



Islamabad POST

Friday, July 18, 2025

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

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Level of destruction in Gaza is huge, says UN Secy Gen

Detailed News On Page-08

Pakistan, EU talks in Brussels

Detailed News On Page-07



Arshad Nadeem spills the beans about funding

Detailed News On Page-06



Over 50 deaths in Punjab

Islamabad, Pindi face urban flooding

Rain emergency imposed in different parts of Punjab; Chakwal witnesses 423mm of downpour due to cloudburst; a cloud burst was witnessed in Chakwal, causing as much as 423mm of rain

FAISAL SHEIKH / DNA

RAWALPINDI, LAHORE: Heavy monsoon rainfall has wreaked havoc in different parts of Punjab, killing at least 43 more people in the last 24 hours and causing urban flooding in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. As per a Water and Sanitation Agency (Wasa) spokesperson, the authority's managing director has reached out to the Pakistan Army's 111 Brigade as it has been decided to call in the army in case of an emergency. With the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) forecasting more downpour, sirens have been sounded in areas surrounding Nullah Leh as the water level has risen by 22 feet prompting the Met Office to issue evacuation orders. Wasa has said that a rain emergency has been imposed and its teams and heavy machinery have been deployed in low-lying areas of Rawalpindi with personnel busy in drainage efforts to address accumulated water. "Nullah Leh and drains across the city are being continuously monitored," said Wasa Rawalpindi Managing Director (MD) Saleem Ashraf, adding that the water level at Katarian was 22 feet and 23 feet at Gowalandi Bridge. Meanwhile, Rescue 1122 has also been put on high alert, with its district administration officer advising people to safe places before urban flooding and to evacuate dilapidated buildings. So far, Saidpur has received 53mm of rain, 77mm in Golra, 95mm in Bokra, 67mm in Shamsabad, 105mm in Kachehri, 90mm in Pirwadhai and Gowalandi and 80mm in Katarian. In a statement, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz said emergency was declared in various areas of the province due to "unprecedented" stormy rains and flooding. "Government institutions are working with zeal and utmost effort. The administration has been directed to keep the public informed through sirens and announcements," she wrote on her X handle. She also urged the public to cooperate with the institutions and follow safety guidelines. Apart from the twin cities, various

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Two sisters killed as building crumbles

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: In another deadly incident in the metropolis, two women lost their lives and three others were injured when the roof of a residential building collapsed in the overcrowded inner-city Lyari area on Thursday. The unfortunate incident comes less than two weeks after a multi-storey residential building collapsed in the same area, killing 27 and injuring several others. Lyari is among those areas where many working-class and poor families live in ageing apartment blocks. According to police officials, the incident occurred in the Khadda Market area of Lyari, where the roof of the sixth floor gave way, crashing down onto the fifth floor below. Rescue operations were launched immediately after the incident was reported. DIG South confirmed that police teams reached the site promptly and began rescue work, transferring the victims to Civil Hospital Karachi. Hospital authorities at the trauma centre also confirmed receiving two bodies and three injured individuals. Police added that the two women who died were sisters, and the three injured included their daughters. Emergency responders managed to retrieve the bodies and rushed the wounded to the hospital for medical care. Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah expressed deep sorrow and grief over the loss of lives due to the roof collapse.

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KABUL: Deputy Prime Minister / Foreign Minister along with the Foreign Ministers of Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, held a trilateral meeting in Kabul ahead of the signing of the Framework Agreement on the Joint Feasibility Study for Uzbek-Afghan-Pak (UAP) Railway project. Afterwards they witnessed the signing ceremony. – DNA

Govt to get 6 Senate seats, opp five

KP Assembly Session to beheld on July 20

APP

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi has summoned session of Provincial Assembly on Sunday, (July 20) at 9:00 AM. The session will be held in the Assembly Building, located on Khyber Road, Peshawar Cantonment. The order, issued under Clause (a) of Article 109 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, empowers the Governor to summon the assembly session, said a notification issued on Thursday. Meanwhile the government and opposition have agreed on a formula whereby govt will get 6 and opposition five Senate seats. After this formula election may not take place.

APNS condemns attack on Daily Ibrat office

DNA

KARACHI: "The All-Pakistan Newspapers Society strongly flays attempts to threaten media by acts of cowardly attack on the Karachi office of Daily Ibrat stated a press release of All Pakistan Newspapers Society. The APNS noted with grave concern that some miscreants attacked the office of Daily Ibrat in Karachi. Sarhad Ali, President and Muhammad Athar Kazi, Secretary General, APNS have stated that the APNS strongly condemns the acts of violence as an attempt to

Continued on Page 06

Regional connectivity

Pak, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan sign railway agreement

Project expected to promote regional stability by facilitating trade and transit, says FO

CENTRELINE REPORT

KABUL: Pakistan has signed a trilateral railway agreement with Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said on Thursday, in a bid to boost regional connectivity and economic integration. The Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (UAP) Railway Project aims to build a rail link to connect Uzbekistan with Pakistan via Afghanistan and facilitate access to Pakistani seaports for Central Asian States. By facilitating regional trade and transit, the project is expected to promote regional stability, growth and development. In a post on X, DPM Dar congratulated the people and the governments of the three nations on the signing of the Framework Agreement on the Joint Feasibility Study for the Naibabad-Kharachi rail link under the UAP Railway Corridor.

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Dar meets Afghan prime minister

NEWS DESK

KABUL: On the sidelines of the signing ceremony for the Framework Agreement on Joint Feasibility Study of the UAP Railway Corridor, DPM/FM, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar called on the Afghan Prime Minister, Mullah Muhammad Hassan Akhund. The two leaders exchanged views on issues of mutual interest, including peace and security, trade and transit cooperation and regional connectivity. Recalling their earlier meeting on 19 April 2025, they reaffirmed the commitment to continued engagement and agreed to maintain high-level contacts to promote bilateral relations.

Briefs

UK to lower voting age to 16

LONDON: The British government said on Thursday that it would allow 16-year-olds to vote in general elections, a landmark change giving the United Kingdom one of the lowest voting ages worldwide. The ruling Labour Party pledged to lower the age from 18 ahead of winning power last year. It is among several planned changes to the democratic system. Some argue Britain's democracy is "in crisis", in particular due to low turnout. The voting age change is contentious, however, with critics previously arguing it is self-serving as newly-enfranchised teenagers are seen as more likely to support centre-left Labour. "I think it's really important that 16- and 17-year-olds have the vote, because they are old enough to go out to work, they are old enough to pay taxes, so [they] pay in," Prime Minister Keir Starmer said.

Diane stands by Racism comments

DNA

LONDON: The Labour Party has said it is taking "incredibly seriously" an interview by Diane Abbott in which she stood by comments she made about racism that led to a year-long suspension from the Labour Party. In an interview with the BBC's James Naughtie, she was asked about the controversy that was sparked by a letter she wrote to the Observer in April 2023. In the letter, she wrote that Irish, Jewish and Traveller people "undoubtedly experience prejudice" that is "similar to racism". She added: "It is true that many types of white people with points of difference, such as redheads, can experience this prejudice.

Transparency in projects

Shehbaz Sharif for third party validation

Task Force formed to ensure provision of clear water to residents of twin cities

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday directed to ensure third-party validation for transparency in public welfare projects, especially those related to clean water, electricity, communications, and education. He emphasized the importance of maintaining high standards in completed and near-completion projects through independent validation. Chairing a review meeting regarding the development projects of the current fiscal year, the prime minister instructed that delayed projects must be completed as soon as possible. He said that the construction of high-quality educational centers like Danish Schools in Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Jammu & Kashmir, and all provinces was a top priority of the government. The prime minister added that educational institutions were a vital part of the current fiscal year's development plans, aimed at providing international-standard education

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Pakistan welcomes UK air safety decision

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan warmly welcomes the decision by the UK Air Safety Committee to remove its airline carriers from the UK Air Safety List, thereby allowing the resumption of commercial flights to the United Kingdom after a five-year hiatus. This landmark decision is an affirmation of Pakistan's sustained diplomatic and technical efforts over the past years. We have demonstrated our firm commitment to meeting and upholding the highest international safety standards. The removal of the ban marks an important restoration of connectivity

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Pakistan FO; White House not aware Donald Trump to visit Pakistan on September 18

However, it remains to be seen how the proposed visit will be perceived in Beijing and Moscow – two major rivals of the US, yet close allies of Pakistan

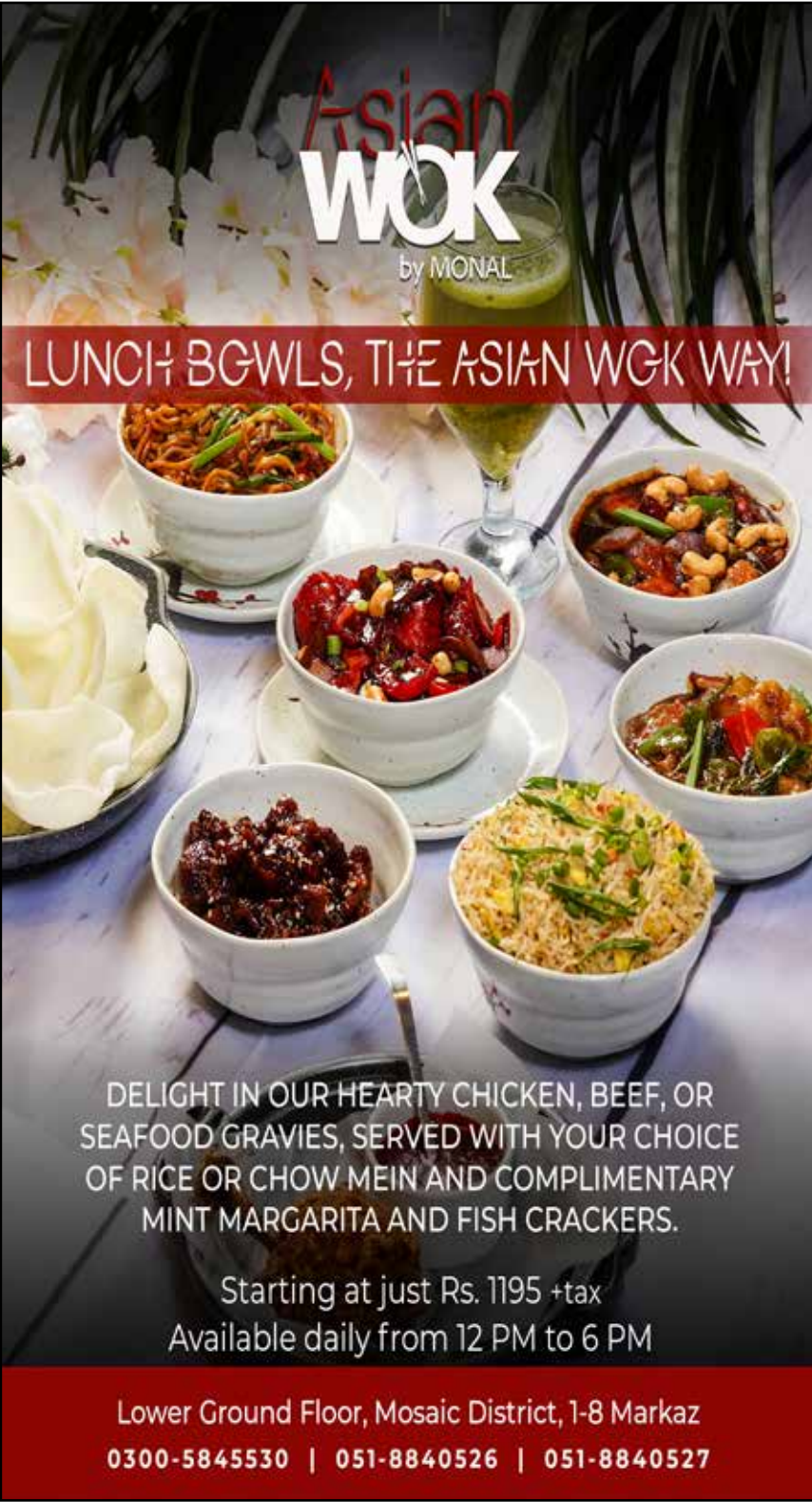
DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former U.S. President Donald J. Trump is expected to visit Pakistan on September 18 for a one-day official trip, highly-placed diplomatic sources have revealed. The visit, if confirmed, would mark a significant step forward in bilateral relations between Pakistan and the United States. According to sources, Trump is scheduled to hold high-level meetings with both civilian and military leadership during his brief stay. The visit is reportedly aimed at further strengthening strategic ties between the two countries, which have seen several ups and downs over the past decades. The development follows a recent unprecedented event in Washington, where President Trump invited Pakistan's Field Marshal General Asim Munir to a private lunch at the White House on June 20. The invi-



tation, considered extraordinary by diplomatic standards, underlines the growing personal rapport and strategic understanding between the two figures. U.S. presidents rarely extend such invitations to foreign military leaders, let alone hosting them at the White House for lunch, making this gesture a strong signal of warming ties. While no official confirmation has yet come from either the U.S. State Department or Pakistan's Foreign Office, preparations are reportedly underway in Islamabad for the high-profile visit. Security, protocol, and diplomatic channels are on alert as backdoor engagements between both governments continue. If the visit goes ahead as scheduled, it will be Trump's first trip to Pakistan and could have significant geopolitical implications, especially in the context of the shifting power dynamics in South Asia. Observers suggest that Trump's outreach to Pakistan may

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Plantation drive inaugurated in Upper S Waziristan

DERA ISMAIL KHAN:As part of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's public agenda program and under the directives of Commissioner Dera Ismail Khan Division Zafar-ul-Islam, Deputy Commissioner South Waziristan Upper Fazal Wadood Safi officially launched the Monsoon Fruit Orchard Plantation Campaign 2025. The initiative began with a high-level meeting chaired by the deputy commissioner and attended by heads of all line departments. During the session, relevant departments were instructed to submit plant demands promptly, ensure active participation in the campaign, and mobilize their teams for its effective implementation. Following the meeting, the deputy commissioner formally inaugurated the campaign by planting a sapling. The event was also attended by Additional Deputy Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners, and senior district officials, all of whom took part in the plantation activity and pledged their full support. Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Commissioner Safi remarked that planting trees is a form of Sadaqah-e-Jariyah (ongoing charity), essential not only for environmental well-being but also for securing the future of coming generations. He called on government officials, institutions, students, and the general public to take active part in the national campaign and to ensure the protection and care of the newly planted trees.—APP

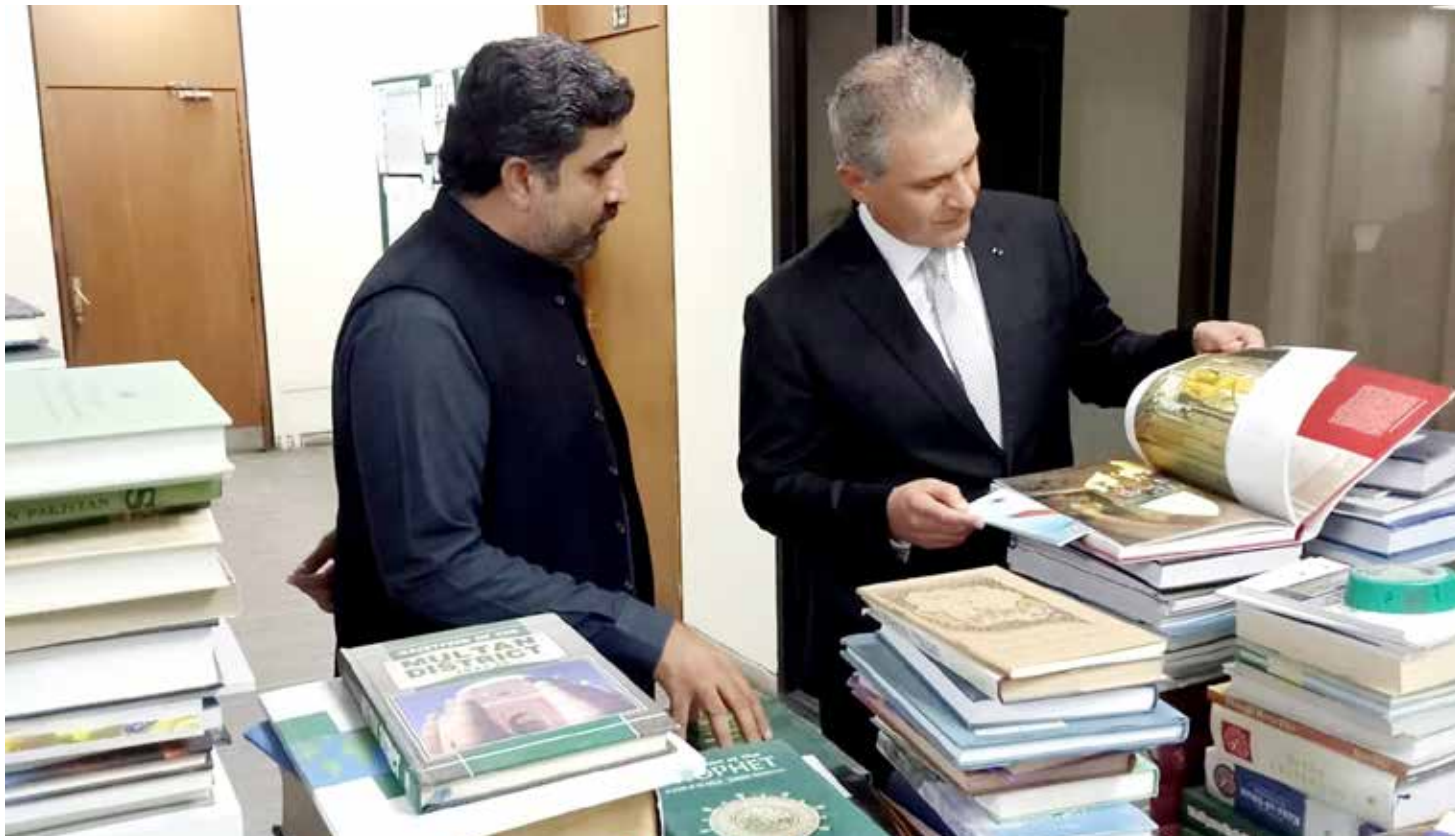
PFA seals 4 food production units

LAHORE:The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) sealed four well-known food production units during a grand operation in Thokar Niaz Baig area here on Thursday. According to PFA sources here under the supervision of Special Assistant to Chief Minister Punjab Salma Butt and lodged FIRs against the food business operators over forgery and hygiene violations. Food safety teams conducted the operation on the directions of Punjab Chief Minister as part of the PFA's ongoing crackdown against food adulteration and forgery. Food safety teams imposed fines worth Rs 1.2 million and discarded thousands of kilograms of expired and unsafe food items. Salma Butt said that units were involved in repackaging expired chocolate and baking powder for supplying to renowned bakeries in Lahore. She said that the teams discarded 10,000kg porridge, 3,200 bottles of cold drinks, 3,000kg chocolate, 144kg cake gel and 132kg baking powder. Cake gel used in bakery items was found uncovered and stored directly on the floor in unhygienic conditions. Special Assistant to Punjab Chief Minister said that another unit producing counterfeit cold drinks of popular brands was also sealed. Food safety team found expired raw materials, fake labels, unapproved formulas, insect infestation and poor hygiene during the inspection.—APP

Jordan ambassador visits National Library

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Maen Khreasat, Ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to Pakistan, visited the National Library of Pakistan, Islamabad. During the visit, Rana Yasir Arfat, Director General of the National Library, provided a comprehensive briefing on the library's services, core functions, and ongoing initiatives. Following the briefing, Dr. Maen Khreasat toured various sections of the library and appreciated its vast contributions in the field of knowledge preservation, public access to information, and promotion of literary and cultural heritage.



NIC Connect unites top media voices

ISLAMABAD: NIC Connect officially took place at NIC Islamabad on Wednesday, bringing together journalists and media professionals for an exclusive look inside the country's premier technology incubation ecosystem. Designed to foster long-term collaboration between the innovation and media sectors, the event opened a dialogue on how Pakistan's success stories in tech, AI, and entrepreneurship can shape a more powerful and accurate national narrative. The event was hosted by National Incubation Center Islamabad, with an agenda focused on engagement, exploration, and storytelling. Members of the press toured the facility, interacted with incubated startups, and heard directly from founders building impactful solutions across diverse sectors. The session kicked off with a powerful address by Mr. Sayyed Ahmad Masud, Project Director at NIC Islamabad, who emphasized the urgent need to reshape how Pakistan is perceived both at home and globally.

"There is no shortage of talent in Pakistan, only a shortage of the right narrative," Masud said. "We must replace the noise of misinformation with the truth: that young Pakistanis are solving real problems, building AI solutions, launching startups, and contributing to global innovation. And this is a responsibility we all share from media and tech to healthcare, economics, and beyond." The event brought together media professionals from across Pakistan, including senior editors, economic analysts, and newsroom leads. Their presence underscored the importance of fostering stronger connections between Pakistan's innovation ecosystem and the individuals shaping its public narrative. As part of the event, three startups EMR Chains, Sothassi, and Carbon Cap briefly presented their ventures, offering a glimpse into the health-tech, cultural AI, and climate-tech solutions being developed at NIC. The interactive pitching session

was followed by a tour of NIC's co-working spaces, innovation labs, and venture capital corner. Media attendees were introduced to members of the NIC team and briefed on the center's incubation process, success stories, and ongoing initiatives. "It's my first time at NIC, and I'm amazed at the energy here," said a senior broadcast journalist. "There's clearly a lot of good happening in Pakistan's tech sector and platforms like this help us see and share that." The event concluded with an informal networking session, where participants engaged in thoughtful conversations over light refreshments. The atmosphere was marked by a strong sense of enthusiasm and curiosity, with several media representatives describing the environment as dynamic, inspiring, and full of potential. The session provided a meaningful opportunity for deeper engagement, leaving attendees with a renewed perspective on the role of innovation in shaping Pakistan's future.—APP

MoU signed to promote collaboration in various fields

LAHORE:The Walled City of Lahore Authority (WCLA) and the University of Management and Technology (UMT) on Thursday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote academic collaboration in the fields of history, heritage, and conservation. The agreement aims to engage students, faculty and researchers from UMT in various heritage-related initiatives, including research projects, educational tours, workshops and joint programmes focused on the conservation and exploration of Lahore's historic Walled City. Under this partnership, both institutions would work together to promote awareness of Lahore's cultural legacy and create opportunities for students to gain hands-on experience in heritage documentation, site analysis and restoration activities. The collaboration also supports joint research publications and knowledge-sharing sessions between experts from both sides.—APP

CM visits rain-hit Hyderabad, orders road construction along Pinyari Canal

HYDERABAD: The Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah conducted a detailed visit to various rain-affected areas of Hyderabad and directed the district administration to ensure immediate relief to the public. Accompanied by provincial ministers Sharjeel Inam Memon and Jam Khan Shoro, Mayor Hyderabad Kashif Shoro, Commissioner Bilal Ahmed Memon and Deputy Commissioner Zainul Abideen Memon, the Chief Minister inspected the severely affected locations. Syed Murad Ali Shah inspected Civil Lines, Thandi Sarak, Autobahn Road Pumping Station, Railway Underpass, Fatah Chowk, Makki Shah Road, Qazi Qayyum Road and low-lying areas of Qasimabad. He instructed the administration to ensure rapid drainage of stagnant rainwater from all low-lying areas and accelerate sanitation efforts. During a briefing, the Deputy Commissioner Zainul Abideen Memon informed the CM that on July 14, heavy rainfall recorded 107mm in an hour, with 91mm in Latifabad and 55mm in Qasimabad. He added that 90 percent of the city's areas had been cleared of rainwater within 24 hours. The CM

emphasized focused attention on Railway Underpass and other low-lying points, directing that all measures be taken to protect human lives. Expressing grief over a citizen's death during the rain, he offered his condolences. He further directed that work on under-construction roads be expedited and public service messages be displayed on city walls. He noted that some parts of the city still had standing water and ordered its immediate drainage. Highlighting the low-lying nature of Hyderabad, the CM stated that the city's drainage system was entirely dependent on pumping, as gravity-based flow was not feasible. He said HESCO was instructed to ensure uninterrupted electricity supply during rain to keep pumping stations operational. The Chief Minister also inspected development projects on Autobahn Road and Abdul Sattar Edhi Road. He issued orders to speed up the construction of the Abdul Sattar Edhi flyover and remove encroachments. The works and service department was directed to build roads along both banks of the Pinyari Canal at a cost of Rs 2.2 billion. The road on the right bank will be 7.40

km long, while the left bank road will span 9.80 km. The CM termed the project vital for easing traffic and enhancing city aesthetics. Later on, addressing a press conference in the mayor office, the chief minister Syed Murad Ali Shah recalled visiting Latifabad by boat in 2005 and said he remains familiar with all areas of the city. He noted that encroachments including eight-story buildings along Autobahn Road, had already been removed, and legal action would continue in other affected areas. Referring to the revival of Niaz Stadium, the CM shared that discussions have been held with PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi, and hopefully, PSL matches will be held in Hyderabad next year. He added that matches of the Asian Championship, involving six international teams, will be hosted in Karachi and Hyderabad in September. The D Park will be inaugurated in August. In the end of the press conference, the Chief Minister reaffirmed that Hyderabad, being the second largest city in Sindh, remains a top priority for the PPP government. He assured that despite limited resources.—DNA

Various initiatives to enhance social community projects approved

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Chief Commissioner of Islamabad Muhammad Ali Randhwa presided over the 76th meeting of the CDA Development Working Party (CDA-DWP) at the CDA Headquarters. Senior officers from the Planning, Development & Special Initiatives Division, Ministry of Interior, Finance Division, CDA Board Members and representatives from relevant formations and project consultant attended the meeting. CDA-DWP in its 76th meeting approved various landmark initiatives to enhance roads infrastructure and social community projects. These include the approval of PCI for development of Christian Graveyard in Sector H-8/1 at an estimated cost of Rs. 275 million. This initiative aligns with National Commission for Human Rights NCHR's commitment to uphold human rights, reduces discrimination, public health, interfaith harmony. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhwa emphasized Infrastructure development and human rights are linked with each other. The agenda of meeting also includes a PCI regarding Resolving Traffic congestion issues at Shaheen Chowk (Intersection of 9th Avenue with Khayaban-e-Iqbal) designed by M/s NESPAK at an estimated cost of Rs. 1899 million to eliminate traffic congestion which will improve Present Serviceability Index (PSI) from E to A by providing underpass and other ancillary road work. The scope of this project consists of 2+2 Lane underpass long Khayaban-e-Iqbal for through traffic and roundabout to serve at-grade through and right turning traffic. The proposed project will be completed within six months duration time. PCI regarding construction of flyover at the Junction of G.T Road & Islamabad Highway, prepared and designed by M/s. NESPAK at an estimated cost of Rs. 1803 Million was also considered in the meeting. The scope of the project includes a two lane flyover at Rawat T-Chowk from N-5 (Gujar Khan side) to Islamabad Highway.—DNA

DGPR Irum felicitated by PID staff on Umrah performance

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Director General Public Relations (DGPR) of PID Karachi, Mrs. Irum Tanweer, was warmly welcomed and felicitated by officers of the Press Information Department (PID) and Directorate of Electronic Media and Publications (DEMP) upon her return from Saudi Arabia after performing Umrah. During a reception at the PID office, Mrs. Tanweer was presented with a bouquet by the staff, who congratulated her on completing the spiritual journey and extended heart-felt wishes of Umrah Mubarak. Mrs. Tanweer expressed gratitude and shared sacred gifts (Tabarrukat) from Saudi Arabia, including dates and Abe-Zamzam, with the officers. She mentioned that she prayed for the well-being of all PID officers during her time in the holy land and emphasized the spiritual transformation experienced during Umrah. Highlighting the blessings of such a journey, she noted that returning pilgrims are often

expected to reflect elevated piety and spiritual closeness to Allah, which she personally experienced. During her stay in Jeddah, Mrs. Tanweer also met with Mr. Muhammad Irfan, Press Counsellor at the

Consulate General of Pakistan. Mr. Irfan appreciated the facilities provided by the Saudi government to Umrah and Hajj pilgrims. The welcome event was attended by senior PID and

DEMP officers including Director Tahir Nawaz, Director Mohammad Khalid Mairaj Abbasi, Deputy Directors Nouman Ahmed, Shazim Akhter, and Maqbool Sandheelo. Notable journalists and

senior media figures such as Nazir Siyal, Qurban Ali Khushik, A. Hameed Soomro, Fayaz Hussain, Mazhar Ali, and G.M. Khokhar also extended their congratulations and blessings on the occasion.



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National Days and Armed Forces Days

JULY

July 01/Japan Self Defence Day

July 01/Singapore Armed Forces Day

July 01 / Canada National Day

July 01/Somalia Independence Day

July 04/USA Independence Day

July 05/Algeria Independence Day

July 09/Argentine Independence Day

July 09/Mongolia Revolution Day

July 14/France National Day

July 15/Brunei Sultan's Birthday

July 21/Belgium National Day

July 20/TRNC Independence Day

July 23/Egypt National Day

July 26/Cuba National Day

July 26/Liberia National Day

July 30/Morocco National Day

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Marriott.....051- 2826121

Monal.....0334-5421812



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



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& Rescue Services.4451122

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MH.....561116

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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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Strong institutions key to sustainable progress: Gilani

Gilani emphasised the importance of collaboration among the government, private sector, and international development partners to accelerate national progress. He praised the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, and other partners for their continued support in building technical capacity, financing infrastructure, and pushing forward critical reforms in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Senate, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, on Thursday underscored the need for strong institutions and transparent systems to ensure sustainable development and improved public service delivery in Pakistan. Addressing the closing ceremony of the International Federation of Consulting Engineers FIDIC Asia-Pacific Mid-Year Conference 2025, Gilani said, "During my tenure as Prime Minister, we actively promoted public-private partnerships, encouraged infrastructure investment, and built a regulatory environment that fostered innovation and business growth." He reaffirmed his commitment to advancing reforms that strengthen Pakistan's engineering and infrastructure sectors, while promoting institutional integrity, technical excellence, and inclusive development. The Senate, he said, is ready to support legislation aimed at improving procurement governance, encouraging ethical engineering practices, and adopting dispute resolution mechanisms aligned with global standards. Gilani emphasised the importance of collaboration among the government, private sector,



and international development partners to accelerate national progress. He praised the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, and other partners for their continued support in building technical capacity, financing infrastructure, and pushing forward critical reforms in Pakistan.

Acknowledging the conference's inclusion of young professionals, Gilani said, "Empowering our youth is both a moral duty and a strategic necessity. Their creativity, energy, and adaptability will shape the infrastructure of the future." He commended the Association of Consulting Engineers Pakistan

(ACEP) for organizing a dynamic forum that brought together experts and stakeholders from across the Asia-Pacific and beyond. "The thoughtful design of this conference, the quality of discussions, and diverse participation reflect Pakistan's rising stature in the global engineering and infrastructure landscape,"

he noted. Highlighting the vital role of infrastructure in national development, Gilani said roads, bridges, power grids, and water systems are not just physical structures but essential lifelines that connect people, boost trade, and uplift communities. He also praised FIDIC's efforts in setting international standards of integrity and efficiency in project delivery. Stressing the need for responsible use of public funds, he advocated for the adoption of globally recognised practices in Pakistan's infrastructure development. Calling for a future where infrastructure is both well-constructed and well-governed, the Senate Chairman expressed hope that the ideas exchanged and connections made during the three-day conference would foster ongoing collaboration. President of ACEP, Wasim Asghar, also addressed the gathering and thanked Chairman Gilani for his remarks. He said the conference provided an important platform for dialogue, knowledge-sharing, and regional cooperation. Delegates from various countries participated in the event, contributing to its success as a meaningful forum for professional exchange.

FGEHA considering price revision of F-14/15 housing scheme

ISLAMABAD: Federal Government Employees Housing Authority(FGEHA) is considering price revision of the Housing Scheme PHASE VII (F-14/15). The scheme was launched in 2015 after getting formal approval from the Prime Minister of Pakistan on May 1, 2015, official spokesperson of FGEHA informed APP on Thursday. He acknowledged that the price revision of plots in Sectors F-14 and F-15 was under consideration and the authority was diligently working to determine the pricing for these sectors. "Currently, the consultation and decision-making process is ongoing which includes the signing of construction agreements, the developer commencing work, and payments to landowners. The authority is meticulously developing a proper schedule for each plot within Sectors F-14 and F-15," he informed. Talking to media, Director Administration of FGEHA stated that any information concerning pricing or installment plans would only be officially provided to allottees after approval by the Executive Board. The pricing and assessment for these sectors would be determined with the interests and financial well-being of the allottees in mind, to ensure the swift development of these sectors. Approval of the PC-I (Planning Commission-I) was also anticipated very soon. "The delay in the completion of the F-14/15 project is due to court cases that began in 2016. These cases were conducted in three phases in these sectors. In November 2024, some of the cases were resolved; however, the rest are still ongoing in the High Court, and the final decision is pending. Despite this, we are moving forward with the development work, and have also opened the transfer process for plots for some of the allottees," he informed. "The public and allottees can be assured that the Housing Authority will complete its work on these sectors promptly and will soon share positive news," he assured. According to official documents, the scheme offered plots in three sizes—50x90, 40x80, and 35x70—to members of Category-I, Category-II, and Category-III, respectively. The total number of plots is 6,746, of which 2,457 are reserved for registered members of Category-I (BPS 20–22), 2,259 for Category-II (BPS 18–19), and 2,030 for Category-III (BPS 16–17). Registered members of Phase-II Membership Drive are eligible for allotment under this scheme on age-wise seniority. A total of 5860 Consent letters have been issued to the members of Cat-I, Cat-II, and Cat-III whose cases are matured on age-wise seniority. Whereas, the 4871 allottees endorsed their consent and deposited the down payment are being issued Provisional Offer letters (POL).—APP



ISLAMABAD: A female monkey sit on a tree along with her child at Damn-e-Koh as eating Ice cream during pleasant weather after the rain, in the Federal Capital.

Govt's refusal to sign amicus brief is moral failure

ISLAMABAD: The refusal of our government to sign the amicus brief for release of Dr Aafia Siddiqui is not just a legal lapse but rather a moral failure, said Aafia Movement leader and notes neurophysician of the country Dr Aafia Siddiqui here Wednesday. In a statement, she said: "Today, I speak not only as Aafia's sister but as a mystified Pakistani citizen who has watched her government abandon its responsibility once again — not with action, but with silence." She said the refusal of Pakistani officials to sign an amicus brief — a simple legal document that could contribute toward relief for my sister — is nothing short of a national disgrace. It requires no confrontation, no diplomacy, no risk. Just a willingness to stand up — on paper — for a Pakistani woman who has endured unspeakable injustice. She said when the Islamabad High Court itself issued an order asking for clarity and warning that Pakistan could be held in contempt for not responding, one would expect urgency from any self-respecting government. But what have we seen instead? Denial. Evasion. Cowardice. Using malicious tactics like case transferring attempts to get the desired results. She said if the state cannot take this minimal step — to sign its name in support of its own citizen — what message does that send? That our people are disposable? That political convenience outweighs justice? That even in the face of a High Court order, our leadership shrinks from its duties? This isn't about legal technicalities anymore. It's about integrity. It's about whether Pakistan will live up to the values it claims to hold — or betray its citizens when they are most in need.—DNA

RCB responds to 24-hour heavy rainfall

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi's Cantonment localities has been among the areas of the city that received heavy rainfall for the past 24 hours to which, the Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB) has mobilized its resources to address the situation effectively. On the directives of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Syed Ali Irfan Rizvi, Deputy CEO Nasir Kamal conducted inspections of various areas within the cantonment to examine the response efforts. Deputy CEO Kamal instructed RCB staff to remain active in the field to manage the ongoing crisis. RCB's Jan Colony, Allama Iqbal Colony, Tench Bhatta, Kamalabad, Mughal are the areas which usually come across chaos during the heavy rainfall. According to Deputy CEO Nasir Kamal, RCB teams are actively working to ensure proper drainage of rainwater across the cantonment areas.—APP

China-made antibiotic to counter infections

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's national drug regulator has officially approved the marketing of a generic version of the potent antibiotic Daptomycin, made by a Chinese drug maker, in a move that could provide a new, potentially more affordable option for treating severe, drug-resistant infections. The Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) granted the market approval for the injectable drug, manufactured by China-based Hainan Poly Pharm, the Chinese firm announced in a post, according to Gwadar Pro. This development is significant for Pakistan, a country facing a severe public health crisis from antimicrobial resistance (AMR). According to a 2019 global study by The Lancet, drug-resistant infections are the third-leading cause of death in the country, directly attributable to over 59,000 deaths and associated with 221,300 others that year. Daptomycin is a last-resort antibiotic used to treat complicated skin and bloodstream infections caused by pathogens like Staphylococcus aureus, particularly its methicillin-resistant strain (MRSA). Its effectiveness against bacteria that have become immune to other treatments makes it a critical tool for clinicians. The original drug, marketed as Cubicin, was first developed by U.S.-based Cubist Pharmaceuticals and approved in 2003.—APP

Khurram vows support for PBM's social welfare mission

ISLAMABAD: Former Federal Minister Engr. Khurram Dastgir Khan on Thursday lauded Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal's (PBM) role in social protection and pledged full support to strengthen its welfare initiatives during a meeting with Managing Director Senator Capt. Shaheen Khalid Butt. PBM's Director General Prof. Dr. Zeeshan Danish briefed him on PBM's key service modules, including financial assistance for rehabilitation, education and medical treatment, care for poor and orphaned children, women empowerment, provision of food and shelter for the needy and vulnerable, and support for the rehabilitation of differently-abled persons. Applauding PBM's exemplary pro-poor initiatives, Engr. Khurram Dastgir Khan praised the visionary leadership of Senator Capt. Shaheen Khalid Butt for crafting inclusive poverty reduction strategies aimed at uplifting the country's most neglected communities. He also expressed his every possible facilitative role in order to implement the federal government's plan to curb the menace of poverty. Highlighting the organization's achievements, Shaheen Khalid Butt communicated his passion to address the multifarious challenges linked with poverty. Managing Director PBM also shared the futuristic plans to make organization more potent, vibrant and accessible for the deserving persons.—APP

Siddiqui underscores importance of PAL

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Party Leader of Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) in the Senate, Senator Irfan Siddiqui emphasized the importance of literary organizations such as the Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL) and pledged his continued support for such institutions. Talking to APP, Senator Siddiqui—who also chairs the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs—commended the inauguration of the newly renovated hall dedicated to Sheikh Ayaz, as well as the commemorative session held at PAL celebrating the outstanding literary legacy of Patras Bokhari. Senator Siddiqui also lauded the recent commemorative event honoring Patras

Bokhari, describing it as a remarkable gathering. He added that the institution, under the leadership of Dr. Najeeba Arif, truly deserves high praise. He further stated that Patras Bokhari's legacy was celebrated — a towering figure in humor writing, diplomacy, education, and communication. He also noted Bokhari's strong association with radio broadcasting. Senator Siddiqui praised the event, saying it was a beautiful and meaningful gathering, and emphasized that such events should continue to be organized. A large number of people attended the program, reflecting its success. He congratulated and commended Dr. Najeeba Arif, Chairperson of PAL, for

organizing the successful event and expressed hope that more such programs would be held in the future. He underscored that these events carry great significance for the youth, who need exposure to refined, thoughtful, and intellectually stimulating gatherings. He described the event as graceful, dignified, and engaging — a lesson in itself for the younger generation. Patras Bokhari's life, he said, was a powerful example of how one can achieve excellence across multiple fields. Senator Siddiqui noted, "Such institutions are the soul, spirit, and identity of a nation — recognized and valued around the world. Literary institutions are cherished and protected globally."—APP

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Briefs

World Youth Development Forum kicks off in east China

ISLAMABAD: The 2025 World Youth Development Forum commenced in Suzhou, east China's Jiangsu Province, drawing about 500 participants from over 100 countries and regions as well as 17 international organizations, Xinhua reported. Themed "Unleash Youth Potential for Global Development," the event welcomed youth affairs ministers, leaders of youth organizations and youth representatives from around the world to share insights in areas such as technological innovation, green development and cultural exchanges. At the opening ceremony, the 100 Excellence Actions of the Action Plan for Global Youth Development 2025 was unveiled and the Acceleration Week for Global Youth Development was officially launched. During the forum, delegates will engage in thematic sessions focused on green consumption and sustainable development, artificial intelligence and technological innovation, and the protection and preservation of cultural heritage. A series of workshops, training camps and field visits will also be held. —APP

ANF recovers over 107 kg drugs in five operations

ISLAMABAD: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) conducting five operations across the country recovered 107.415 kgs drugs worth more than Rs 11.2 million and apprehended four accused. According to an ANF Headquarters spokesperson, in an operation at Sialkot International Airport, ANF recovered 950 grams ice from the possession of a Bahrain-bound passenger. In another operation near Islamabad Motorway Toll Plaza, 1.2 kg hashish was recovered from 2 suspects. At Bacha Khan International Airport, 265 grams ice drug was recovered from a passenger's trolley bag travelling to Karachi while from Yaru area in Pishin, 50 kgs Hashish hidden for smuggling was recovered. In 5th operation conducted in Churbandar area of Pasi, 40 kgs Hashish & 15 kgs ice drug hidden for smuggling were recovered. Separate cases have been registered against the accused under the CNS Act, the spokesperson informed. —APP

Correction of Name

I, ALI HASSAN S/O IMTIAZ AHMAD of CNIC, 37302-6176368-7 Passport No. QW6803682 Permanent Address: ROTHAS ROAD NEAR JAMIL TOWN MASJID, H.NO 5 JHELMUM, Pakistan, That my correct name is ALI HASSAN S/O IMTIAZ AHMAD according to Passport No. QW6803682, but on my academic certificates, my name is ALI HASSAN S/O IMTIAZ AHMED, which is also correct name. I hereby declare that the both names are, ALI HASSAN S/O IMTIAZ AHMAD as per on my academic certificates and passport refer to the same individual



ISLAMABAD : Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif is being briefed on measures being with regard to recent Monsoon rains and floods at National Emergencies Operations Centre, on 17 July, 2025.— DNA

UN Women launches digital startup roundtable

"In today's rapidly evolving digital economy, leaving women behind is not an option," said Jacqui Ketunuti, Deputy Country Representative, UN Women Pakistan

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: With the support of the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), UN Women Pakistan launched the first event of its Digital Startup Roundtable Series in Islamabad. The event convened thought leaders, innovators, policy experts, development partners, and aspiring young women entrepreneurs to explore the transformative power of digital skills in driving women's economic empowerment. Under the Digitalization for Women's Economic Empowerment (D4WEE) project, the roundtable served as a dynamic platform for

collaboration, dialogue, and innovation. The event aligned with the shared vision of UN Women and KOICA to promote gender equality and inclusive development through technology and entrepreneurship. It focused on the unique challenges and opportunities faced by young women in Pakistan's digital ecosystem and emphasized the importance of fostering an enabling environment for their participation and leadership in the tech sector. "In today's rapidly evolving digital economy, leaving women behind is not an option," said Jacqui Ketunuti, Deputy Country Representative, UN Women Pakistan. "We are working towards a future

where young women shape the tech landscape, lead innovations, and take their ideas from local to global. But vision alone is not enough — we call on all partners to step up, invest in women, open doors to mentorship, and amplify every voice. Only then can we unlock the full potential of Pakistan's digital future." Echoing this sentiment, the So-dam Baek, Deputy Country Director, KOICA Pakistan emphasized KOICA's long-term commitment to promoting sustainable development through inclusive innovation. "KOICA is committed to investing in projects that empower women and promote sustainable development. Our collaboration

with UN Women is rooted in our belief that technology, when made accessible and inclusive, can be a powerful equalizer. Through this partnership, we aim to equip young women with the tools they need to succeed in the digital economy," they said. Adding a national perspective, Sayeed Ahmad Masud, National Incubation Centre Islamabad highlighted the importance of women's participation in shaping the country's digital future. "Digital skills are the cornerstone of progress in today's world. By empowering women to embrace technology, we are not only enabling individual success but also fostering national growth. Women's

participation in the digital sector is vital to Pakistan's future," he stated. The event featured two key thematic sessions addressing barriers and opportunities for women in the digital economy. The first session focused on policy and infrastructure, bringing together policymakers, digital experts, and development practitioners to discuss the structural challenges that limit women's access to technology. Participants explored ways to strengthen digital infrastructure, integrate gender-responsive indicators into national e-governance reforms, and expand access in underserved regions.

Petroleum prices surge threaten household survival

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's relentless surge in petroleum prices is not just a concern, but a pressing issue that is pushing families towards economic collapse and systematically eroding industrial and agricultural competitiveness, prominent financial analyst Shahid Rasheed Butt said Thursday. The former president of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce criticized government policymakers for treating fuel pricing as a convenient "fiscal shortcut" that destabilizes the broader macroeconomic foundations. During discussions with the business community, he emphasized how petrol has transformed from a basic necessity into a daily financial burden, driving up transport costs, electricity bills, and prices of consumer goods nationwide. "The common man is struggling to make ends meet while everything around him becomes increasingly unaffordable," the business leader stated, underlining the absence of genuine efforts to establish transparent pricing mechanisms. Current inflation statistics reveal fuel costs disproportionately impact rural communities and small enterprises, widening economic inequality while choking essential supply chains. When core production inputs become prohibitively expensive, even modest economic recovery becomes impossible, according to comprehensive business sector analysis. Shahid Rasheed Butt demanded immediate suspension of further price increases until sustainable pricing structures can be developed. His policy recommendations include reducing petroleum levies, renegotiating import contracts, controlling IPPs, and accelerating cleaner energy adoption to alleviate mounting economic pressure on consumers. The seasoned economic commentator delivered sharp criticism of power distribution companies' artificial revenue extraction mechanisms, specifically targeting already burdened consumers. These entities prioritize profit generation over genuine service and solutions, he argued. Meanwhile, the IMF's objection to Pakistan's duty-free sugar imports represents a significant challenge to the sugar cartel. —DNA

Intermittent rain continues in ICT, drainage operations underway

ISLAMABAD: Intermittent rainfall continued across Islamabad on Thursday, prompting the district administration to intensify drainage efforts in several low-lying areas to prevent urban flooding. According to the spokesman of ICT administration here, various parts of the federal capital witnessed light to heavy showers throughout

the day, leading to water accumulation in some areas. The Islamabad administration has mobilized sanitation teams across the city to ensure quick drainage of rainwater, particularly in areas prone to flooding. He said that the assistant commissioners are actively supervising the drainage operations on the ground. The teams, equipped with

heavy machinery, have been deployed to clear water from low-lying localities where waterlogging was reported after the rainfall. "Sanitation teams are working continuously to ensure smooth drainage of rainwater, and assistant commissioners are overseeing these operations directly," the spokesman stated. The district admin-

istration has also put in place a monitoring system for the city's stormwater drains. Officials are regularly inspecting the condition of these drains to prevent any blockages that could exacerbate flooding risks in vulnerable areas. The spokesman further advised residents to stay vigilant and immediately report any emergency situations related to water accumulation or flooding to the administration. "We are monitoring the situation round the clock, and citizens are requested to inform us promptly in case of any emergency," the official added. —DNA

PIA's flight resumption a game-changer

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) spokesperson Abdullah Hafeez on Wednesday said that the restoration of direct flights from Islamabad to Manchester and other key international destinations starting this mid of August is a milestone step that carries great potential, will enhance productivity and is expected to create a strong impact in the aviation market. In an exclusive conversation with a local news channel, the spokesperson emphasized that the move is part of PIA's broader strategy to rebuild its international presence and restore customer confidence. This is not just about adding routes, it is about regaining trust, enhancing operational efficiency, and tapping into key markets that have been underserved in recent years," Hafeez stated. Responding to a query, he explained, PIA is preparing to restart its flight operations to the United Kingdom beginning mid-August, adding, the airline will reinstate direct routes from Islamabad and Lahore to Manchester and Birmingham, while flights from Karachi will resume service to London. —APP

IRSA releases 303,500 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 303,500 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 357,700 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1530.00 feet which was 128.00 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 223,900 cusecs and 197,600 cusecs, respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1186.70 feet, which was 136.70 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 37,900 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 250,800, 201,700, 353,000 and 256,800 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 35,000 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 34,400 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala. —APP

Chinese firm achieves breakthrough

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC) has successfully completed excavation of the fifth tunnel on the relocated portion of the Karakoram Highway, also known as the China-Pakistan Friendship Highway. The Dogah Tunnel is one of the seven tunnels in Phase 1 of the relocated highway, KKH-01. The highway is being relocated because a 46-kilometre stretch of the existing road will be submerged in the Dasu Dam, which is currently under construction in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Province. The tunnel, with a total length of 1,242 meters, represents a critical advancement in strengthening regional connectivity and infrastructure development, a senior engineer involved in the construction of the project wrote. The breakthrough was achieved on July 14, a source said. He added that excavation of the remaining two tunnels will be achieved within two months. The total length of the relocated KKH will be 62 kilometres, according to the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA). The relocated KKH has been divided into two Phases i.e., KKH-01 and KKH-02. Phase 1 (KKH-01) will serve as a bypass to avoid interference in construction activities at the dam site. —APP



ISLAMABAD: CDA staff engaged in clearing drainage channels to prevent rainwater accumulation on roads. — DNA

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Flooding across Pakistan: A tragedy repeating every year

FLOODING has once again wreaked havoc in Islamabad and Rawalpindi – the twin cities – and many other regions of Pakistan, claiming precious lives, damaging property, and leaving countless people displaced. Sadly, the worst affected are always the most vulnerable: those living in low-income neighborhoods and mud houses, often built along the banks of seasonal waterways. Year after year, the country experiences heavy rains, and year after year, the same story unfolds – lives lost, homes destroyed, and the government offering only lip service.

This is not a new phenomenon. In 2021, torrential rains caused severe urban flooding in Islamabad's Sector E-11. The sector, which once had natural stormwater drains and seasonal nullahs, was heavily built upon in the name of "development." Real estate developers, with the alleged support or willful negligence of government officials, built residential complexes and commercial buildings right on the natural drainage systems. As a result, when the rains came that year, the water had nowhere to go. Entire buildings were inundated, cars floated down streets, and lives were lost – including a child who drowned in a basement apartment. Fast forward to 2025, and the story remains tragically the same. In Rawalpindi, the notorious Nullah Lai – once a vital waterway – has turned into a death trap. Encroachment along its banks continues unabated, and the government's failure to desilt or maintain the nullah has worsened the problem. Whenever the monsoon season arrives, the nullah overflows, washing away everything in its path. The destruction this year has been widespread: dozens of homes destroyed, several people killed, and thousands displaced.

Yet despite repeated disasters, the fundamental issues remain unaddressed. The primary reasons for the recurring devastation are well known. Natural drainage systems, seasonal nullahs, and waterways that once carried stormwater away from urban areas have been blocked, filled, or built over. Real estate developers, in collaboration with corrupt government officials, continue to construct high-rises and housing societies on what used to be essential floodways. The problem is not just illegal construction – it's systemic failure. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for urban development are rarely followed. In theory, every construction project is supposed to undergo environmental and safety evaluations. In practice, bribes change hands, and rules are bypassed. No long-term urban planning, no zoning enforcement, and no accountability. The result? The cities become death zones during the monsoon season. Behind every flooded street and collapsed house is a human tragedy. The victims are overwhelmingly poor people who build their homes in unsafe areas because they have no other choice. Land in formal sectors is prohibitively ex-

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pensive. The government has no effective low-income housing schemes, leaving the poor to fend for themselves.

In Rawalpindi, for instance, entire communities live along Nullah Lai, knowing full well the risk involved. Yet they stay because they have nowhere else to go. These are families who earn just enough to survive – daily wage workers, laborers, widows, and the elderly. When the floodwaters come, they lose everything: homes, possessions, even loved ones. The trauma is immeasurable.

Each year, as the rains begin, the authorities make vague promises of relief and rehabilitation. A few rescue teams are sent, some emergency shelters are set up, and press releases are issued. But when the water recedes, so does the attention. There is no accountability, no real planning, no long-term investment in flood prevention infrastructure.

Even where some projects have been proposed – like the long-delayed Lai Expressway and flood channeling system – progress is slow, mired in bureaucratic red tape and corruption allegations. Political will is lacking, and governance remains reactive rather than proactive.

Poverty is at the heart of the problem. It forces people into vulnerable areas. It prevents them from rebuilding. It keeps them dependent on the same corrupt systems that exploit them. With no affordable housing options, the poor resort to building makeshift homes near nullahs and flood-prone zones. These homes are made of mud and wood, lacking foundations, proper roofing, or drainage. They stand no chance against rising water levels.

Moreover, the economic cost of repeated flooding is devastating for poor households. Whatever meager savings they have go into rebuilding each year, only to be wiped out again. With rising inflation, joblessness, and no safety net, these communities are stuck in a vicious cycle of disaster and poverty.

The situation is not hopeless, but it demands urgent and systemic change. Here are some concrete steps that must be taken:

1. Restore and Protect Natural Waterways: All seasonal nullahs and stormwater drains must be cleared, restored, and protected from encroachments. Construction on natural drainage paths must be strictly prohibited, and existing encroachments should be removed with proper rehabilitation plans for displaced residents.
2. Accountability for Corruption: The practice of approving illegal housing societies and constructions through bribery must be stopped. An independent commission should be set up to investigate and hold accountable the contractors, developers, and government officials involved in these deals.
3. Low-Income Housing Schemes: The government must introduce and expand affordable housing plans for low-income citizens. Safe housing in planned urban areas must be made accessible through subsidies, micro-loans, and land allocation.
4. Urban Planning and SOP Enforcement: Urban development authorities need to enforce existing building codes, environmental assessments, and zoning regulations. No project should be approved without a proper flood-risk analysis.
5. Public Awareness and Community Preparedness: Local communities must be involved in flood preparedness programs. Early warning systems, evacuation drills, and community response teams can save lives during disasters.
6. Investment in Infrastructure: Massive investment is needed in urban drainage, sewerage, and flood protection infrastructure. Cities like Rawalpindi and Islamabad cannot afford to function on decades-old systems that were never designed for today's population.

America's Sanctions Spiral

Qamar Bashir



This crackdown directly contradicts the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which guarantees freedom of speech, expression, and peaceful assembly. By criminalizing dissent, particularly when it challenges Israeli policies, the United States reveals the depth of its subservience to foreign agendas. It is no longer just international justice that is under assault—it is the American soul itself. This obsessive alignment with Israel, particularly under Netanyahu's leadership, is the common thread linking many of these punitive actions

IN a world already teetering on the edge of conflict, the United States' expanding use of sanctions has taken a dangerous and unprecedented turn. What began as a tool to deter rogue actors has now become a blunt instrument of coercion—wielded not only against adversarial governments and corporations, but shockingly, against international institutions and even human rights defenders. This shift signals a collapse of diplomatic norms and a troubling rise in unilateral aggression cloaked under the guise of legality. The recent imposition of U.S. sanctions on Francesca Albanese, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, illustrates the depth of this crisis. Her sole offense was the publication of meticulously documented reports that highlighted Israeli war crimes in Gaza and the West Bank. Her findings contributed to the International Criminal Court's issuance of arrest warrants against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant for crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. Rather than supporting these legal processes, the United States retaliated—not against the alleged perpetrators, but against those seeking justice.

Albanese's case, though emblematic, is not isolated. The U.S. has gone further to impose sanctions on the very judges and prosecutors of the ICC—targeting those who dared to uphold international law. These punitive actions are not based on evidence of wrongdoing but on the political inconvenience such accountability brings to America's closest allies. This pattern reveals a deeper flaw in American foreign policy. Sanctions are no longer tools of last resort; they have become the default mechanism when diplomacy, negotiation, and international consensus fail to align with Washington's interests. What's more disturbing is the arbitrary and often whimsical application of these measures, guided not by global justice but by strategic alignment—especially with Israel. The history is long and revealing. Russian President Vladimir Putin has faced personal sanctions since 2014, intensified after the invasion of Ukraine. Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, accused of corruption and democratic erosion, has been subjected to sweeping sanctions. Former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi were first sanctioned, then militarily removed. Iran's leaders, Syria's of-

ficials, North Korean diplomats, and even Afghan institutions have all found themselves targeted by America's economic arsenal.

But the reach doesn't stop with political figures. Business tycoons like Russian oil magnate Gennady Timchenko, Zimbabwe's Kudakwashe Tagwirei, and Iranian frontmen like Elyas Nirumand Tumaj have been blacklisted. Global firms—Chinese tech giant Huawei, Iranian and Venezuelan oil companies, and even Swiss-based intermediaries—have seen their operations strangled under U.S. directives. Sanctions have cut off access to financial systems, disrupted supply chains, and destroyed livelihoods across continents.

Even entire nations reel under U.S. economic siege. Iran, Venezuela, Syria, North Korea, Russia, and Afghanistan face restrictions that devastate their economies and isolate their populations. China, while not under full-spectrum sanctions, endures targeted restrictions on its semiconductor, telecom, and defense sectors. Sectoral bans and export controls are calibrated not for security but to contain rivals and maintain technological dominance.

The hypocrisy is staggering. The U.S.—self-proclaimed guardian of democracy—has sanctioned a UN official for defending human rights, judges for enforcing international law, and students for exercising free speech. During Congressional hearings, Senator Marco Rubio chillingly defended the arrests of university students protesting Israeli actions in Gaza. He declared bluntly that "whoever opposes Israel or demonstrates against it will be dealt with." Protesters have been arrested by masked agents. Faculty members supporting them have been fired. Even academic institutions are facing punitive funding cuts—transforming universities into battlegrounds for political conformity. This crackdown directly contradicts the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which guarantees freedom of speech, expression, and peaceful assembly. By criminalizing dissent, particularly when it challenges Israeli policies, the United States reveals the depth of its subservience to foreign agendas. It is no longer just international justice that is under assault—it is the American soul itself.

This obsessive alignment with Israel, particularly under Netanyahu's leadership, is the common thread linking many of these punitive actions. Whether in Libya, Iraq, Syria, or Iran, nearly every military or economic intervention by the U.S. over the past two dec-

ades has mirrored the strategic calculus of Tel Aviv. Any regime perceived as hostile to Israeli dominance is painted as an existential threat—and then systematically undermined through sanctions, subversion, or war.

Netanyahu has made no effort to hide his ambitions. By turning Gaza into a killing field and ignoring every international plea, Israel has openly defied the United Nations, the Muslim world, and even U.S. public opinion. His administration's policies, grounded in racial supremacy and territorial expansion, have reduced Palestinian territories to rubble, desecrated the very notion of international law, and created a humanitarian catastrophe that history will not forget.

And yet, rather than restraining these excesses, the U.S. has become their chief enabler. From military aid packages to diplomatic cover at the UN, Washington has placed Israel above reproach. But the tide is beginning to turn. Western nations—once unwavering allies—are now imposing sanctions on Israel. Major global corporations are severing ties with Israeli firms. Public opinion across Europe and America is shifting rapidly, with campus protests and media commentary reflecting growing outrage.

This backlash is not just a reaction to Israeli actions—it's a response to America's complicity. Weaponizing sanctions to silence critics, intimidate allies, and crush dissent is no longer a sustainable policy. The credibility of U.S. leadership is eroding, and its moral standing is collapsing under the weight of its double standards.

It is time for urgent recalibration. The United States must de-link its foreign policy from Netanyahu's destructive vision and return to principles rooted in international law, justice, and diplomacy. Sanctions should be tied to human rights violations—not wielded as tools to shield those committing them. Engagement, not economic strangulation, should define America's approach to the world.

A nation that once inspired the world through its Constitution, civil liberties, and democratic ideals must not descend into a caricature of repression and hypocrisy. To restore its standing, the U.S. must recommit to its founding principles—liberty, justice, and respect for the rule of law. Otherwise, it risks becoming not a leader of the free world, but a hostage to the whims of one regime, isolated and feared for all the wrong reasons.

Sacred boundaries

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



Islam, in its foresight, endeavors to protect five primary objectives: religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property. Alcohol poses a threat to all five. It compromises faith by distancing one from prayer, it endangers life by causing accidents and health crises, it destroys intellect – the very distinction of mankind – and often leads to the ruin of families and wealth

THE matter of alcohol consumption and its trade in an Islamic state demands grave and contemplative consideration. Islam, as a complete code of life, addresses not only the spiritual elevation of man but also the preservation of his physical, moral, and social wellbeing. At the heart of this discourse lies the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), which leave little ambiguity regarding the status of intoxicants in a Muslim society.

The Qur'anic approach to the prohibition of alcohol was gradual and filled with divine wisdom. Initially, the Qur'an acknowledged the presence of both benefit and harm in wine and gambling. In Surah Al-Baqarah (2:219), Allah says: "They ask you concerning wine and gambling. Say: In them is great sin and [some] benefit for men, but the sin of them is greater than their benefit." This verse invites the intellect to weigh the moral and societal cost of intoxicants and lays the foundation for future prohibition.

The next command came in Surah An-Nisa (4:43): "O you who believe! Do not approach prayer while you are intoxicated until you know what you are saying..." This guidance, though not a full prohibition, created a consciousness among believers that intoxication impaired reason, especially in the divine presence. Finally, the complete and decisive prohibition is declared in Surah Al-Ma'idah (5:90–91): "O you who believe! Intoxicants and gambling, sacrificing to stones, and divination by arrows are abominations of Satan's handiwork. So avoid them that you may be successful. Satan only desires to cause enmity and hatred among you through intoxicants and gambling and to hinder you from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer. So, will you not then desist?" These verses combine legal prohibition with the underlying philosophy: that intoxicants are a tool of Satan to sow discord and distance man from his Creator. The Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him) reinforced

es and elaborates upon these commandments. He said, "Every intoxicant is Khamr, and every Khamr is haram (forbidden)." (Sahih Muslim). The Messenger of Allah also declared, "Whatever intoxicates in large amounts, a small amount of it is also forbidden." (Sunan al-Tirmidhi). This hadith eliminates the loophole often sought by those who claim moderation, as even a sip is condemned if the substance in quantity leads to intoxication.

Moreover, the Prophet (peace be upon him) pronounced a curse upon all who are associated with intoxicants. In a narration found in Sunan Abi Dawood, he said: "Truly, Allah has cursed Khamr (intoxicants): the one who produces it, the one for whom it is produced, the one who drinks it, the one who serves it, the one who sells it, the one who buys it, the one who squeezes it, the one who carries it, and the one to whom it is carried." This comprehensive proscription signifies that in an Islamic society, the entire chain of alcohol production and trade is deemed unlawful.

The harm caused by intoxicants is not merely spiritual but manifests visibly in social decay. Alcohol consumption impairs the intellect, weakens the sense of accountability, and opens the door to a multitude of sins – including violence, indecency, neglect of duties, and public disorder. Countless reports across the world associate alcohol with road accidents, domestic abuse, moral corruption, and even suicide.

Islam, in its foresight, endeavors to protect five primary objectives: religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property. Alcohol poses a threat to all five. It compromises faith by distancing one from prayer, it endangers life by causing accidents and health crises, it destroys intellect – the very distinction of mankind – and often leads to the ruin of families and wealth. Nonetheless, some may argue that alcohol trade yields economic benefit. In secular societies, it generates revenue, provides employment, and supports hospitality industries. However, Islam's ethical economy prioritizes lawful sustenance and societal well-

being over profit alone. What benefit is wealth that comes at the cost of broken homes, diseased bodies, and corrupted hearts? Similarly, liberal arguments for individual freedom fall short in the Islamic paradigm. Islam does not deny personal liberty, but it binds it within moral and divine boundaries. In an Islamic state, the law reflects not just public opinion but divine guidance. True freedom is not the license to indulge in self-harm but the ability to live righteously in accordance with divine wisdom.

Furthermore, Islamic history offers examples of just implementation. After the final prohibition, the companions of the Prophet immediately destroyed their wine, and the streets of Madinah flowed with it. Their obedience and trust in divine command became the foundation for a healthy and morally upright society. Social advantages of this prohibition are numerous. A sober community is more productive, less violent, and spiritually conscious. It nurtures responsible citizens, stable families, and a culture where honor, clarity of thought, and modesty prevail. The youth are safeguarded from addiction, and public safety is ensured. However, enforcing prohibition must be handled with wisdom. An unprepared society may resist or fall into clandestine practices. Thus, reform must begin with education, da'wah, and moral persuasion. Laws must reflect the spiritual readiness of the people, as was exemplified by the Prophet himself, who laid years of groundwork before implementing full prohibition. In conclusion, the Islamic view on alcohol is deeply rooted in divine revelation and prophetic wisdom. It balances the spiritual, moral, and social dimensions of life. While recognizing worldly temptations and superficial benefits, Islam calls upon the believer to choose purity over indulgence, order over chaos, and divine pleasure over transient gratification. In the vision of an Islamic state, the prohibition of alcohol is not merely a legal statute but a testament to the pursuit of a higher, more sacred civilization.

Briefs

Islamabad,
Pindi face...

FROM PAGE 01

areas across Punjab continue to be battered by heavy rains. A cloud burst was witnessed in Chakwal, causing as much as 423mm of rain. Several low-lying areas have been inundated with water, entering the houses. The district administration has said that a rescue operation was underway to move citizens to safer places. As per the additional deputy commissioner, the dire situation is a result of a cloud-burst. "Civil administration is working to rescue citizens," said Bilal Bin Hafeez. Separately, continuous rain overnight has caused flooding in rivers and canals in Jhelum with the district administration calling in the army and a helicopter to rescue those trapped in flood water — which has entered surrounding areas. Rescue teams are facing difficulties due to high water levels. Also, Sheikhupura and the surrounding areas have also been battered by heavy rains measuring up to 217mm. Speaking on the heavy rains and situation across Punjab, Secretary Emergency Services Dr Rizwan said that more than 400mm of downpour was recorded in Chakwal and therefore, managing the situation was challenging. Various small dams have overflowed in the district, causing a flood-like situation. Furthermore, water has also entered the historic Katas Raj temple located near the town of Choa Saidanshah in the Potohar region. "So far, the roofs of about 310 houses have collapsed in Punjab during the monsoon season and 15 traffic accidents have occurred due to rain [in the province]. "Around 90 deaths have occurred in various accidents across Punjab since June 16," Dr Rizwan revealed. On the overall situation in the province, a rescue spokesperson said at least 130 incidents of roof and wall collapses reported across Punjab. Out of the total 43 fatalities, 16 occurred in Lahore, five in Sheikhupura, four each in Okara and Pakpattan and two in Chakwal.

Two sisters
killed as...

FROM PAGE 01

In a statement, the chief minister said he was deeply saddened by the loss of precious human lives and extended heartfelt condolences to the families of the deceased women. He also directed that the injured be provided with the best possible medical care without delay. CM Shah called for a thorough investigation into the incident and asked the Karachi commissioner to submit a detailed report. He instructed the Sindh Building Control Authority to take immediate action against all dangerous and dilapidated buildings in the city. Emphasising the value of human life, he ordered that structural assessments of buildings be carried out without delay. The chief minister further directed that all hazardous buildings, including those in Lyari and across Karachi, be evacuated immediately.

Shehbaz
Sharif for...

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and training to children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, ensuring equal development opportunities. He highlighted that water reservoirs were crucial for national integrity, and several projects were currently under construction to this end. He noted that the establishment of technology parks in Karachi and Islamabad will make Pakistan a significant economic hub for information technology both in the region and globally. He emphasized that the development of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) was a key component of the government's economic vision for the country. During the meeting, the prime minister was briefed on the completed development projects as well as those currently underway in the current fiscal year. The briefing informed that multiple projects across the country in sectors such as communications, IT, water reservoirs, electricity, educational institutions, and hospitals had been completed, and work on new projects was progressing rapidly.

Pakistan squad reaches
Bangladesh for T20I series

Green Shirts set to play three T20Is against Bangladesh on July 20, 22 and 24

DNA

DKAHA: The entire Pakistan cricket squad has reached Bangladesh as the second group of players and support staff landed on Wednesday, completing the contingent for the upcoming three-match T20I series, scheduled to commence on July 20. The second batch of eight players, including wicketkeeper-batter Mohammad Harris, Abbas Afridi, Sahibzada Farhan, Hassan Nawaz, Sufiyan Mugeem, Hussain Talat, Ahmed Daniyal and Salman Mirza, along with additional support staff, touched down in the host country earlier today.

They joined the first group of the national squad, which had already reached Dhaka this morning. This contingent comprised key players such as captain Salman Ali Agha, Saim Ayub, Fakhar Zaman, Mohammad Nawaz, Abrar Ahmed, Faheem Ashraf, and Khushdil Shah, along with support staff. With both groups now on Bangladeshi soil, the players who arrived today are slated to take a rest day tomorrow before beginning their training sessions on July 18. For the unversed, the green shirts will play three T20Is against Bangladesh on July 20, 22 and 24, with Dhaka's Shere-Bangla National Cricket Stadium set to host all

the matches. The series marks a rematch between the two sides after their last encounter in May, where Pakistan sealed a 3-0 clean sweep at home. Earlier this week, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) officially announced ticket prices for the upcoming series, with prices ranging from Tk 300 to Tk 3,500, catering to a wide range of fans. The BCB has prioritised a digital-first approach for ticket distribution. Starting July 15, tickets will be available exclusively online through the official eTicket platform. Pakistan squad for Bangladesh T20I series: Salman Ali Agha (captain), Abrar Ahmed, Ahmed Daniyal, Faheem Ashraf, Fakhar

Zaman, Hassan Nawaz, Hussain Talat, Khushdil Shah, Mohammad Abbas Afridi, Mohammad Harris (wk), Mohammad Nawaz, Sahibzada Farhan (wk), Saim Ayub, Salman Mirza and Sufiyan Moqim Series schedule in Bangladesh:

- 16 — Pakistan men's team arrival
- July 20 — First T20I at Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Dhaka (6pm local time)
- July 22 — Second T20I at Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Dhaka (6pm local time)
- July 24 — Third T20I at Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Dhaka (6pm local time)

Pakistan
welcomes
UK air safety
decision

FROM PAGE 01

between Pakistan and the United Kingdom, supporting millions of Pakistanis living in the UK and strengthening economic, cultural, and people-to-people ties. With over 1.7 million British Pakistanis forming one of the largest diaspora communities in the UK, the resumption of direct flights promises significant benefits for families, businesses, tourism, and trade. Pakistan expresses its gratitude to the United Kingdom for acknowledging Pakistan's commitment to aviation safety and cooperating constructively throughout the evaluation process.

Donald
Trump
to visit
Pakistan...

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be aimed at creating new alignments in the region and strengthening military and economic cooperation with a long-time but often misunderstood partner. Experts believe that Trump's visit could also be a response to Pakistan's recent strategic engagements with other global powers, as Washington seeks to maintain its influence in the region. Political analysts see the visit as a potential game-changer for Pakistan-U.S. relations, especially if concrete agreements or partnerships are announced during the visit. The visit is also expected to include meetings with top business leaders and possibly a joint statement aimed at expanding trade and defense cooperation. However, it remains to be seen how the proposed visit will be perceived in Beijing and Moscow — two major rivals of the US, yet close allies of Pakistan.

Pakistan,
Uzbekistan,
Afghan...

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Dar said that the UAP Railway Corridor, a major milestone in advancing regional connectivity and economic integration, will connect Central Asian countries to Pakistani seaports through Afghanistan. He also mentioned that the signing of today's agreement is a result of the leadership and commitment of the last PDM Government (2022-23), when he was tasked as Finance Minister to lead "this effort with brotherly countries, and we collectively laid the foundation for this transformational project". DPM Dar — who witnessed the signing of the agreement — was accompanied by Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi, special representative for Afghanistan, and secretary for railways, the Foreign Office said in a statement. In an earlier statement, the Foreign Office said that the foreign minister's visit underscores the importance Islamabad attaches to the successful realisation of the UAP Railway Project. The foreign ministry said the signing of the Framework Agreement on Joint Feasibility Study between the three participating countries in Kabul will be an important step towards its implementation. The Foreign Office also said that FM Dar met Afghan Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi in Kabul, along with senior-level delegations from both sides.

APNS
condemns
attack on...

FROM PAGE 01

suppress the media by force and termed the incident as brutal attack on freedom of expression and the peoples' right to know. The task of media is to disseminate the news and report the events without fear of repression which will be performed despite all efforts to browbeat the media. The APNS calls upon the civil society, human right organizations and democratic forces across the country to strongly condemn the acts of violence against the media. The APNS also urges upon to the Government of Sindh to provide complete security and protection to media establishments and media persons and take action against the culprits who resorted to strangle the media.

McIlroy on home
turf as Scheffler
seeks satisfaction
at British Open

PORTRUSH: Rory McIlroy will be roared on in his homeland as the 153rd British Open gets underway at Royal Portrush on Thursday as world number one Scottie Scheffler seeks his first Claret Jug. McIlroy returns to Northern Ireland as the Masters champion but determined to make amends for his disastrous start at Portrush six years ago when a quadruple bogey at the opening hole on his way to a first-round 79 saw him miss the cut. The world number two is the star attraction for the close to 280,000 spectators set to attend the four days of play at the final major of the year. Scheffler, though, is the favourite despite having never won the British Open before, while defending champion Xander Schauffele is aiming to put a frustrating year behind him. McIlroy, who tees off at 15.10 local time (1410 GMT) alongside Ryder Cup team-mate Tommy Fleetwood and American rival Justin Thomas, may have to battle the worst of blustery weather for the opening round with thunderstorms forecast early evening. But the man who announced himself as a star of the future by breaking the course record at Portrush with a 61 as a 16-year-old 20 years ago, is confident after ending his 11-year major drought at the Masters in April. — Agencies



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Justice, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar, met with the Ambassador of Thailand to Pakistan, Mr. Rongvudhi Virabutr. — DNA

EU budget hits immediate
German opposition

The European Commission put 451 billion euros on the table under a broad "competitiveness" tag that encompasses defence and space -- together allocated 131 billion euros, a five-fold increase

BRUSSELS: The European Union executive on Wednesday proposed a two-trillion-euro long-term budget focused on tackling overseas competition and Russian aggression, but it was quickly shot down by Germany, the bloc's largest member. Germany said it was "unable to ac-

cept" the \$2.3-trillion budget for 2028-2034, which EU chief Ursula von der Leyen called "the most ambitious ever proposed". Farm unions also quickly came out against proposed reforms to the blocs huge agriculture subsidies. The plan seeks to bolster Europe's security and ramp up competitiveness, against a backdrop of soaring trade tensions with the United States, while paying off debts from a massive Covid-era loan. The European Commission put 451 billion euros on the table under a broad "competitiveness" tag that encompasses defence and space — together allocated 131 billion euros, a five-fold increase. The budget earmarks up to 100 billion euros for the reconstruction of war-torn Ukraine — as well as substantial new "flexibility" funds kept available in event of crises. But German government spokesman

Stefan Kornelius said in a statement that "a comprehensive increase in the EU budget is not acceptable at a time when all member states are making considerable efforts to consolidate their national budgets." Germany also opposed the commission call to make companies with a turnover of more than 100 million euros pay more tax. While Germany says the budget is too large, many EU lawmakers accuse it of not leaving sufficient funds for priorities such as climate adaptation and the agriculture subsidies that make up the biggest share of the budget. Budget commissioner Piotr Serafin said under the commission's plans, 300 billion euros would remain to support farmers — against around 387 billion euros, of which 270 billion in direct payouts, under the current seven-year budget. — Agencies

Uzbekistan delegation
visits Alabuga
SEZ in Tatarstan

TASHKENT: Uzbekistan delegation visited the Alabuga Special Economic Zone located in the Republic of Tatarstan, Uzbekistan MFA reports. During the visit, the parties discussed issues related to the legal employment of Uzbekistan citizens, as well as ensuring safe and comfortable living conditions for migrant workers. The SEZ leadership highly appreciated the contribution of Uzbekistan's specialists to the development of industrial projects in the zone and expressed their willingness to further expand cooperation. During the visit, preventive discussions were held with citizens of Uzbekistan living and working on the territory of Alabuga. Issues related to compliance with migration legislation, the registration of necessary documents, and the prevention of possible offenses were discussed. Additionally, the delegation's representatives listened to the appeals and suggestions of their compatriots. Following the meetings with migrant workers, additional consultations were held with the enterprises' leadership to resolve domestic and social issues promptly. Special attention was paid to spiritual and moral education during the visit. A representative from the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan conducted an educational conversation aimed at strengthening moral values, promoting interethnic harmony, and fostering harmonious integration into the local community. — Agencies

Olympic star Arshad Nadeem
exposes truth behind reward claims

Javelin thrower was promised several hefty prizes after he won gold medal during 2024 Paris Olympics

LAHORE: Pakistan's javelin throw sensation and gold medalist at the Paris Olympics 2024 Arshad Nadeem has recently shed light on the various prizes that were announced by various organizations following his historic victory. While acknowledging that he had received all announced cash prizes, Nadeem revealed that the land plots he was promised as a reward remain unfulfilled. Nadeem, the 28-year-old athlete who captivated the nation by setting a new Olympic record with a throw of 92.97 metres and led Pakistan to its first track and field gold in decades, became the recipient of numerous accolades and financial incentives from the government, provincial authorities, and private institutions. However, during a recent interview, when questioned about the promised prizes, Nadeem said: "Out of all the prize announcements made for me, all the plot announcements were fake, which I did not receive. Apart from that, I have received all the cash prizes that were announced." Despite the issue with the promised plots, Nadeem revealed that his focus re-



mains firmly on his athletic career. "My entire focus is on myself, but apart from that, we train any youth who comes to us for training, and this training is given by my coach Salman Butt," he reiterated when he was asked about training other aspiring athletes. — DNA

Pak cueists Asif,
Hasnain qual-
ifies for IBSF
World Masters
Snooker
C'ships semis

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani cueists Muhammad Asif and Hasnain Akhtar has qualified for the semifinals of masters and U17, of the IBSF World Masters, U17, U21 & Men 6Red Snooker Championships 2025, respectively at Manama, Bahrain. According to details, in the Master quarterfinal, Asif beat Habib Sabab (Bahrain) 4-0 (68(68)-8, 57-37, 68(68)-8, 40(40)-8). Earlier in the Pre quarterfinals, Asif defeated Mohamed Shehab (UAE) 4-2 (56-68, 21-72, 57-21, 80(80)-0, 68-45(43), 68-58). In U17 quarterfinals, Hasnain outplayed Krzysztof Czapnik (Poland) 3-1 (1-78(57), 92(46)-1, 67(60)-45, 58-16). Earlier in the Pre quarterfinals he beat Mutasim Al Saadi (Oman) 3-0 (75-41, 56(37)-31, 81-06). — APP

Pakistan Olympic Association forms
national youth games council

Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme, Rana Mashhood Ahmad, has been appointed as the Chairman of the Council, while President of the POA, Arif Saeed, will serve as Co-Chairman. POA's Secretary General, Khalid Mehmood, has been named the Secretary of the Council

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Olympic Association (POA) has officially established the National Youth Games Council to ensure the successful organization of the upcoming National Youth Games. The council will be responsible for policymaking, strategic decisions, and overall supervision of the event. Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme, Rana Mashhood Ahmad, has

been appointed as the Chairman of the Council, while President of the POA, Arif Saeed, will serve as Co-Chairman. POA's Secretary General, Khalid Mehmood, has been named the Secretary of the Council. The Council includes the Federal Secretary for Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC), the Director General of the Pakistan Sports Board, and representatives from the Pakistan Army, the Higher Education Commission (HEC), provincial and regional sports boards. This wide representation aims to ensure a com-

prehensive and coordinated national strategy for youth sports. Special attention has been given to ensure representation from all provinces, and three women members have also been included to promote gender balance and female participation in sports activities. According to the POA, the Council will work in close coordination with all relevant institutions to ensure a smooth, transparent, and impactful event. The National Youth Games are expected to play a crucial role in identifying young

athletic talent and fostering a stronger sports culture across Pakistan. In a statement issued by the POA, it was highlighted that the National Youth Games would not only provide a platform for young athletes to showcase their skills but also serve as a catalyst for promoting sports at the grassroots level nationwide. This initiative reflects the growing collaboration between the government and the Pakistan Olympic Association in their shared mission to empower the youth and advance sports development in the country.

Briefs

Gold price
dips by
Rs.900 per
tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold decreased by Rs.900 and was traded at Rs.355,100 on Thursday as compared to its sale at Rs.356,000 on the last trading day, All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported. The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also decreased by Rs771 to Rs.304,441 from Rs.305,212 and for 10 grams of 22 Karat it went down by Rs.706 to Rs.279,081 from Rs. 279,787. The rates of per tola and ten gram silver decreased by Rs.50 and Rs.43 to Rs.3,964 and Rs.3,398 respectively. The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$9 to \$3,326 from \$3,335 whereas that of silver went down by \$0.5 to \$37.80, the Association reported. —APP

Rupee
remains flat
US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Thursday remained unchanged against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 284.96. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs288.30 and Rs288.60, respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by Rs 0.78 to close at Rs 330.33 against the last day's closing of Rs 331.11, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen remained stagnant and closed at Rs 1.91, whereas a decline of Rs 0.38 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 381.39 compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 381.77. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham remained unchanged and closed at Rs 77.58 and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 01 paisa each to close at Rs 75.97.—APP

New study
reveals details
of lives of
ancient
Chinese nobles

BEIJING: Chinese archaeologists have investigated the lives of nobles from the Qin state during the Eastern Zhou Dynasty, providing new insights into ancient Chinese social hierarchy, dietary customs and cultural integration. Details of the study have been published in Heritage Science, an international journal. The work was conducted by a research team led by associate professor Shang Xue at the University of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, in collaboration with the Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology, the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Shaanxi Academy of Archaeology. The research team investigated two noble tombs — one of a male noble, and one of a female noble — and the burial sites of two accompanying sacrificial victims in northwest China's Shaanxi Province, employing advanced techniques such as high-precision stable isotope analysis and starch grain examination in dental calculus.

The study revealed that the male noble had consumed millet as his staple food, with a significantly higher meat intake compared to the sacrificial victims and commoners of his time. This corroborates our current understanding of ancient China's social hierarchy: meat-eaters were nobles. The female noble had a unique dietary trajectory. She consumed more wheat or rice-based foods during her childhood, yet adapted to the local millet-dominated diet in adulthood while maintaining a relatively low level of meat consumption. Analysis indicates that the noblewoman spent her childhood in a warmer, more humid environment. The researchers inferred that she was likely a noble bride from a feudal state in eastern or southern China — an example of the political marriages characteristic of the Spring and Autumn Period. The study also found that noble Qin children were weaned around the age of 3, which is consistent with records in the ancient Chinese classic—APP

European Union and Pak
hold 10th Political Dialogue

The EU and Pakistan acknowledged the importance of multifaceted cooperation on security matters, including counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics

DNA

BRUSSELS :The 10th Political Dialogue between the European Union (EU) and Pakistan took place in Brussels on the other day. The Dialogue covered key issues of the EU-Pakistan bilateral cooperation, as well as regional and international issues, including multilateral cooperation. Both sides agreed to deepen dialogue and discussions on security related issues. The EU and Pakistan reaffirmed their commitment to the implementation of Strategic Engagement Plan (SEP) signed in 2019. Both sides aim to further deepen cooperation in all areas covered under the SEP. The two sides reiterated their resolve to continue close engagement under the GSP+ framework. They acknowledged the meaningful cooperation on various aspects of migration, aiming to hold the third Comprehensive Migration and Mobility Dialogue later in 2025. Besides bilateral cooperation, both sides also exchanged views on regional and global issues. The EU and Pakistan acknowledged the importance of multifaceted cooperation on security matters, including counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics. They condemned all forms of terrorism.



Both sides agreed on the need for efforts based on dialogue and diplomacy in order to solve contentious issues and underscored the importance of upholding international law and the sanctity of international agreements/treaties. The parties exchanged views on the situation in Ukraine as well as Jammu and Kashmir. Both sides stressed the need to find peaceful solutions to conflicts, in full respect of the principles of international law and the UN Charter. They agreed on the urgent need to improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza. Both sides called for the resumption of a ceasefire, and expressed support for initiatives that contribute to a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace in Palestine in accordance with the two-state solution. The two sides reaffirmed their aspiration to convene the 7th Strategic Dialogue in 2025, underscoring its importance in strengthening Pakistan-EU cooperation. They agreed to hold the next Political Dialogue meeting in 2026 in Islamabad. The EU delegation was headed by Olof Skoog, Deputy Secretary General of the European External Action Service and the Pakistani delegation by Amna Baloch, Foreign Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan.

Britain seeks German help
against people smuggling gangs

LONDON: Britain sought a firm commitment Thursday from Germany to change its law to help smash people smuggling gangs, as the two countries agreed to boost defense ties on the first official UK visit by German Chancellor Friedrich Merz. The trip comes a week after undocumented migrants also topped the political agenda during a state visit to Britain by French President Emmanuel Macron. UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Merz signed the first ever "friendship treaty" between their countries at London's Victoria and Albert Museum before heading for talks at the PM's Downing Street office. Merz said London and Berlin had agreed an exchange program for German and British students. Speaking in German, he said he believed allowing the "young generation" to get to know each other and their respective countries was a "good basis for the further development of our relations." The two leaders were also expected to unveil a deal to jointly produce military goods such as Boxer armored vehicles and Typhoon jets, which could lead to "billions of pounds of additional defense exports," Downing Street said. They were to commit to developing a precision strike missile with a range of more than 2,000 kilometers (1,250 miles) in the next decade. "Chancellor Merz's commitment to make necessary changes to German law to disrupt the supply lines of the dangerous vessels which carry illegal migrants across the Channel is hugely welcome," Starmer said ahead of the talks. His office said it was hoped the German legal changes could be made "this year." Undocumented migration has become a major headache for Starmer's year-old Labour government, as support for the upstart anti-immigrant Reform UK party soars. More than 22,500 would-be asylum seekers have arrived on England's southeastern coast by small boat from northern France this year alone. The "friendship treaty" also seeks to improve post-Brexit ties with its neighbors. Macron's trip in early July was the first state visit to the country by a European Union head of state since Brexit — the UK's acrimonious 2020 departure from the bloc. A German government source said "we shouldn't underestimate" how much relations with the UK had improved since the "traumatic" experience of Brexit. The friendship deal would be a "foundation on which we go further to tackle shared problems," Starmer said. The two leaders were also to discuss continued support for Ukraine, with both countries expected to play a role in US President Donald Trump's plan to send weapons to Kyiv with financing from other NATO countries. The visit is Merz's first to the UK as chancellor, although he has already met Starmer several times, including on a trip by train to Ukraine just days after he took office in early May. The wide-ranging treaty will refer to the turbulent security situation faced by both countries, and include a mutual defense pact. "There is no strategic threat to one which would not be a strategic threat to the other," pact says, with a pledge the two countries "shall assist one another, including by military means, in case of an armed attack." While Britain and Germany already have a commitment to mutual defense as NATO members, the treaty aims to pave the way for greater defense cooperation, including operations on NATO's eastern flank.—DNA

France court orders
release of Lebanese
militant after 4 decades

PARIS: A French appeals court Thursday ordered the release of pro-Palestinian Lebanese militant Georges Ibrahim Abdallah, who has been imprisoned for 40 years for the 1982 killings of two foreign diplomats. Abdallah, 74, is one of the longest serving prisoners in France, where most convicts serving life sentences are freed after less than 30 years. He has been up for release for 25 years, but the United States — a civil party to the case — has consistently opposed his leaving prison. Abdallah was sentenced to life in prison in 1987 for his involvement in the murders of US military attache Charles Robert Ray and Israeli diplomat Yacov Barsimantov. He has always insisted he is a "fighter" who battled for the rights of Palestinians and not a "criminal." The Paris Appeals Court ordered he be freed from a prison in the south of France next week, on Friday, July 25, on the condition that he leave French territory and never return. Several sources before the hearing said that it was planned for him to be flown to Paris and then to Beirut. Lebanese authorities have repeatedly said Abdallah should be freed from jail, and had written to the appeals court to say they would organize his return home. The detainee's brother, Robert Abdallah, in Lebanon told AFP he was overjoyed. "We're delighted. I didn't expect the French judiciary to make such a decision nor for him to ever be freed, especially after so many failed requests for release," he said. "For once, the French authorities have freed themselves from Israeli and US pressures," he added. Prosecutors can file an appeal with France's highest court, the Court of Cassation, but it is not expected to be processed fast enough to halt his release next week.—APP

RCCI delegation visits rain-
affected low-lying areas, markets

RAWALPINDI: A delegation from the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), led by President Usman Shaukat, visited various low-lying areas and markets affected by recent heavy rains and urban flooding. The delegation included Senior Vice President Khalid Farooq Qazi, Executive Member Naveed Kanwal, former Vice President Faisal Shahzad and representatives from different market associations. The team visited flood-affected areas including Gawalmandi, Raja Bazaar, Moti Bazaar, Bohar Bazaar, Mochi Bazaar, and Kalan Bazaar to assess the damage on-site. Local market office-bearers briefed the delegation about the losses suffered due to the rains. President Usman Shaukat issued directions to the concerned authorities to ensure regular monitoring and cleaning of water drains during the monsoon season to prevent further damage. He also urged traders and citizens to take precautionary measures during monsoon rains to safeguard life and property.—DNA

Global Kashmir moot
condemns India's aggression

DNA

LONDON: Under the patronage of Raja Najabat Hussain, Sitara-e-Pakistan, a historic All Parties Kashmir Parliamentary Conference was held in London, UK. The conference raised grave concerns over India's escalating belligerence and nuclear brinkmanship, which, in the aftermath of the Pahalgam tragedy where 26 innocent lives were lost—has pushed the region dangerously close to full-scale war. The declaration of the conference strongly urged the United Nations to conduct an impartial investigation into the incident and determine its real perpetrators. Held at the British Parliament, the event saw the participation of a large number of MPs and dignitar-

ies, including: Barrister Imran Hussain, Chair of APPG on Kashmir, Tahir Ali, Senior Vice Chair, Debbie Abrahams, former Chair, MPs Dr Afzal Khan, Richard Burgon, David Williams, Dr Alison Clarkson, Connor Rand, Kate Dearden, Dr Zubair Ahmed, Barrister Mohammad Ayub, Mohammad Yasin, UK Head of Trade for Pakistan, Senator Dr Humayun Mohammad, Lt Gen (R) Abdul Qayyum, Chair Ex-Pakistan Army, Onaza Ehsan Butt, former MNA, Zafar Bakht-awari, Secretary General UBG and leading businessman, Mohammad Suleman, Assistant Director PIPS. Kashmiri community leaders and diaspora figures such as Prof. Shahid Iqbal, Muzammil Ayub Thakur, Rehana Ali Advocate, Nadia Jafri (Chairperson, JK Right to Self-Determination Movement UK), Zeeshan

Arif (Youth Wing Head), Barrister Shehzada Hayat, and many others also participated. Speakers condemned Indian PM Narendra Modi's ideology-driven Hindutva extremism and systematic human rights violations against minorities in India. They accused the BJP-RSS regime of pursuing the fascist goal of Akhand Bharat while spreading state terrorism, including cross-border attacks on Kashmiri and Sikh activists through RAW operatives. India's unilateral suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty was described as water terrorism. The speakers also highlighted the rise of over 19 separatist movements within India—across Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Manipur, Nagaland, Assam, and the South—indicating internal instability. Particular outrage was expressed over

the use of rape as a weapon of war by Indian forces in occupied Kashmir, calling it a gross violation of international law. Reference was made to US travel advisories warning about risks to women in India. Participants demanded the immediate release of Kashmiri freedom leaders including Yasin Malik, Dr Qasim Fakto, Shabir Shah, Khurram Parvez, Asif Sultan, Sajad Gul, Asiya Andrabi, Altaf Shah, and Musarat Alam Bhat. It was emphasized that The Simla Agreement of 1972 is void, as the people of Jammu & Kashmir were not a party to it. India is violating international laws, including UN Resolutions 47, 51, and 91, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the 1949 Geneva Conventions. Raja Najabat Hussain, Chairman of JK Self-Determination

International UK, urged House of Lords members to raise the Kashmir conflict, Indo-Pak nuclear threat, and India's treaty violations in today's debate (July 17), especially in light of extremist Hindutva policies. The conference concluded with a 6-point declaration, calling for: UN-supervised plebiscite in Jammu & Kashmir; A ban on extremist organizations and actions; Immediate action against uranium smuggling; Accountability of India for war crimes; Global support for imprisoned Kashmiri leaders. International action against India's water aggression. The participants demanded global sanctions on India for weaponizing sexual violence, extrajudicial killings and disappearances, harassment of journalists.—Agencies

Israeli strikes
on south
Lebanon kill
two

BEIRUT: Two people were killed Thursday in separate Israeli strikes on south Lebanon, the Lebanese health ministry said, in the latest attacks despite a ceasefire between Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah. The ministry said that "an Israeli drone strike targeted a car" in the Nabatiyeh district, killing one person and wounding two others. Another strike "targeted a truck in the town of Nagura" in southern Lebanon "resulting in one martyr," it said in a statement. The Israeli army did not immediately comment on the incidents. Israel has repeatedly bombed Lebanon despite a November ceasefire seeking to end over a year of hostilities with Lebanese armed group Hezbollah. Under the agreement, Hezbollah was to pull its fighters back north of the Litani river, about 30 kilometers (20 miles) from the Israeli border, leaving the Lebanese army and United Nations peacekeepers as the only armed parties in the region. Israel was required to fully withdraw its troops from the country but has kept them in five places it deems strategic.—APP

Drone hits oil
field in Iraq's
Kurdistan for
second day

BAGHDAD: A drone loaded with explosives struck an oil field in Iraq's northern Kurdistan region on Thursday, Kurdish forces said — the second attack in two days on the Norwegian-operated site. "At 10:55 am (0755 GMT) a new attack by an explosives-laden drone hit" the DNO-operated Tawke field in Zakho district, Kurdistan's counterterrorism services said. No casualties or damage were reported. Similar attacks on Wednesday forced the Norwegian firm to suspend operations at the Tawke and Peshkibir oil fields. Another two attacks targeted an oil field operated by the US firm Hunt Oil in Duhok province. In the past few weeks, Kurdistan has seen a spate of unclaimed drone attacks, which have come as the regional government and the federal authorities in Baghdad wrangle over control of export revenues from the Kurdistan fields. Several oil fields in the region have been hit in the space of a week. The Association of the Petroleum Industry of Kurdistan (API-KUR) — which represents international oil firms in the region, including DNO, and Hunt — condemned the attacks Wednesday. It added that the majority of its members have suspended production "totalling over 200,000 barrels per day." Long plagued by conflict, Iraq frequently experiences such attacks, often linked to regional proxy struggles between Iran and the United States and its ally Israel. There has been no claim of responsibility for any of the past week's attacks, and Baghdad has promised an investigation to identify the culprits.—APP

Output
of LCVs
increases
74.60%

ISLAMABAD: The production of Light Commercial Vehicles (LCVs), vans and jeeps in the country has witnessed 74.60 percent increase during the fiscal year 2024-25 against the output of last fiscal year. As many as 36,807 LCVs, vans and jeeps were manufactured during July-June (2024-25) as compared to the production of 21,080 LCVs, vans and jeeps during July- June (2023-24), according to official data by Pakistan Automobile manufacture Association (PAMA). During the period under review, the production of trucks also rose from 2,204 units to 4,366 units, showing an increase of 98.09 percent while the production of buses increased by 89.97 percent, going up from 419 units to 796 units. However, the production of farm tractors decreased by 35.56 percent from 45,821 units last year to 28,607 units during the period under review. The production of cars increased to 111,402 units during this year from 79,594 units during last year while the production of motorcycles.—APP

Briefs

Fire at mall in Iraq leaves at least 60 dead

"We have filed lawsuits against owner of building and mall," INA quoted governor as saying

DNA

BAGHDAD: DA massive fire in a hypermarket in al-Kut city in eastern Iraq has left at least 60 people dead and 11 others missing, the city's health authorities and two police sources told Reuters on Thursday. Videos circulating on social media showed flames engulfing a five-storey building in al-Kut overnight as firefighters tried to contain the blaze. "We have compiled a list of 59 victims whose identities have been confirmed, but one body was so badly burned that it has been extremely difficult to identify," a city health official told Reuters. "We have more bodies that have not been recovered still under fire debris," city official Ali al-Mayahi told Reuters. The cause of the fire was not immediately known, but the province's governor said initial results from an investigation would be announced within 48 hours, the state news agency (INA) reported. "We have filed lawsuits against the owner of the building and the mall," INA quoted the governor as saying.

Pakistan, El Salvador discuss digital asset venture

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Crypto and Blockchain and CEO of the Pakistan Crypto Council, Bilal Bin Saqib met with President El Salvador, Nayib Bukele in San Salvador, marking the first-ever official meeting between a Pakistani government representative and the Salvadoran Head of State. The historic encounter was centered entirely on Bitcoin and digital asset collaboration, a move that analysts are describing as the beginning of a new chapter in "Diplomacy" – a term blending Bitcoin and diplomacy, signaling the growing role of decentralized technologies in shaping international relations, according to press release issued by finance ministry. During the meeting, Minister Bilal Bin Saqib and President Bukele discussed El Salvador's pioneering experience as the first country to adopt Bitcoin as legal tender, and explored avenues through which Pakistan could draw on these learnings to inform its own digital asset frameworks. Key themes included Bitcoin education, sovereign digital asset reserves, and regulatory innovation. A pivotal outcome of the meeting was the signing of a Letter of Intent (LOI) between the Bitcoin Office of El Salvador and the Pakistan Crypto Council.

Syria says pulling troops from Druze

DAMASCUS: Syria announced that its army had begun to withdraw from violence-hit Sweida on Wednesday, following a wave of Israeli strikes on the capital and a US call for government forces to leave the majority-Druze southern city. The United States, which is close allies with Israel and has been trying to reboot its relationship with Syria, said an agreement had been reached to restore calm in the area, and urged "all parties to deliver on the commitments they have made". The Syrian government earlier announced a new ceasefire in Sweida that would bring a halt to military operations there, after clashes that a war monitor said had left more than 350 people dead since Sunday. The Syrian army "has begun withdrawing from the city of Sweida in implementation of the terms of the adopted agreement, after the end of the sweep of the city for outlaw groups", a defence ministry statement said. – Agencies

Royal Int'l Air Tattoo 2025

JF-17 Thunder, C-130 aircrafts land at UK

PAF's participation in RIAT, one of the world's largest military airshows, underscores Pakistan Air Force's commitment to showcasing its professional excellence, operational capability and the indigenous strength of its aviation industry, said a news release issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR)

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Contingent of the Pakistan Air Force comprising state-of-the-art JF-17 Thunder Block-III fighter aircraft and the C-130 Hercules transport aircraft has landed at the Royal Air Force Base Fairford, United Kingdom, to participate in the prestigious Royal International Air Tattoo – 2025 (RIAT). PAF's participation in RIAT, one of the world's largest military airshows, underscores Pakistan Air Force's commitment to showcasing its professional excellence, operational capability and the indigenous strength of its aviation industry, said a news release issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR). Adding to the operational significance of this international deployment, Pakistan Air Force's JF-17 Thunder Block-III fighters executed successful Air-to-Air Refuelling operations enroute to United Kingdom with the support of a PAF IL-78 aerial refuelling tanker. The intricate refuelling operation demonstrated PAF's long-range operational capabilities and the proficiency of its air and ground crew in conducting extended operations beyond national borders. JF-17 Block-III is an EASA Radar and Long Range BVR equipped 4.5 generation multi-role fighter aircraft which is capable of undertaking wide variety of combat missions bolstering airpower application in the face of contemporary challenges thereby strengthening national security. There is a palpable sense of enthusiasm across the United Kingdom following the recent Pakistan India conflict, as aviation enthusiasts and defence observers were eagerly looking forward to the arrival of the Pakistan Air Force's JF-17 Thunder Block-III. The aircraft's combat-proven capabilities and operational excellence have garnered significant global attention, making its appearance at RIAT a highly anticipated highlight in the aerospace and defence community, the press release said.



US Senate passes \$9 billion aid, public broadcasting cuts

Senate votes 51 to 48 in favour of Trump's request for spending cut already approved by Congress

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: The US Senate early on Thursday approved President Donald Trump's plan for billions of dollars in cuts to funding for foreign aid and public broadcasting, handing the Republican president another victory as he exerts control over Congress with little opposition. The Senate voted 51 to 48 in favour of Trump's request to cut \$9 billion in spending already approved by Congress. Most of the cuts are to programmes to assist foreign countries suffering from disease, war and natural disasters, but the plan also eliminates all \$1.1 billion the Corporation for Public Broadcasting was due to receive over the next two years. Trump and many of his fellow Republicans argue that spending on public broadcasting is an unnecessary expense and reject its news coverage as suffering from anti-right bias. Standalone rescission packages have not passed in decades, with lawmakers reluctant to cede their constitutionally mandated control of spending. But Trump's Republicans, who hold narrow majorities in the Senate and House, have shown little appetite for resisting his policies since he began his second term in January.

Pilot may have cut fuel supply before Air India crash: report

MONITORING DESK

NEW DELHI: A cockpit recording of dialogue between the two pilots of the Air India flight that crashed last month indicates the captain cut the flow of fuel to the plane's engines, the Wall Street Journal reported on Wednesday. The newspaper cited people familiar with US officials' early assessment of evidence uncovered in the investigation into the June 12 crash in Ahmedabad, India, that killed 260 people. The first officer, who was flying the Boeing 787 Dreamliner, asked the more experienced captain why he moved the fuel switches to the "cutoff" position seconds after lifting off the runway, the report said. The two pilots involved were Captain Sumeet Sabharwal and First Officer Clive Kunder, who had total flying experi-

ence of 15,638 hours and 3,403 hours, respectively. India's AAI, Directorate General of Civil Aviation, Ministry of Civil Aviation, Air India and two unions representing Indian pilots did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the Wall Street Journal report. Boeing declined to comment. A preliminary report into the crash released by India's Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) on Saturday said the fuel switches had switched from run to cutoff a second apart just after takeoff, but it did not say how they were flipped. Almost immediately after the plane lifted off the ground, closed-circuit TV footage showed a backup energy source called a ram air turbine had deployed, indicating a loss of power from the engines. One pilot was then heard on the cockpit voice recorder asking the other why he cut off the fuel. "The other pilot responded that he did not do so," the report said.

UN report: \$39 trillion in economic losses from vanishing wetlands

ISLAMABAD: The global destruction of wetlands, which support fisheries, agriculture and flood control, may mean the loss of \$39 trillion in economic benefits by 2050, Reuters reports citing the Convention on Wetlands. According to the a report by the Convention on Wetlands released, some 22% of wetlands, both freshwater systems such as peat lands, rivers and lakes, and coastal marine systems including mangroves and coral reefs, have disappeared since 1970, according to the intergovernmental report, the fastest pace of loss of any ecosystem. Pressures, including land-use change, pollution, agricultural expansion, invasive species, and the impacts of climate change - such as rising sea levels and drought - are driving the declines. "The scale of loss and degradation is beyond what we can afford to ignore," said Hugh Robertson, the lead author of the report. The report called for annual investments of \$275 billion to \$550 billion to reverse the threats to the remaining wetlands, and said current spending was a "substantial under-invest-

ment" without giving figures. The world has lost 411 million hectares of wetlands, the equivalent of half a billion football pitches, and a quarter of the remaining wetlands are now classified as in a state of degradation, according to the report. Wetlands' economic benefits include flood regulation, water purification and carbon storage - key as water levels rise and tropical storms and hurricanes intensify due to climate change. They also support the fishery and agriculture industries and offer cultural benefits. The report launches a week before the Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, meeting of the parties of the Convention on Wetlands, a global agreement of 172 countries signed in 1971 to spearhead preservation of the ecosystem. The group, which includes China, Russia and the United States, meets every three years, but it is unclear if all nations will send delegates. Wetland deterioration is particularly acute in Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean, but is worsening in Europe and North America, the report said. Rehabilitation projects are under way in countries including Zambia, Cambodia and China. – Agencies

Russia, Ukraine trade deadly drone attacks

KYIV: Russia and Ukraine traded another wave of drone strikes overnight, both sides said on Thursday, in attacks that killed and wounded people on either side of the front line. Moscow has carried out nightly drone and missile barrages on Ukraine since launching its invasion in February 2022, with Kyiv responding with increasingly long-range strikes inside Russia as well as its own attacks on borders areas. Russian President Vladimir Putin has rejected calls for a ceasefire and escalated his army's strikes, defying US President Donald Trump's pledge of fresh weapons for Ukraine and harsh sanctions if a peace deal is not struck soon. Russia's defence ministry said its air defences shot down 122 drones overnight, most of them in border regions. In Russia's Belgorod border region, "a woman was killed when an explosive device was dropped from a drone onto a private house", Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov wrote on Telegram. He said three civilians had been killed a day earlier. And in the Voronezh region, which also borders Ukraine, three teens were wounded when falling drone debris struck a building, regional governor Alexander Gusev wrote on Telegram. Russia's strikes on Ukraine killed one person in the central city of Dnipro, Governor Sergiy Lysak said. Russia launched 64 drones, mostly targeting the central Dnipropetrovsk region, which includes Dnipro, according to Ukraine's air force. It said it had shot down or disabled 41 of them. – Agencies

Level of destruction in Gaza is unprecedented: Guterres

Guterres expressed his hope that the parties would be able to overcome the difficulties they face in order to achieve a ceasefire paves the way for a political solution in accordance with international legitimacy resolutions, adding, that this is why a conference on the two-state solution will be held in July

NEW YORK: UN Secretary-General António Guterres reiterated his call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza that would pave the way for a political solution based on the UN resolutions. The UN News website quoted Guterres as saying in a press conference at the organization's headquarters in New York: "that the level of death and destruction witnessed in Gaza is unprecedented in recent times, undermining the most basic conditions of human dignity for the people of Gaza. Guterres expressed his hope that the parties would be able to overcome the difficulties they face in order to achieve a ceasefire paves the way for a political solution in accordance with international legitimacy resolutions, adding, that this is why a conference on the two-state solution will be held in July. He pointed out that the presence of 5 million people within a country and on their own land without any rights is completely contrary to humanity and international law. For her part, UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell called on Israel to review its rules of engagement in Gaza following the killing of seven children last Sunday waiting in line for water at a distribution point. – APP

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