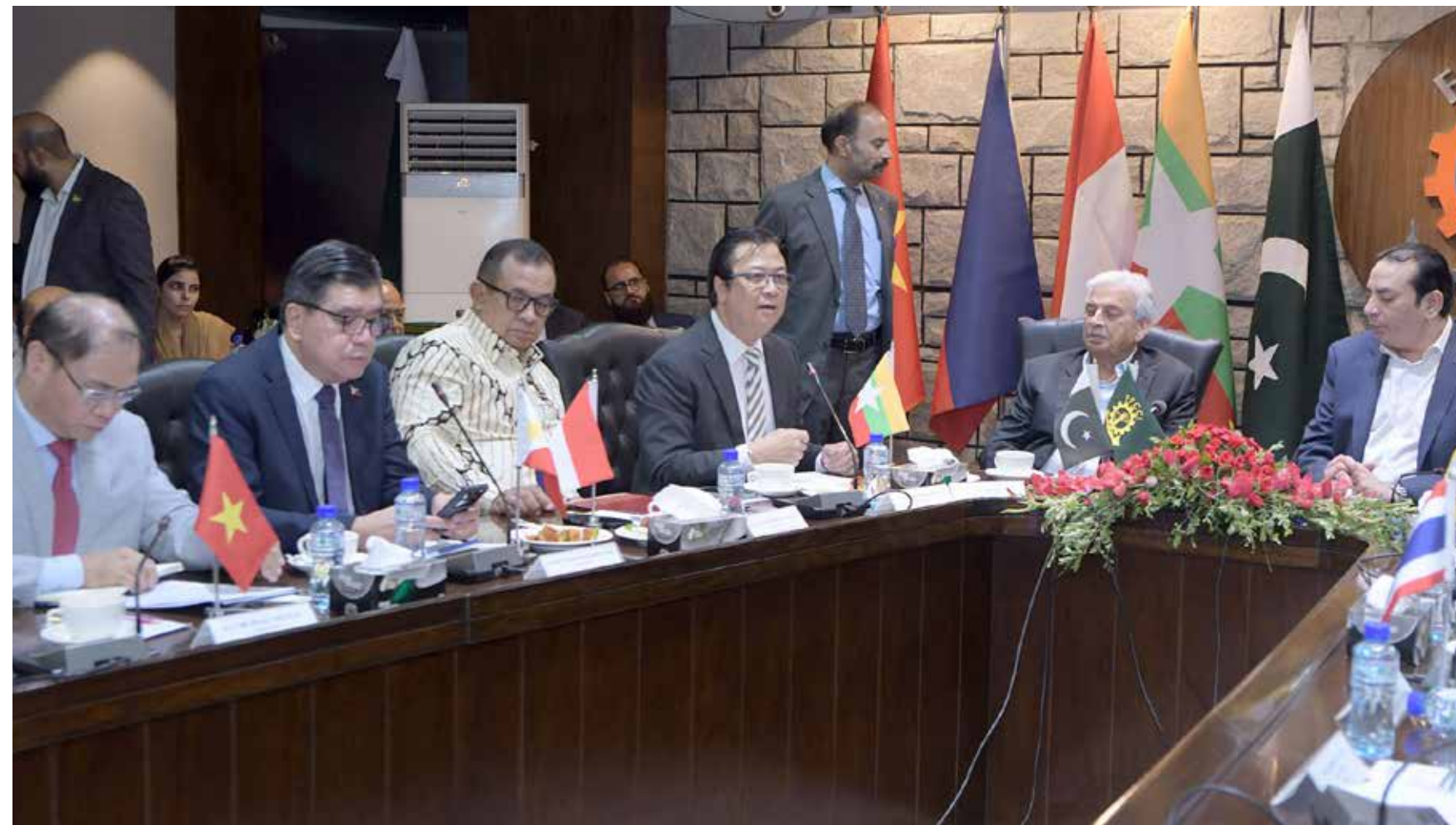
## Experts stress better water safety

ISLAMABAD :On World Drowning Prevention Day, experts in Pakistan joined the global call for enhanced swimming education, local water safety programs and the development of a national drowning prevention strategy, noting that drowning causes an estimated 236,000 deaths annually worldwide and ranks among the top ten causes of death for children aged 5 to 14. In an exclusive conversation with a local news channel, Rescue Emergency Services Director General Dr. Rizwan Naseer emphasized the urgent need to educate communities about swimming and water safety. He pointed out that many drowning incidents occur due to a lack of basic swimming skills and unawareness of the dangers posed by natural water bodies. Dr. Naseer further highlighted the importance of understanding river depths, noting that unpredictable currents and uneven terrain in rivers often catch people off guard. He stressed that structured training programs and awareness campaigns are essential to reduce drowning incidents, particularly during the monsoon season and in flood-prone areas. Dr. Rizwan Naseer revealed that during the current monsoon season in Punjab, Rescue 1122 responded to over 19,000 drowning-related emergencies, adding, out of these, approximately 4,000 individuals were successfully rescued, while many others tragically lost their lives often while attempting to save someone else without proper safety measures. He emphasized that the majority of these incidents could have been prevented with basic awareness and precaution. Dr. Naseer urged the public to assess water depth before entering rivers or canals and stressed the critical importance of wearing life jackets.—APP

## PIDE Sparks Dialogue on Growth Beyond IMF Limits

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), through its Macro Policy Lab (MPL), organized a seminar titled "Balancing Stabilization and Growth Under URAAN Pakistan". The event brought together senior officials from the Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives (MoPD&SI), researchers, and economists to engage in a rigorous policy discussion. The session was moderated by Dr. Haider Ali, Assistant Professor/Director MPL, and featured a panel comprising Dr. Muhammad Arshad (Chief



ISLAMABAD: President FPCCI Atif Ikram Sheikh hosted an interaction with ASEAN ambassadors. Federal Minister for Food Security Rana Tanveer Hussain also attended. —DNA

## Business community deeply troubled by dollar shortage

Speaking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that Pakistan had achieved several key economic targets by the end of the last fiscal year. These included a current account surplus of over \$2 billion, increased foreign exchange reserves, and record-high remittances

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, the President of the Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, the President of All Karachi Industrial Alliance, the Chairman of the FPCCI Advisory Board, and the President and former provincial minister, Mian Zahid Hussain, said on Friday that the ongoing dollar shortage for the past several months has created serious concern among the business community and must be addressed immediately. He stressed that due to the scarcity of dollars, many traders are being forced to turn to the black market. This underscores the

crucial need for balanced policymaking and immediate steps to restore business confidence by ensuring adequate availability of foreign currency. Speaking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that Pakistan had achieved several key economic targets by the end of the last fiscal year. These included a current account surplus of over \$2 billion, increased foreign exchange reserves, and record-high remittances. The surplus, he said, reflects improved performance in the external sector. However, despite this encouraging progress, the persistent shortage of dollars remains a significant concern. He further explained that the State Bank's unusually high volume of dollar purchases is exacerbating the problem, making it

even more difficult for the private sector to access foreign currency. Mian Zahid remarked that the ongoing austerity measures and the slow pace of reforms, despite debt deferments and target achievements, are both surprising and concerning. He also highlighted reservations within the business community regarding the new discretionary powers granted to the Federal Board of Revenue. Rather than imposing stricter enforcement measures, he emphasised the need for reform policies that facilitate taxpayers. He urged the State Bank to strike a balance in its foreign exchange buying operations to restore market confidence. Additionally, he called on the government to adopt a softer, more transparent, and consultative approach to tax reforms. He said that,

alongside improving tax recovery, efforts should also focus on expanding the economy's size. Instead of aiming for a \$412 billion GDP, the country should strive for the \$1 trillion benchmark envisioned by the prime minister. This goal can only be achieved with the cooperation of the business sector. Mian Zahid concluded by saying that while the potential for stability and growth exists, it requires the state to shift away from control-oriented policies and long-term structural reforms. He suggested that the FPCCI, the State Bank, and the Ministry of Finance should jointly develop a clear policy framework to reduce market uncertainty and increase investment opportunities, which are critical to putting Pakistan on a sustainable economic path.

## China-funded 1.2 MGD water plant starts supplying clean water to Gwadar

ISLAMABAD: The China-funded 1.2 MGD (million gallons per day) desalination water plant officially began supplying safe drinking water to residents of Gwadar. This marks a promising step toward alleviating the region's long-standing water crisis, Gwadar Pro reported on Friday. The development came into effect following the efforts of Gwadar Port Authority (GPA) Chairman Noorul Haq Baloch, who collaborated with Chinese engineers to operationalize the plant, located within the premises of Gwadar Port. To mark the occasion, Chairman Noorul Haq Baloch, along with Executive Engineer of the Public Health Engineering Department, Momin Baloch, visited the desalination plant and the Koh-Bun Ward pumping station to inspect the water supply system. During the visit, Executive Engineer Momin Baloch briefed the GPA Chairman on the distribution of water from the Koh-Bun pumping station to the old city and neighboring settlements around Gwadar Port. The briefing noted that 50,000 gallons of water will now be supplied daily from the port to the Koh-Bun pumping station, ensuring a regular supply of clean water to the local population.—DNA

## Alarming surge in cloudbursts linked to climate change

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is witnessing a disturbing surge in cloudburst incidents, particularly in vulnerable regions such as Gilgit-Baltistan, Chitral, Swat, and densely populated urban centers like Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has flagged this trend, linking it to escalating climate change impacts. A cloudburst is an extreme weather event marked by torrential rainfall, over 100 millimeters falling in under an hour. These violent downpours often unleash flash floods, trigger landslides, and wreak havoc on infrastructure, agriculture, and communities. Experts warn that the increasing frequency and intensity of cloudbursts are a direct consequence of global climate disruption. Speaking to the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP), Muhammad Irfan Virk, Director of the National Weather Forecast Centre at PMD, cautioned that a spell

of heavy rainfall is expected in the coming days. While he noted that there is currently no immediate threat of a cloudburst, he urged heightened vigilance. Virk advised the public, especially tourists, to avoid traveling to mountainous areas during this period. "In the event of a cloudburst, people must immediately evacuate to safer locations," he emphasized. He also strongly discouraged proximity to rivers and streams and recommended that residents near riverbanks consider temporary relocation. Households with fragile rooftops were urged to ensure proper drainage systems are in place to prevent waterlogging. Additionally, farmers were advised to revise crop planning to mitigate agricultural losses. Dr. Ghulam Abbas, a professor of bio-sciences at COMSATS University Islamabad, provided insight into the meteorological mechanisms behind cloudbursts.—APP

## Five more drug pushers arrested

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Police continued the crackdown against drug pushers on Friday and arrested five more accused with over 6 kilograms charas. According to a police spokesman, the Sadiqabad Police detained two accused and recovered 2.8 kg charas from their possession. Similarly, the Wah Cantt Police also caught two accused with 2.22 kg of the contraband item.—APP

## Pakistani sesame exports to China surge

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's sesame seed exports to China soared in the first half of 2025, recording a staggering 300% year-on-year increase in value, China Economic Net reported here on Friday quoting Ghulam Qadir, Trade and Investment Counsellor at the Embassy of Pakistan. Ghulam Qadir highlighted that from January to June 2025, Pakistan exported 46,029,511 kilograms of sesame seeds to China, generating \$57.44 million in revenue. This marks a substantial leap from the same period in 2024, when exports totaled 8,608,260 kilograms worth \$14.39 million. The remarkable growth is attributed to both a significant rise in export volume and a competitive pricing strategy. While the average price per kilogram was \$1.67 in H1 2024, it dropped to \$1.24 in H1 2025, making Pakistani sesame more attractive in the Chinese market.—DNA

## Islamabad police revolutionize policing

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Inspector General of Police Islamabad Muhammad Jawad Tariq announced on Friday that Islamabad has adopted advanced artificial intelligence technology, launching 'Mobile Police Stations on Wheels' and 'Online Women Police Stations,' ensuring response teams arrive within 5 to 7 minutes and simplifying FIR registration to improve citizen support and policing efficiency. In an exclusive conversation, Muhammad Jawad Tariq revealed that for the first time in history, the capital city will operate both online and mobile police stations. This groundbreaking initiative aims to modernize policing by leveraging technology to provide faster and more accessible law enforcement services to the public. He explained that the mobile police stations on wheels will enable rapid on-site response within minutes, while the online women police stations will allow citizens, especially women, to register FIRs and seek assistance remotely. This dual approach is expected to significantly enhance public safety and convenience across Islamabad. Jawad Tariq highlighted that citizens can now file FIRs online, eliminating the need to visit police stations physically. This digital system streamlines the reporting process, making it more efficient and accessible for everyone, especially in urgent situations.—APP

## Stray dog population raises alarm in G-8/1

ISLAMABAD: Residents of G-8/1 and G-8 Markaz are urging the authorities concerned of CDA to expand on-ground operations, ensure safer streets, and launch awareness campaigns to prevent pet abandonment. Talking to APP here on Friday, residents of Sector G-8/1 have raised serious concerns over the growing number of stray dogs in their neighbourhood, urging the Capital Development Authority (CDA) to take immediate and humane action. Shumyla Noreen, a local resident, warned that the unchecked presence of stray dogs is becoming a daily threat, especially for children and the elderly. "It's becoming risky for people to move around freely, particularly during early morning and late evening hours," she said. Another resident, Sanam, echoed the concern, highlighting the difficulties faced by pedestrians. "Many people are afraid to walk on certain streets due to the fear of being chased or bitten," she said.—APP

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## ASEAN must rise to the moment and defuse Thailand-Cambodia tensions

The recent escalation of tensions between Thailand and Cambodia is a deeply troubling development for the Southeast Asian region and a serious challenge to ASEAN's credibility as a platform for peace, unity, and regional integration. For two member states of a regional bloc often praised as a model of dialogue and diplomacy to stand at the brink of conflict is not just concerning – it strikes at the very foundation of ASEAN's vision. Reports suggest that both countries have now approached the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to express their concerns, signaling the gravity of the situation. With Pakistan currently holding the rotating presidency of the UNSC, Islamabad has moved swiftly and responsibly to help avert a further deterioration in relations. Pakistani officials held a meeting with representatives of both Thailand and Cambodia in New York and urged both sides to show restraint and settle their differences through peaceful dialogue and diplomatic channels. This is a moment of reckoning for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. For years, ASEAN has been hailed globally as a unique model of regional cooperation – a bloc that, despite immense diversity in political systems, cultures, and economic levels, has managed to maintain internal peace and cohesion. It has often been cited as a success story of quiet diplomacy and consensus-building. And yet, today, two of its own members are embroiled in a conflict that could have severe implications for regional stability. This is not merely a bilateral issue – it is a test of ASEAN's maturity, responsibility, and unity. If ASEAN fails to act decisively, its moral authority and political relevance may suffer lasting damage. The world is watching to see whether ASEAN lives up to its founding principles of peace, dialogue, and mutual respect. While territorial disputes or diplomatic misunderstandings are not unusual among neighboring states, the answer must always lie in dialogue and peaceful negotiation. It is unfortunate that the matter had to be escalated to the level of the United Nations before more serious regional mediation mechanisms were activated. ASEAN must now urgently convene a special consultative meeting, bringing together Thailand and Cambodia under its umbrella to initiate a structured and constructive dialogue. It must offer itself as the principal mediator – not as a passive observer. This is an opportunity for the bloc to reaffirm its centrality in the region and to send a strong message that disputes among ASEAN members will be resolved within the ASEAN family. Both Thailand and Cambodia, for their part, must rise above national pride and political calculation. As founding and long-standing members of ASEAN, they bear a shared responsibility to uphold the bloc's values and prevent the region from sliding into confrontation. The world today is already grappling with multiple crises – from wars to economic shocks to climate emergencies. Southeast Asia, under the ASEAN framework, has the potential to be a beacon of stability and cooperation. But that promise can only be fulfilled if ASEAN itself leads with wisdom, urgency, and moral clarity.

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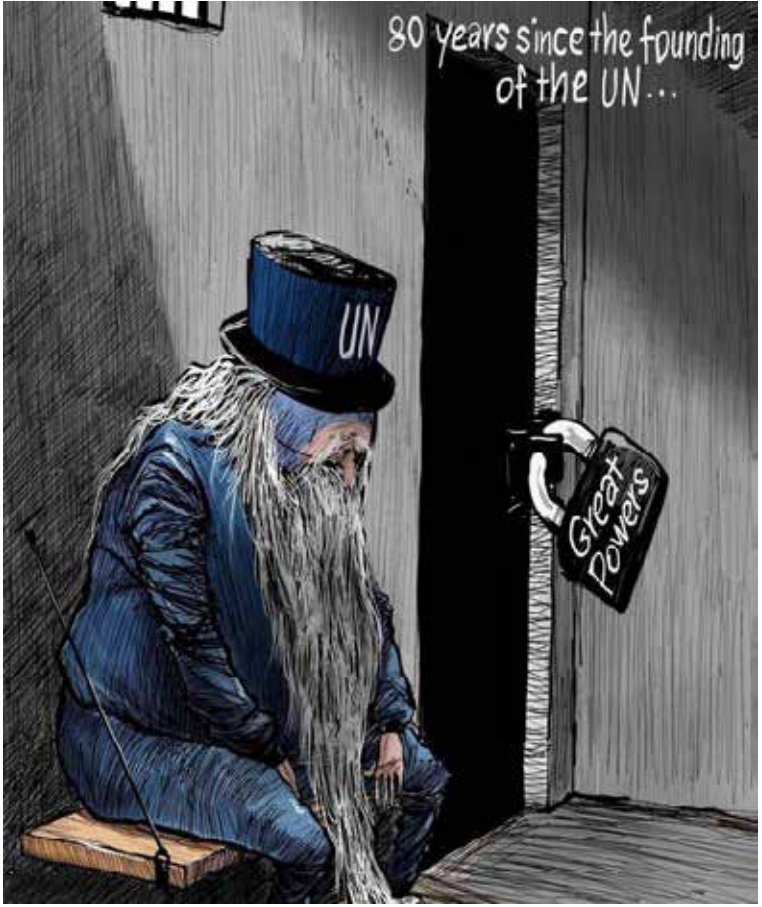
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## The future of BRICS: can Pakistan join?

THE BRICS alliance—comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—has emerged as a significant economic and geopolitical bloc, challenging Western-dominated institutions like the IMF and World Bank. With recent expansions, including Egypt, Iran, UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Ethiopia, BRICS is positioning itself as an alternative to the G7. This raises critical questions: What is the future of BRICS? Can Pakistan join? If yes, how? If not, why? Additionally, how does BRICS compare to other regional blocs like ASEAN and NAFTA (now USMCA)? BRICS represents 45% of the world's population and 30% of global GDP (PPP). Its future hinges on: De-Dollarization Efforts – BRICS is pushing for trade in local currencies, reducing reliance on the US dollar. A potential BRICS currency could reshape global finance. Expansion & Influence – New members (Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia) strengthen its geopolitical weight, particularly in energy markets. Challenges – Internal rivalries (India-China tensions) and economic disparities may hinder deeper integration. If BRICS succeeds in creating a unified financial system, it could rival the G7, offering developing nations an alternative to Western-led institutions. Yes, Pakistan Can Join—Here's How: Strengthen Economic Stability – Pakistan must stabilize its economy (reduce debt, control inflation) to be an attractive candidate. Diplomatic Alignment – Pakistan enjoys strong ties with China and Russia, key BRICS members. It must also improve relations with India (a current BRICS member). Strategic Importance – Pakistan's location (CPEC, Gwadar Port) makes it valuable for trade and energy corridors. Formal Application – Pakistan must formally apply, backed by support from China and Russia. Indian Opposition – India may veto Pakistan's entry due to geopolitical tensions. Economic Instability – High debt, inflation, and IMF dependency weaken Pakistan's case. Western Alignments – Pakistan's historical ties with the US could be a hurdle if BRICS seeks anti-Western unity. BRICS is evolving into a powerful alternative to Western economic dominance, but its success depends on overcoming internal divisions. Pakistan has a chance to join, but it must stabilize its economy and navigate geopolitical hurdles, particularly India's opposition. Compared to ASEAN and NAFTA, BRICS is less integrated but more geopolitically ambitious. If Pakistan plays its cards right—leveraging Chinese support, improving its economy, and balancing diplomatic relations—it could secure a seat at the BRICS table, opening new avenues for trade, investment, and strategic influence. However, without reforms, it risks being left behind in this shifting world order.

# BRICS Unites as the West Fragments

Qamar Bashir



Timed strategically after Israel's devastating strikes on Iran and Gaza—and following Trump's belligerent declaration of a 10% tariff on all nations defying U.S. trade terms—the summit sent a unified message: the world is moving on. At the heart of this message was the BRICS Declaration, a bold articulation of resistance against militarized foreign policy, economic coercion, and the abuse of reserve currency power. What made this summit unprecedented was not only the clarity with which BRICS condemned the U.S

The BRICS 2025 Summit in Rio de Janeiro was far more than a diplomatic gathering—it was a geopolitical turning point, a moment of collective reckoning for the Global South, and a direct response to America's unilateralism, Israel's unchecked militarism, and the unraveling of the Western world order. Timed strategically after Israel's devastating strikes on Iran and Gaza—and following Trump's belligerent declaration of a 10% tariff on all nations defying U.S. trade terms—the summit sent a unified message: the world is moving on. At the heart of this message was the BRICS Declaration, a bold articulation of resistance against militarized foreign policy, economic coercion, and the abuse of reserve currency power. What made this summit unprecedented was not only the clarity with which BRICS condemned the U.S.-Israel axis for its blatant violation of international law, but the practical measures agreed upon to structurally decouple from American economic domination. The centerpiece of this structural shift was the long-anticipated move to establish a common BRICS trading currency. For the first time, member countries agreed to denominate a growing share of their trade and investment flows in a non-dollar-based, BRICS-aligned digital settlement system. This decision was not symbolic. It came in the wake of China of flooding over \$100 billion in U.S. Treasury securities over the past five years, and redirecting its reserves into strategic real assets—gold, rare earth minerals, agricultural land, and energy infrastructure across Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The message is clear: the dollar is no longer sacred. As BRICS economies deepen their interdependence—through trade agreements, digital fiber-optic corridors, satellite connectivity, and synchronized financial systems—they are preparing for a post-dollar world. This isn't simply de-dollarization; it's sovereign emancipation. When you control the currency, you control the terms of global commerce. The United States used this leverage for decades. Now BRICS is building an alternative. This redirection is also political. The United States and Israel's unprovoked bombing of Iran on June 13—which killed 935 Iranians, including key military and scientific leaders—and the follow-up U.S. strikes on June 21 using bunker-buster bombs on Iranian nuclear facilities, were condemned as “a blatant breach of international law” by

the BRICS bloc. Iran's response—precision missile and drone retaliation—was followed by a U.S.-brokered ceasefire. But the BRICS statement didn't forget. It squarely placed moral and legal blame where it belonged: on Washington and Tel Aviv. The silence of international institutions was deafening. The United Nations failed to respond decisively. Western media framed the strikes as “pre-emptive” rather than illegal. In contrast, BRICS voiced its unequivocal support for Iranian sovereignty, for Syria's territorial integrity, and for the universal application of international law. But nowhere was the moral clarity sharper than in BRICS' position on Gaza. The 21-month Israeli assault on the enclave—killing over 57,000 Palestinians, 70% of them women and children, and turning Gaza into what human rights experts describe as a “concentration camp”—was denounced in the strongest terms. The BRICS Declaration rejected the weaponization of starvation, the politicization of aid, and the targeting of civilians at food distribution points. It called for full recognition of Palestinian statehood, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and endorsed the work of UNRWA, which has been banned by Israel. Meanwhile, Trump's tariff regime continues to destabilize the global economy. Under the guise of “America First,” the U.S. administration has weaponized trade to punish dissent. The new 10% blanket tariff on BRICS-aligned nations—threatened on Trump's Truth Social account—was met with a chilling counter-move: BRICS pledged to increase internal trade, insulate their economies from the dollar, and systematically bypass the SWIFT system. This isn't theory. It's happening. Already, BRICS accounts for over 36% of global GDP (PPP-adjusted) and 47% of the world's population. With the addition of new members like Iran, Indonesia, Egypt, and the UAE, the bloc has transformed into a dynamic political-economic alliance representing the true Global Majority. While G7 economies grow at an average of 1.6%, BRICS is projected to grow at 3.4% in 2025, according to the IMF. China, India, and Brazil are already among the world's top 10 largest economies. Collectively, BRICS holds more foreign reserves than the G7, and controls over 60% of critical minerals essential for green technologies. This isn't a coalition that can be isolated. It's a rising pole. What's even more striking is the shift in reconstruction politics. Traditionally, the U.S. model

was destruction followed by controlled reconstruction—destroy Iraq, then rebuild it with Halliburton; bomb Libya, then claim oil concessions. That era is waning. Today, countries like Saudi Arabia are investing in Syria not to exploit, but to stabilize. BRICS nations are financing development without political strings. They are demonstrating that you can rebuild without colonizing. The declaration also emphasized connectivity—fiber optic corridors, digital bridges, and space-linked infrastructure. This is the technological backbone of BRICS integration. By reducing dependency on U.S.-controlled systems—satellites, networks, and payment rails—BRICS is building a self-sufficient parallel world order. Yet amid all this, Washington remains curiously sluggish. The American political elite appears insulated, unaware of the tectonic shifts underway. The majority of U.S. foreign-held debt is owned by BRICS countries and their allies. Should they convert their dollar reserves into real assets or non-dollar trade systems, the American financial system—based on printing and demand—will face a reckoning. Let us be clear: no one wants America to fall. The United States is a land of unmatched creativity, innovation, and potential. Its people deserve prosperity and peace. But if it continues to rely on coercion instead of cooperation, on threats instead of treaties, and on tariffs instead of trust—it will lose not just influence, but respect. It is still within America's power to pivot. To abandon the zero-sum mindset. To embrace multilateralism, dignity, and mutual prosperity. But the clock is ticking.

In the current geopolitical realignment, BRICS is now the most populous, the most resource-rich, and arguably the most forward-thinking bloc on Earth. It cannot be sidelined. It must be engaged—seriously, and respectfully. Trump's trade war is not just economically reckless—it is strategically self-defeating. By attempting to isolate BRICS, he may be accelerating its consolidation into the very superpower bloc he fears. The 2025 BRICS Summit was not just another declaration. It was a declaration of independence from the unipolar world. A call for a new equilibrium based on equality, sovereignty, and shared humanity. The question is: will Washington listen, or will history leave it behind?

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

## When the Rains Turn Ruthless

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



The nation finds itself asking a dire question; is this destruction the work of shifting weather, human recklessness, or divine displeasure? There is no doubt that climate change plays a formidable role in this pattern. Pakistan, though one of the least contributors to global carbon emissions

EVEN before the arrival of the monsoon, various parts of Pakistan were already overwhelmed by destruction. Unseasonal and unrelenting rains descended upon the land, bringing with them torrents that swept away homes, roads, crops, and lives. Rainfall during these months is not an unfamiliar visitor, but the scale of devastation now experienced is a marked departure from the seasonal showers of years past. Floods that once came with warning and a rhythm now descend like a curse, sudden and unforgiving. The nation finds itself asking a dire question; is this destruction the work of shifting weather, human recklessness, or divine displeasure? There is no doubt that climate change plays a formidable role in this pattern. Pakistan, though one of the least contributors to global carbon emissions, is counted among the most vulnerable countries to the effects of environmental degradation. Erratic weather patterns, prolonged dry spells followed by cloudbursts, melting glaciers in the north, and rising sea levels in the south—all converge to paint a grim reality. However, to lay the blame solely at the feet of nature is to ignore our own hand in this unfolding tragedy. The carelessness and heedlessness of the people, especially tourists and thrill-seekers, cannot be overlooked. Each year, as warnings are issued by the meteorological departments, many still choose to venture into unsafe zones, pitching camps near rivers or ascending mountain passes vulnerable to landslides. Such negligence has repeatedly cost lives—not just of the risk-takers, but often of the rescue workers who must retrieve them. But the deeper and more dangerous threat lies not in individual misjudgment, but in systemic failure and unbridled urban greed. In recent decades, the unchecked expansion of housing soci-

eties—often operating with influential patronage and with little regard for environmental codes—has encroached upon vast swathes of agricultural land and natural waterways. These societies, in their race for profit and concrete, have blocked or diverted the ancient paths of rivers and stormwater runoffs. The result is that when the rains come, there is no longer a path for the water to escape; instead, it floods residential areas, submerges roads, and tears through anything that obstructs its natural flow. Agricultural fields, once capable of absorbing rainwater, have been replaced by asphalt and stone. Canals and tributaries have been narrowed or redirected. In some cases, housing developers have built over dried riverbeds, not realizing—or choosing to ignore—that these dry tracts are dormant, not dead. When nature reclaims her space, the consequences are catastrophic. The once fertile belt between Lahore and Sheikhupura, the surroundings of Islamabad, and the outskirts of Karachi all serve as bitter examples of how unregulated development has led to ecological imbalance and human suffering. Adding to this woe is the criminal negligence in the maintenance of drainage systems. Major cities of Pakistan suffer annually from choked sewer lines and unclear storm drains. Despite repeated incidents, local administrations seldom initiate timely cleaning drives. Thus, even modest rainfall can inundate entire localities, paralyze urban mobility, and cause irreparable damage to public and private property. Some look at these events through the lens of spirituality, interpreting them as signs of divine displeasure. In a society marred by injustice, corruption, and widening moral decline, such calamities are viewed as warnings rather than mere accidents of nature. Whether one accepts this view or not, the need for introspection is undeniable. It is not merely the skies that have changed; the ground

beneath us—social, ethical, and literal—has shifted too. According to the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), over 180 lives have been lost this year due to rain-induced incidents, while property and infrastructure damage has crossed 60 billion rupees. Thousands of people have been rendered homeless, and entire villages in flood-prone districts have been submerged or cut off. Crops have been swept away just weeks before harvest, inflicting further hardship on an already struggling rural population.

If we are to avert such losses in the future, immediate and long-term measures must be taken. First and foremost, the establishment of a comprehensive, technologically advanced early warning system is imperative. Local governments must be equipped and empowered to act swiftly upon such warnings. Urban planning must include proper drainage and water flow considerations, and illegal constructions on flood plains must be removed without exception. The annual cleaning of storm drains should be conducted with transparency and regular monitoring. There must be a moratorium on the approval of housing societies on agricultural lands and near natural waterways. The land development authorities must be reformed to prioritize environmental sustainability over short-term revenue. In addition, educational campaigns are needed to sensitize citizens, especially travelers and tourists, about safety protocols during the rainy season. Finally, Pakistan must advocate at international forums for climate justice and seek technology transfers, funding, and partnerships to build resilience. The challenge before us is immense, but not insurmountable. If we learn from past errors, combine wisdom with science, and align our actions with both reason and righteousness, we may yet find a path to safety. Otherwise, the rains will return next year—and with them, another chapter of sorrow.



## Briefs

Pak, China  
vow to jointly

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at a time of heightened global uncertainty, making the reaffirmation of Pakistan-China relations all the more significant. It underscores the maturity, depth, and trust that define the bilateral relationship – often described as “higher than mountains, deeper than oceans, and sweeter than honey.” In a joint sentiment echoed throughout the visit, both sides reiterated that peace, development, and mutual cooperation are the cornerstone of their enduring friendship. The visit concluded with a renewed pledge to advance strategic synergy through sustained dialogue, practical collaboration, and shared vision for regional peace and prosperity. It reflects a powerful message to the international community: the Pakistan-China partnership remains unshakable and forward-looking – a bedrock of stability in an increasingly complex global order.

## Court summons..

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Dr Yasmin Rashid and Mian Mehmood ur Rasheed, to 10 years in prison each in connection with the May 9 case. The court also awarded sentences to former Punjab governor Omar Sarfraz Cheema, PTI Senator Ejaz Chaudhry, and Afzal Azeem Pahat in the same case. However, the court acquitted former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Hamza Azeem Pahat, Rana Tanveer, and Aizaz Rafiq in the case. The same day ATC in Sargodha also sentenced Punjab Assembly Opposition Leader Ahmed Khan Bachar, MNA Mohammad Ahmed Chattha and several other PTI workers to 10 years each in prison in a vandalism case related to May 9 riots. Rawalpindi, 25 July, 2025: Major General Saidzoda Bobojon Abdulkodir, Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces, First Deputy Minister of Defence of the Republic of Tajikistan called on General Sahir Shamsad Mirza, NI (M), Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJSC) at Joint Staff Headquarters, Rawalpindi. The discussion focused on the evolving regional security situation and shared strategic interests. Both military leaders emphasized deep-rooted brotherly relations between Pakistan and Tajikistan and explored avenues to further strengthen bilateral defence cooperation. The visiting dignitary lauded the professionalism of Pakistan Armed Forces and acknowledged their sacrifices in fight against terrorism. Earlier, upon arrival at Joint Staff Headquarters, a smartly turned-out tri-services contingent presented Guard of Honour to the visiting dignitary.

PM Shehbaz  
reaffirms

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and reiterated the EU's commitment to strengthening its cooperation with Pakistan. Expressing gratitude for the prime minister's good wishes, the ambassador said that she would continue to promote stronger Pakistan-EU relations in her next assignment in Brussels

Pak strongly  
condemns

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pre-June 1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions.” Meanwhile, French President Emmanuel Macron announced Thursday that France will recognize Palestine as a state, in a bold diplomatic move amid snowballing global anger over people starving in Gaza. Israel denounced the decision. Macron said in a post on X that he will formalize the decision at the U.N. General Assembly in September. “The urgent thing today is that the war in Gaza stops and the civilian population is saved,” he wrote. The mostly symbolic move puts added diplomatic pressure on Israel as the war and humanitarian.

## NUML signs MoUs to enhance skill development and media training

Speaking on the occasion, DG NUML expressed optimism that these collaborations will lead to meaningful outcomes and mutual benefit, reinforcing NUML's commitment to bridging the gap between academia and industry

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The National University of Modern Languages (NUML) signed two key Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) aimed at enhancing industry-relevant skills and strengthening practical media training for students.

The first MoU was signed between NUML and the TEU Professional Development Centre (TEUPDC). Director General NUML, Brigadier Shahzad Munir, and Executive Director TEUPDC, Brigadier (R) Muzaffar ul Hassan, signed the agreement. This partnership aims to serve as a model public-private initiative focused on boosting employability through targeted short courses and professional training programs. Both institutions will collaborate to offer industry-aligned courses, build capacity in high-demand sectors, and equip youth with skills suited to the evolving job market. In another significant development, NUML also signed an MoU with Azaad Media Academy. DG NUML Brigadier Shahzad Munir and Patron-in-Chief of Azaad Media Academy, Murtaza Solangi, formalized the partnership. Through this collaboration, the Academy will offer internship opportunities to students of NUML's Media and Communication Studies Program, providing hands-on experience in journalism, broadcasting, digital media, and the use of



Artificial Intelligence in modern media practices. Speaking on the occasion, DG NUML

expressed optimism that these collaborations will lead to meaningful outcomes and mutu-

al benefit, reinforcing NUML's commitment to bridging the gap between academia and industry.

Pak announce white-ball  
squads for West Indies tour

Men in Green will play three ODIs and as many T20Is against West Indies

DNA

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Friday unveiled the national squad for the upcoming limited-overs series against the West Indies. The ODI series will be played at the Brian Lara Cricket Academy in Trinidad & Tobago from August 8-12. Mohammad Rizwan will continue to lead the ODI side as PCB has named a 16-member squad for the three-match series. Right-handed batter Hasan Nawaz is the only uncapped player in the ODI squad, while Babar Azam and Shaheen Shah Afridi are part of the ODI squad. The Men in Green will also play three T20Is against the West Indies, scheduled from July 31 to August 3 at the Central Broward Park & Broward County Stadium in Lauderdale, USA. In T20Is, Salman Ali Agha will captain the side, while fast bowlers Haris Rauf, Hasan Ali and Sha-

heen Shah Afridi return to the squad in limited overs format. Following the conclusion of the three-match T20I series in Bangladesh, Pakistan will arrive in the USA on Sunday, 27 July. Pakistan T20I squad: Salman Ali Agha (captain), Abrar Ahmed, Faheem Ashraf, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Hasan Ali, Hasan Nawaz, Hussain Talat, Khushdil Shah, Mohammad Harris (wicket-keeper), Mohammad Nawaz, Sahibzada Farhan (wicket-keeper), Saim Ayub, Shaheen Shah Afridi and Sufyan Moqim ODI squad: Mohammad Rizwan (captain), Salman Ali Agha (vice-captain), Abdullah Shafique, Abrar Ahmed, Babar Azam, Faheem Ashraf, Fakhar Zaman, Hasan Ali, Hasan Nawaz, Hussain Talat, Mohammad Harris (wicket-keeper), Mohammad Nawaz, Naseem Shah, Saim Ayub, Shaheen Shah Afridi and Sufyan Moqim Team management: Naveed Akram Cheema (manager), Mike Hesson (head coach), Ashley

Noffke (bowling coach), Hanif Malik (batting Coach), Shane McDermott (fielding Coach), Cliffe Deacon (physiotherapist), Grant Luden (strength and conditioning coach), Talha Ejaz (analyst), Syed Naem Ahmad (media manager), Ir-taza Komail (security manager), Dr Wajid Ali Rafai (team doctor) and Muhammad Ehsan (masseur). Series schedule: • July 31 – First T20I v West Indies, Central Broward Park & Broward County Stadium, Lauderdale, USA • Aug 2 – Second T20I v West Indies, Central Broward Park & Broward County Stadium, Lauderdale, USA • Aug 3 – Third T20I v West Indies, Central Broward Park & Broward County Stadium, Lauderdale, USA • Aug 8 – First ODI v West Indies, Brian Lara Cricket Academy, Trinidad & Tobago • Aug 10 – Second ODI v West Indies, Brian Lara Cricket Academy, Trinidad & Tobago • Aug 12 – Third ODI v West Indies, Brian Lara

Crickit Academy, Trinidad & Tobago our de France stage modified over infected cattle Col de la Loze, France, July 25 (AFP/APP):The 19th stage of the Tour de France has been shortened due to the discovery of a contagious disease in a herd of cattle located along the original route between Albertville and La Plagne, race organisers said Thursday. The discovery of an outbreak of contagious nodular dermatitis affecting cattle in a herd located specifically in the Col des Saissies has necessitated the culling of the animals,” said organisers in a statement about Friday's stage. “In light of the distress experienced by the affected farmers and in order to preserve the smooth running of the race, it has been decided, in agreement with the relevant authorities, to modify the route of Stage 19 (Albertville-La Plagne) and to avoid the ascent to the Col des Saissies.

Thailand warns of  
war with Cambodia as  
138,000 flee fighting

SURIN, THAILAND: Thailand's acting Prime Minister Phumtham Wechayachai warned Friday that cross-border clashes with Cambodia that have uprooted more than 130,000 people “could develop into war”, as the countries traded deadly strikes for a second day. A long-running border dispute erupted into intense fighting with jets, artillery, tanks and ground troops on Thursday, and the UN Security Council is set to hold an emergency meeting on the crisis later Friday. A steady thump of artillery strikes could be heard from the Cambodian side of the border, where the province of Oddar Meanchey reported one civilian – a 70-year-old man – had been killed and five more wounded. More than 138,000 people have been evacuated from Thailand's border regions, its health ministry said, reporting 15 fatalities – 14 civilians and a soldier – with a further 46 wounded, including 15 troops. “We have tried to compromise as we are neighbours, but we have now instructed the Thai military to act immediately in case of urgency,” said Wechayachai. “If the situation escalates, it could develop into war, though for now, it remains limited to clashes,” he told reporters in Bangkok. In the Cambodian town of Samraong, 20 kilometres (12 miles) from the border, AFP journalists saw families speeding away in vehicles with their children and belongings as gunfire erupted. “I live very close to the border. We are scared because they began shooting again at about 6:00 am,” Pro Bak, 41, told AFP. He was taking his wife and children to a Buddhist temple to seek refuge. “I don't know when we could return home,” he said. AFP journalists also saw soldiers rushing to man rocket launchers and speeding off towards the frontier. Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, whose country currently holds the chair of regional bloc ASEAN, said he held talks with both countries leaders on Thursday and called for a ceasefire and dialogue. —APP

Tight security as  
Trump heads to  
Scotland

GLASGOW: US President Donald Trump was due to arrive in Scotland on Friday for a mix of diplomacy, business and leisure, with a huge security operation swinging into place and protests planned near his family-owned golf resorts. The president, whose mother was born in Scotland, is expected to split his time between two seaside golf courses bearing his name, in south-western coastal Turnberry and Aberdeen in the northeast. Air Force One carrying the president and White House staff was due to arrive around at 8:20 pm local time (1920 GMT) and Trump has no public events scheduled for Saturday or Sunday, the White House said. Police Scotland, who are bracing for mass protests in Edinburgh and Aberdeen as well as close to his golf courses, said there will be a “significant operation across the country over many days”. An avid golfer, Trump is expected to tear himself away from the greens to meet with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer at some point, but details of that meeting have not been released. Starmer is not reputed to be as passionate about golf as the 79-year-old Republican, and may have other concerns to tee off on. The US and the UK announced a trade agreement in May, but London is worried about Trump's stated intention to “refine” the deal. The British leader, who has dodged the exorbitant import/export tariffs other countries have been saddled with, will aim to stay in the good graces of the unpredictable American leader. APP

Zong continues nationwide  
cloud showcase

The Islamabad event marked another key milestone in Zong's ongoing nationwide journey with Z SAIS Cloud, strengthening its position as the trusted enabler of Pakistan's digital future

ISLAMABAD: Zong, Pakistan's leading technology innovation company, continued its Z SAIS Cloud showcase with a high-impact event here, bringing it to the Capital after a successful series of engagements in Lahore and Karachi that marked a major leap in the country's digital transformation journey. Z SAIS Cloud signals a natural progression in Zong's journey, extending beyond connectivity to deliver business-ready solutions aligned with the strategic priorities of modern enterprises, said a news release. The Islamabad event offered more than just product updates; it was a curated platform designed to reflect how far the Z SAIS Cloud initiative has come since its kickoff in Lahore and its powerful reception in Karachi, underscoring Zong's role in enabling nationwide innovation. A key highlight of the event was the announcement of additional strategic partnerships with leading enterprises, including Cymax Technologies, Pak Gulf, and Appologix. These

new signings marked a significant expansion of the cloud ecosystem and underlined growing cross-sector interest in business-ready and locally hosted cloud solutions. On the occasion, Farooq Raza Khan, Head of Business Solutions, Zong, said: “This showcase was never just about launching a platform; it was about listening, engaging, and building momentum with the right partners. Our transformation is strategic, not cosmetic; rooted in a deep commitment to enabling enterprise innovation and delivering business-ready solutions that serve Pakistan's evolving digital ambitions. As we conclude this nationwide showcase, it's clear that the future of cloud in the country will be shaped by collaboration, built on trust, and driven by local purpose.” The Islamabad event marked another key milestone in Zong's ongoing nationwide journey with Z SAIS Cloud, strengthening its position as the trusted enabler of Pakistan's digital future and setting the stage for deeper enterprise collaboration, innovation, and business-ready cloud-first growth across industries.—DNA

FM Ishaq  
Dar meets  
Marco Rubio

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House last month. Dar was warmly received upon arrival at the US State Department, where Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States, Rizwan Saeed Sheikh, was also present, Geo News reported.

The meeting was held at the delegation level, with senior officials from both sides in attendance. The two sides discussed a broad range of issues including bilateral ties, prospects for enhanced cooperation in trade, economy, investment, counterterrorism, and regional peace. Both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening bilateral relations and agreed to work together for shared goals. FM Dar appreciated President Donald Trump's role in de-escalating Pakistan-India tensions, calling his efforts commendable. He said Pakistan seeks deeper and more stable ties with the US.

Secretary Rubio acknowledged Pakistan's unmatched sacrifices in the war on terror and praised the country's constructive role in global and regional peace.

Dar expressed optimism over progress in trade talks and noted alignment in both countries' interests and perspectives on regional peace. He also stated that the Pakistani diaspora continues to act as a bridge between the two nations.

The meeting between the deputy PM and Secretary Rubio lasted for around 40 minutes. Following the conclusion of the meeting, Dar departed from the US Department of State.

When Trump met Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Munir, they discussed trade, economic development, mines and minerals, artificial intelligence, energy, cryptocurrency, and emerging technologies.

Following the meeting – which took place more than a month after an armed conflict between nuclear-armed Pakistan and India – Islamabad also nominated Trump for the Nobel prize for his role in ending the war.

During an interaction with journalists, President Trump had said that he had the “honour” of meeting Field Marshal Munir and maintained that he invited the army chief to thank him for ending the war with India.

Although Pakistan has, time and time again, praised and credited President Trump for his role in the ceasefire, which he himself has

Pak seeks  
ban on  
accounts

terrorist groups and said that Pakistan was unaware of their exact origins. The government, he said, was seeking information from platform operators to help dismantle these online networks, adding that Pakistan remained a wall between terrorism and the world. Chaudhry further stated that many proscribed organisations under UN, US, UK, and Pakistani sanctions were freely using these platforms. Referring to the National Action Plan, he said one of its core points was to act against individuals or entities spreading terrorist propaganda via media and social media. He noted that hardcore terrorist groups were operating online under the guise of free speech and urged the complete blocking and removal of their accounts.

Iran says  
will continue  
nuclear talks

DNA

TEHRAN: Iran said it would continue nuclear talks with European powers after “serious, frank, and detailed” conversations on Friday, the first such face-to-face meeting since Israel and the United States bombed Iran last month. Before the meeting in Istanbul, Iran also pushed back on suggestions of extending the United Nations resolution that ratifies a 2015 deal, nearing expiry, that was designed to curb its nuclear programme. Delegations from the European Union and the so-called E3 group of France, Britain and Germany met Iranian counterparts for about four hours.

17,600 Afghans hosted by UAE prior  
to departure to final destinations

Residents also have access to necessary means for sustenance, including medicine, food, and other essential supplies, reflecting the values and traditions of Emirati society

ABU DHABI: As part of its humanitarian commitment and swift response during crises, the UAE hosted 17,619 Afghans who were evacuated from Afghanistan since August 2021, prior to their resettlement in third countries. This step was carried out in cooperation with international partners to support the Afghan people amid the exceptional circumstances the country faced. The Emirates Humanitarian City in Abu Dhabi received the Afghan evacuees, providing high-quality services and facilities prior to their departure to 21 final destinations. The total cost of the hosting amounted to AED 1.384 billion (USD 367 million), providing a comprehensive framework for dignified temporary accommodation that met the full range of needs, particularly those of children, the elderly, and women. The UAE also facilitated the evacuation

of 41,000 individuals from Afghanistan, including Afghan citizens and foreign nationals residing in the country. Driven by its commitment to supporting friendly nations, the UAE responded to requests for assistance in evacuating their citizens from Afghanistan, and facilitating their eventual return home. During their stay, the UAE provided all essential needs to Afghan nationals, including healthcare, logistical and diplomatic services, and communications, in addition to shelter and food – ensuring their comfort, dignity, and well-being. Financial assistance was also provided to help families rebuild their lives in their final destinations. To facilitate the resettlement process, all necessary departure services were provided within the Emirates Humanitarian City. This included the establishment of 17 embassy offices, along with offices for

the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and two offices for international non-governmental organisations. In the healthcare domain, the UAE undertook extensive efforts to care for residents of the Emirates Humanitarian City – including Afghans and foreign nationals – especially during the COVID-19 crisis. These efforts included providing necessary vaccines and preventive treatments, with a total of 34,923 vaccines administered to all residents by specialized medical teams. Simultaneously, comprehensive healthcare services were offered to more than 303 newborns, while successfully completing over 303 surgeries across various specialties, including three critical cases treated abroad. In total, more than 254,572 medical services

were provided throughout their temporary stay. In the field of educational and vocational training, the UAE provided education to more than 3,764 Afghans, including approximately 800 children enrolled in nurseries with school transportation and continuous follow-up. Authorities also organized more than 39 educational courses, in addition to vocational training and development workshops, which benefited 2,589 Afghan nationals. The Emirates Humanitarian City facilities include outdoor courtyards, several playgrounds and entertainment facilities dedicated to children, women, and the elderly, in addition to a preventive healthcare centre. Residents also have access to necessary means for sustenance, including medicine, food, and other essential supplies, reflecting the values and traditions of Emirati society.—Agencies



## Briefs

## PSO expands women's driving, riding training program

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan State Oil (PSO) has expanded its flagship women's skill development initiative, PSO Shaheen, by launching the second phase and quadrupling the reach in Lahore and Islamabad. Following the success of the initial rollout, the program continues to equip women with essential car driving and bike riding skills to enhance their mobility and confidence. The training sessions have expanded to two more cities Lahore and Islamabad, marking a significant expansion of the program which originally began in Karachi. In Phase 1, an impressive 82% of trained women successfully obtained their driving licenses and certificates, demonstrating the program's effectiveness. PSO Shaheen is committed to supporting women's journey toward greater mobility and confidence. Many participants from the previous phase have already utilized their newly acquired skills to support their families, launch small businesses, and even finance their own motorcycles.—APP

## PSX turns bullish, gains 514 points

ISLAMABAD: The Paistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 turned around to bullish trend on Friday, gaining 514.62 points, a positive change of 0.37 percent, closing at 139,207.29 8 points against 138,692.67 points last trading day. A total of 634,810,939 shares were traded during the day as compared to 648,800,865 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 24.611 billion against Rs 28.117 billion on the last trading day. As many as 479 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 211 of them recorded gains and 236 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 32 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were Bank of Punjab with 50,256,609 shares at Rs 13.60 per share, Fauji Foods Limited with 48,876,899 shares at Rs16.29 per share and Aisha Steel Mill with 35,595,347 shares at Rs 12.34 per share. Unilever Pakistan Foods witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 529.12 per share price, closing at Rs 34,139.55, whereas the runner-up was Atlas Honda Limited with Rs 61.39 rise in its per share price to Rs 1,160.25.—APP

## Rupee gains 76 paise against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Friday appreciated by 76 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 283.45 against the previous day's closing Rs 284.21. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 285.50 and Rs 286.55, respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by Rs 1.46 to close at Rs 332.88 against the last day's closing of Rs 334.34, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen came down by 03 paise and closed at Rs 1.91, whereas a decline of Rs 3.86 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 381.59 compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 385.45.—APP

## CCP's outstanding penalty recovery drops to Rs19b

ISLAMABAD, Jul 25 (AP-P):A subcommittee of the National Assembly's Public Accounts Committee (PAC), chaired by Naveed Qamar, held a meeting to review the performance of the Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP), particularly focusing on the recovery of penalties, pending litigation, and legal proceedings. The meeting examined two audit paras from CCP's accounts for the fiscal year 2021-22.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Saudi Arabia Nawaf Saeek Al Maliky called on President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari on Friday. Both sides discussed matters of mutual interest. \_DNA

## ECC drives forward economic agenda with major approvals

The ECC reviewed and endorsed a report presented by the Ministry of Commerce on industrial competitiveness and export-led growth of the steel sector, in alignment with the National Tariff Policy 2025–30, aimed at reducing production costs and enhancing export competitiveness.

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet was held under the chairmanship of Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb to deliberate on a range of important agenda items concerning industrial growth, environmental policy, skill development, housing finance, and telecommunications. The meeting was attended by Federal Minister for Power Sardar Awaish Ahmed Khan Leghari, Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik, Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan, along with senior officials from relevant ministries, divisions, departments, and authorities. The ECC reviewed and endorsed a report presented by the Ministry of Commerce on industrial competitiveness and export-led growth of the steel sector, in alignment with the National Tariff Policy 2025–30, aimed at reducing production costs and enhancing export competitiveness. The Committee also approved a summary by the Ministry of Commerce for filing an appeal in the Supreme Court

of Pakistan against the decision of the Lahore High Court regarding the grant of gas/RLNG tariff concessions to M/s Ghani Glass Ltd. The Committee found the appeal tenable in light of the fact that concessional energy tariffs for five export-oriented sectors have already been withdrawn and are no longer available to any sector. In a major step towards environmental sustainability, the ECC approved Pakistan's Green Taxonomy, as proposed by the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination. The Chair appreciated the initiative, noting that it was long overdue and would play a vital role in facilitating access to financing for green projects in the country. To support skills development through outcomes-based financing, the ECC approved a government guarantee of Rs. 1 billion for the issuance of the Pakistan Skill Impact Bond (PSIB), as moved by the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training. The Committee encouraged the Ministry to gradually move towards adopting the Public-Private Partnership model and to explore

undertaking similar initiatives using its own balance sheet, thereby reducing reliance on sovereign guarantees. In the housing sector, the ECC approved a markup subsidy and risk-sharing scheme for affordable housing finance, with the objective of expanding access to low-cost housing. The Committee also urged the Ministry to develop a comprehensive, integrated database of the housing sector in coordination with relevant federal and provincial stakeholders, in order to ensure better targeting and effective implementation of the scheme. The ECC was briefed by the Ministry of Industries and Production on the status of availability and pricing trends in the vegetable ghee and oil market. While noting the Ministry's assurance regarding adequate national stock levels, the Committee expressed concern over the limited pass-through of declining international prices to domestic consumers. It advised vigilant monitoring to prevent price distortions and potential cartelization, and emphasized the need for active coordination with the Competition Commission of Pakistan, National Price Monitoring Committee (NPMC), and provincial

governments through the Ministry of Industries and Production. The ECC approved a proposal by the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication for the revision of charges for Radio-Based Services (RBS). The Committee directed the Ministry to ensure periodic revision of RBS charges every three to five years, aligned with ongoing economic changes and technological advancements in the sector. The Committee also endorsed a revised composition of the advisory committee overseeing the release of IMT spectrum, which is critical for improving next-generation mobile broadband services in Pakistan. In conclusion, the ECC approved the formal declaration of ship breaking and recycling as a recognized industry, as recommended by the Ministry of Maritime Affairs. However, the Committee instructed the Ministry to coordinate with the Power Division and share relevant data on power consumption patterns in the sector, to enable accurate assessment of the implications of applying industrial power tariffs in place of the existing commercial rates.—DNA

## Britain, Australia to sign 50-year nuclear submarine treaty

MELBOURNE: Britain and Australia announced they will sign a cooperation treaty to build Australian nuclear-powered submarines and welcomed a review by President Donald Trump's administration of the United States' role in the trilateral defense deal. Britain's Defense Secretary John Healey and Foreign Secretary David Lammy met Friday with their Australian counterparts Richard Marles and Penny Wong in Sydney for an annual bilateral meeting. Marles said he and Healey will sign a 50-year treaty Saturday that will underpin bilateral cooperation on building an Australian fleet of submarines powered by US nuclear technology. "It is as significant a treaty as has been signed between our two countries since federation," Marles said, referring to the unification of several British colonies to form the Australian government in 1901. The three-way alliance was announced in 2021 to contend with growing Chinese military might in the Asia-Pacific region. It would deliver Australia at least eight submarines including three to five second-hand US Virginia-class submarines. Britain and Australia would cooperate to build their own SSN-AUKUS submarines. US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth is reviewing the pact, known by the acronym AUKUS, that was entered into by US President Joe Biden's administration. There are concerns that the US won't provide Australia with its first Virginia-class submarine by the early 2030s as planned because US submarine-building was behind schedule.—APP

## Hundreds protest over water shortages in drought-hit Iraq

HILLA: Hundreds of Iraqis protested Friday against severe water shortages exacerbated by the summer's sweltering heat in the central province of Babylon, an AFP correspondent said. Iraq, and its 46 million inhabitants, have been intensely impacted by the effects of climate change, experiencing rising temperatures, year-on-year droughts and reduced river flows. Authorities also blame upstream dams built in neighboring Iran and Türkiye for dramatically lowering the flow of the once-mighty Tigris and Euphrates, which have irrigated Iraq for millennia. In the village of Al-Majriyeh near the city of Hilla, more than 300 angry protesters urged the government to take action and solve the long-standing water issue, a day after the police dispersed a similar protest. "We have been without water for 35 days and it has already been scarce for years," protester Saadoun Al-Shammari, 66, said. Another protester Kahtan Hussein, 35, said "it is our basic right, we don't want anything more." "We don't have any water and the pipes have gone dry."—APP

## Tropical storm adds to Philippines' weather toll with 25 dead

MANILA: A tropical storm was blowing across the Philippines' mountainous north Friday, worsening more than a week of bad weather that has caused at least 25 deaths and prompted evacuations in villages affected by flooding and landslides. The storm was Typhoon Co-may when it made landfall Thursday night in the town of Agno in Pangasinan province with maximum sustained winds of 120 kilometers (74 miles) per hour and gusts of up to 165 kph (102 mph). It was weakening as it advanced north-eastward and had sustained winds of 100 kph (62 mph) Friday morning. Co-may was intensifying seasonal monsoon rains that had swamped a large swath of the country for more than a week. Disaster response officials have received reports of at least 25 deaths since last weekend, mostly due to flash floods, toppled trees, landslides and electrocution.—DNA

## Zafar Bakhtawari, Waseem Zaffar discuss trade opportunities

BIRMINGHAM: Secretary General of United Business Group (UBG), Zafar Bakhtawari, visited the Birmingham City Council during his UK tour, where he met with the Lord Mayor of Birmingham, Councillor Zafar Iqbal, and prominent British Councillor Waseem Zaffar. During the meeting, Lord Mayor Zafar Iqbal warmly accepted Mr. Bakhtawari's invitation to visit Pakistan, announcing his planned visit in October 2025. He expressed his eagerness to meet the people of Pakistan and engage in discussions on economic cooperation, trade opportunities, and community welfare. Lord Mayor Zafar Iqbal, who hails from Chakswari, Azad Kashmir, emphasized the significant contributions of the British Pakistani community to the UK's economy, development, and prosperity. "I consider it my duty to represent this community and work at every level to resolve their issues," he remarked. He added that British Pakistanis are deeply loyal to the UK while maintaining a profound love for Pakistan, actively contributing to its economic progress as well. The meeting featured an in-depth discussion on Pakistan's current economic challenges and opportunities, along with exploring areas where the UK can extend its cooperation. Zafar Bakhtawari highlighted the UK's role as a developed and globally influential nation, actively promoting economic stability, peace, and development worldwide. He underscored the pivotal role of the Pakistani diaspora in the UK's growth and called for increased direct investment by this community in Pakistan's economy. Mr. Bakhtawari appealed to the UK to enhance its cooperation with Pakistan in key sectors like technology, education, healthcare, and industry, ensuring that Pakistan's economy aligns with modern global standards.—DNA



Abu Dhabi: Dr. Sultan Mohammed Al Nuaimi, Director General ECSSR presenting a commemorative shield to Ambassador Faisal Niaz Tirmizi, following a dialogue session on Pakistan-UAE bilateral relations.

## Arab, Gulf countries welcome France recognition of Palestinian state

RIYADH: Gulf Arab states on Friday welcomed President Emmanuel Macron's announcement that France would recognize the state of Palestine, and urged other countries to follow suit. Other European Union members have recognized Palestine since the Gaza war erupted in October 2023 but France is the first member of the G7 group of major advanced economies to do so. The Saudi foreign ministry said "the kingdom commends this historic decision, which reaffirms the international community's consensus on the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and to establish their independent state." It called on other countries "that have not yet recognized the State of Palestine to take similar positive steps." Macron said on Thursday that France would formally recognize a Palestinian state during a United Nations meeting in September. A ministerial-level meeting co-chaired by France and Saudi Arabia to discuss a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is planned for later this month. Qatar, a key mediator in indirect negotiations between Israel and Hamas on ending the Gaza war, also welcomed the French move.—DNA

## Thailand says over 100,000 civilians flee clashes with Cambodia

SURIN, Thailand: More than 100,000 people have fled the bloodiest border fighting between Thailand and Cambodia in a decade, Bangkok said Friday, as the death toll rose and international powers urged a halt to hostilities. A long-running border dispute erupted into intense fighting with jets, artillery, tanks and ground troops on Thursday, and the UN Security Council is set to hold an emergency meeting on the crisis later Friday. The Thai interior ministry said more than 100,000 people from four border provinces had moved to nearly 300 temporary shelters, while the health ministry said the death toll had risen to 15 – 14 civilians and one soldier – with 46 wounded, including 15 troops. Cambodian authorities have not released any casualty figures from their side. In the Cambodian town of Samraong, 20 kilometers from the border, AFP journalists reported hearing distant artillery fire on Friday morning. As the guns started up, some families packed their children and belongings into vehicles and sped away. "I live very close to the border. We are scared because they began shooting again at about 6:00 am," Pro Bak, 41, said. He was taking his wife and children to a Buddhist temple to seek refuge. "I don't know when we could return home," he said. AFP journalists also

saw soldiers rushing to man rocket launchers and speeding off toward the frontier. Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, whose country currently holds the chair of regional bloc ASEAN, said he held talks with both countries' PMs on Thursday and called for a ceasefire and dialogue. "I welcome the positive signals and willingness shown by both Bangkok and Phnom Penh to consider this path forward," he said in a Facebook post late on Thursday. But despite Anwar's optimism, fighting resumed in three areas around 4:00 am on Friday (2100 GMT Thursday), the Thai army said. Cambodian forces carried out bombardments with heavy weapons, field artillery, and BM-21 rocket systems, the army said, and Thai troops responded "with appropriate supporting fire." The fighting marks a dramatic escalation in a long-running dispute between the neighbors – both popular destinations for millions of foreign tourists – over their shared 800-kilometer frontier. Dozens of kilometers in several areas are contested and fighting broke out between 2008 and 2011, leaving at least 28 people dead and tens of thousands displaced. A UN court ruling in 2013 settled the matter for over a decade, but the current crisis erupted in May when a Cambodian soldier was killed in a new clash. Fighting on Thursday

was focused on six locations, according to the Thai army, including around two ancient temples. Ground troops backed up by tanks battled for control of territory, while Cambodia fired rockets and shells into Thailand and the Thais scrambled F-16 jets to hit military targets across the border. Both sides blamed each other for firing first, while Thailand accused Cambodia of targeting civilian infrastructure, including a hospital hit by shells and a petrol station hit by at least one rocket. Thursday's clashes came hours after Thailand expelled the Cambodian ambassador and recalled its own envoy after five members of a Thai military patrol were wounded by a land mine. Cambodia downgraded ties to "the lowest level" on Thursday, pulling out all but one of its diplomats and expelling their Thai equivalents from Phnom Penh. At the request of Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet, the UN Security Council will hold an emergency meeting on Friday to discuss the deadly clashes, diplomatic sources said. The United States urged an "immediate" end to the conflict, while Cambodia's former colonial ruler France made a similar call. The EU and China – a close ally of Phnom Penh – said they were "deeply concerned" about the clashes, calling for dialogue.—Agencies



## Briefs

S&P Global  
lifts Pak  
credit rating

DNA

KARACHI: S&P Global raised Pakistan's sovereign credit rating to 'B-' from 'CCC+' and placed it on a 'stable' outlook on Thursday, saying the country's finances and reserves had been stabilised by International Monetary Fund support. "The stable outlook reflects our expectations that continued economic recovery and government efforts to enhance revenue will stabilize fiscal and debt metrics," ratings agency S&P said in a statement on the move. "We also expect that sustained official financing will support Pakistan in meeting its external obligations, and that the country will continue to roll over its commercial credit lines over the next 12 months." Pakistan's longer-dated international bonds rallied after the upgrade, with the 2051 maturity gaining 1.6 cents to be bid at 84.85 cents on the dollar, according to Tradeweb data. The 2031 and 2036 maturities also gained around 1 cent, while shorter-dated maturities posted smaller gains. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed satisfaction over the improvement in Pakistan's credit rating by S&P Global Ratings, saying that it reflects the country's economic stabilisation. He noted that this upgrade will enhance Pakistan's access to international capital markets and reduce pressure on external debt repayments. The prime minister added that Pakistan's macroeconomic indicators are steadily improving and this positive momentum is being acknowledged by global financial institutions and credit rating agencies.

Zelensky  
says meeting  
with Putin  
possible

KYIV, UKRAINE: Delegations from Moscow and Kyiv discussed the possibility of a meeting between Ukrainian President and Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin during talks in Istanbul this week, Volodymyr Zelensky said in comments released Friday. Zelensky has been pushing for a meeting with Putin and has urged Donald Trump, who has been pushing for the warring parties to strike a deal, to also attend. Putin has said he is willing to meet Zelensky but only during a "final phase" of negotiations to end the more than three-year war. "We need an end to the war, which probably begins with a meeting of leaders," Zelensky told reporters, including AFP. "In talks with us, they have begun to discuss it. This is already progress toward some kind of meeting format," he added. At a fresh round of talks in Istanbul on Wednesday, Kyiv proposed holding the talks by the end of August. The timing would roughly align with a deadline set by Trump, who earlier this month gave Russia 50 days to strike a peace deal with Ukraine or face sweeping sanctions.

Senate  
session  
prorogued  
sine die

ISLAMABAD: The Senate session was prorogued sine die on Friday by the presiding officer, formally concluding proceedings following the completion of the scheduled agenda. The session wrapped up after all listed items were addressed, with lawmakers holding final discussions on key matters of national significance. No date was announced for the next sitting. "The President, in exercise of powers conferred by Clause (1) of Article 54 of the Constitution, has been pleased to prorogue the Senate session upon conclusion of its business," stated the prorogation order, read aloud by Presiding Officer Shahadat Awan, who chaired the sitting.—APP

Pakistan reaffirms strong  
ties with ASEAN: Amna

During the handover ceremony, Ambassador Wunna Han of Myanmar formally transferred the chair of ACI to the Ambassador of Thailand, H.E. Rongvudhi Virabutr

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Foreign Secretary, Amna Baloch, has reiterated Islamabad's firm commitment to deepening its multifaceted relations with ASEAN member states, highlighting the regional bloc's critical role in promoting peace, integration, and economic development across Asia. She made these remarks during the handover ceremony of the ASEAN Committee in Islamabad (ACI) Chair, where Myanmar formally passed the baton to Thailand. The ceremony, held in at the Myanmar residence, was followed by a luncheon hosted by the Ambassador of Myanmar, H.E. Wunna Han, in honor of ASEAN envoys and Pakistani officials. Foreign Secretary Amna Baloch lauded ASEAN's contribution to regional cooperation, economic integration, and dialogue-based diplomacy. She praised the bloc for setting a global example in maintaining unity among diverse nations and emphasized that Pakistan views ASEAN as a key partner in its foreign policy framework. "Pakistan greatly values its longstanding ties with ASEAN countries," she said. "Our engagement with ASEAN has steadily grown over the years, and we remain committed to further enhancing cooperation across economic, political, and cultural dimensions." Underscoring Pakistan's proactive approach, the Foreign Secretary also shared that preparations are underway to celebrate ASEAN



Day in Islamabad in a "befitting and meaningful manner," reflecting the strength of the relationship and mutual respect shared between Pakistan and ASEAN nations. The ASEAN Committee in Islamabad (ACI) is composed of the resident missions of ASEAN countries in Pakistan, including Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. The chairmanship of the committee rotates after every six months among member states. During the handover ceremony, Ambassador Wunna Han of Myanmar formally transferred the chair of ACI to the Ambassador of Thailand, H.E. Rongvudhi Virabutr. The symbolic passing of the gavel marks

a new chapter in ASEAN's diplomatic presence in Pakistan, with Thailand expected to further energize ASEAN's collective engagements in Islamabad during its chairmanship. The event was attended by senior officials of Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including Additional Secretary Imran Ahmed Siddiqui, as well as the heads of missions of ASEAN member states represented in Islamabad. Ambassador Wunna Han, in his farewell remarks as outgoing ACI Chair, reflected on the achievements and collaborative efforts undertaken by ASEAN missions in Pakistan during his tenure. He also expressed confidence that Thailand would carry forward the



momentum to strengthen ASEAN's visibility and outreach in Pakistan. Accepting the chairmanship, Ambassador Rongvudhi Virabutr reaffirmed ASEAN's commitment to strengthening dialogue and cooperation with Pakistan. He highlighted the mutual opportunities for trade, investment, cultural exchange, and people-to-people ties that lie ahead. ASEAN — the Association of Southeast Asian Nations — is a regional organization established in 1967 comprising ten countries: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. Its primary aim is to promote political and economic cooperation and

regional stability among its members. Pakistan became a Sectoral Dialogue Partner of ASEAN in 1993 and has since maintained regular interaction with the grouping through high-level visits, participation in forums, and trade engagements. The Islamabad-based ASEAN Committee plays a vital role in furthering these ties on the ground, not only through diplomacy but also through cultural, educational, and development initiatives. As ASEAN and Pakistan look ahead to new horizons of cooperation, events such as the ACI chair handover reflect the enduring partnership and shared aspirations for a peaceful, prosperous, and integrated Asia.

Nine dead, dozens  
missing as climate  
disasters batter GB

Chief secretary says floods damaged 200 homes, disrupted roads, water channels, and cut off several villages

DNA

PESHAWAR: Gilgit Baltistan Chief Secretary Abrar Ahmed Mirza said the region has been severely affected by a series of climate-driven disasters over the past two weeks, with at least nine people confirmed dead, more than 200 homes damaged, and major infrastructure left in ruins. The region, nestled in the north of Pakistan, has seen extreme weather conditions, with glacial melts, heatwaves, and heavy rainfall triggering flash floods and landslides. Addressing a press briefing on Thursday, the top official said the region initially faced glacial melt and heatwaves, followed by a new spell of heavy rains that triggered flash floods and landslides, particularly in Diamer and Astore districts. "From June 10 till now, we have confirmed nine fatalities, eight of which occurred in the valleys of Thak and Thor in Diamer, while one death was reported from Astore valley," he said. The chief secretary noted that most incidents were caused by glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs), a phenomenon increasingly common due to rising temperatures and climate change. "We are witnessing the compounded impact of extreme heat and erratic rainfall," he added. He said the floods had damaged around 200 homes, disrupted roads and water channels, and cut off several villages in Kharmang dis-

trict, where bridges collapsed. "All 10 districts of Gilgit Baltistan have been affected to varying degrees, but Diamer remains the hardest hit," he stated. According to Mirza, the government launched immediate rescue operations in collaboration with the Pakistan Army, GB Scouts, district administration, and Rescue 1122, with the help of local volunteers. Stranded tourists were also airlifted through army helicopter sorties in inaccessible areas. He acknowledged that travel advisories are regularly issued for high-risk areas, but said that public response remains inadequate. "People tend not to alter their travel plans until the threat becomes imminent," he observed. He further warned that the death toll may rise, as several vehicles are still missing, and four to five more bodies are feared to be found during the ongoing recovery efforts. The GB government continues to assess the full scale of damage and has pledged to restore blocked routes and provide relief to displaced families. Meanwhile, at least six people were killed and five others injured due to heavy rainfall across the country in the past 24 hours, pushing the country's death toll from the monsoon spell to 258, according to the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). The agency reported on Thursday that three of the fatalities occurred in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where five individuals were also injured. Additionally, two people died in Islamabad and one person in Sindh as a result of rain-related incidents.

Children in Gaza suffer  
from malnutrition

GAZA: The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) said that one in every five children is malnourished in Gaza City as cases increase every day. "Most children our teams are seeing are emaciated, weak and at high risk of dying if they don't get the treatment they urgently need. More than 100 people, the vast majority of them children, have reportedly died of hunger," Philippe Lazzarini, UNRWA Commissioner-General, said. He added that parents are too hungry to care for their children, "those who reach UNRWA clinics don't have the energy, food, or means to follow medical advice." This deepening crisis is affecting everyone, including those trying to save lives in the war-torn enclave. "UNRWA frontline health workers, are surviving on one small meal a day, often just lentils, if at all. They are increasingly fainting from hunger while at work. When caretakers cannot find enough to eat, the entire humanitarian system is collapsing," he stated.—APP

Aid groups warn of starving  
children as powers discuss Gaza

GAZA: Aid groups warned of surging numbers of malnourished children in war-ravaged Gaza as a trio of European powers prepared to hold an "emergency call" Friday on the deepening humanitarian crisis. Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said that a quarter of the young children and pregnant or breastfeeding mothers it had screened at its clinics last week were malnourished, a day after the United Nations said one in five children in Gaza City were suffering from malnutrition. With fears of mass starvation growing, Britain, France and Germany were set to hold an emergency call to push for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas and discuss steps towards Palestinian statehood. "I will hold an emergency call with E3 partners tomorrow, where we will discuss what we can do urgently to stop the killing and get people the food they desperately need while pulling together all the steps necessary to build a lasting peace," British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said. The call comes after hopes of a new ceasefire in Gaza faded on Thursday when Israel and the United States quit indirect negotiations with Hamas in Qatar. US envoy Steve Witkoff accused the Palestinian militant group of not "acting in good faith". President Emmanuel Macron said Thursday that France would formally recognise a Palestinian state in September, drawing a furious rebuke from Israel. More than 100 aid and human rights groups warned this week that "mass starvation" was spreading in Gaza, has rejected accusations it is responsible for the deepening crisis, which

the World Health Organization has called "man-made". Israel placed the Gaza Strip under an aid blockade in March, which it only partially eased two months later. The trickle of aid since then has been controlled by the Israeli- and US-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, replacing the longstanding UN-led distribution system. Aid groups have refused to work with it, accusing it of aiding Israeli military goals. The GHF system, in which Gazans have to travel long distances and join huge queues to reach one of four sites, has often proved deadly, with the UN saying that more than 750 Palestinian aid-seekers have been killed by Israeli forces near GHF centres since late May. An AFP photographer saw bloodied patients, wounded while attempting to get humanitarian aid, being treated on the floor of Nasser hospital in the southern city of Khan Yunis on Thursday. Israel has refused to return to the UN-led system, saying that it allowed Hamas to hijack aid for its own benefit. Accusing Israel of the "weaponisation of food", MSF said that: "Across screenings of children aged six months to five years old and pregnant and breastfeeding women, at MSF facilities last week, 25 per cent were malnourished." It said malnutrition cases had quadrupled since May 18 at its Gaza City clinic and that the facility was enrolling 25 new patients every day. Aid groups and medics have also warned that a lack of food is preventing the sick and wounded from recovering.—APP

Google develops  
AI tool that fills  
missing words

LONDON: Google's DeepMind has unveiled a new artificial intelligence tool called Aeneas, designed to assist historians in studying ancient Roman inscriptions, according to The Guardian. The tool helps identify the origin and date of the inscriptions and suggests missing words in damaged or incomplete texts. Aeneas was developed in collaboration with historians, including Dr. Thea Sommerschild from the University of Nottingham. The AI was trained on a database of nearly 200,000 Latin inscriptions, containing more than 16 million characters. The inscriptions, found on monuments, tombs, and even everyday items, are valuable records of life in ancient Rome. However, many are fragmented or worn, making them difficult to interpret. Aeneas analyses the text and sometimes images from an inscription and compares it with similar examples from the 7th century BC to the 8th century AD. It uses deeper linguistic and historical patterns, not just keyword matches, to find connections. The AI can determine the likely Roman province where an inscription was created and estimate its date within about 13 years. It also proposes possible words to fill in missing parts, tested so far on texts where the original wording is already known. In tests, Aeneas provided accurate insights into famous inscriptions such as the Res Gestae Divi Augusti and linked similar texts across different regions of the Roman Empire. Historians called the tool "transformative," with 23 researchers finding it useful in 90% of cases.—APP

Sindh govt  
abolishes all  
parking fees

Parking fees now restricted to plazas or designated council areas

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The Sindh government has issued a notification abolishing all parking fees on public roads across Karachi, marking a significant shift in urban parking policy. According to the notification, no government agency under the Sindh government, including the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC), is authorised to collect parking charges on roads within city limits. As per the notification, parking charges may now only be collected in designated areas such as plazas, private plots or specific parking zones managed by respective local councils.