



# Islamabad POST

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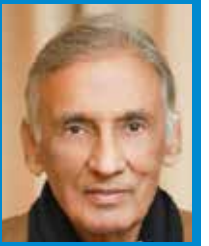
Detailed News On Page-07

**Pak presses for global cut in emissions**

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**PTI MNA Mian Azhar Passes away**

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## Cross border issues

# Pakistan hits back at India

“It is India which actively sponsors, aids and abets terrorism in my country and beyond,” Ambassador Usman Jadoon, deputy permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, told the 15-member body

DNA

UNITED NATIONS: Rejecting Indian allegations of cross-border terrorism, Pakistan has asked India to change its behaviour, instead of resorting to its “tired narrative of victimhood and blame-shifting” during a UN Security Council debate on ‘Promoting International Peace and Security through Multilateralism and Peaceful Settlement of Disputes’. “It is India which actively sponsors, aids and abets terrorism in my country and beyond,” Ambassador Usman Jadoon, deputy permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, told the 15-member body on Tuesday evening, while responding to the allegations made by India’s UN Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish.

“Rather than being blinded by hubris and a misplaced sense of impunity, and instead of resorting to its tired narrative of victimhood and blame-shifting, India must introspect seriously, change its behaviour and comply with its international legal obligations on all counts,” he said in the debate convened by Pakistan to promote pacific settlement of disputes between nations. Ambassador Jadoon said it was especially regrettable that the Indian Ambassador targeted Pakistan on Tuesday when earlier in the day, the Council spoke with a unanimous voice to reaffirm the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and the imperative of peaceful settlement of disputes, respect for international law and effective implementation of the resolution of the Security Council. The Indian envoy was reacting to Pakistani Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar who underscored the need for the resolution of Kashmir dispute in a speech he gave in his national capacity after the adoption of Pakistan-sponsored resolution calling for the peaceful settlement of disputes.

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## Dar for inclusive dialogue

DNA

NEW YORK: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister (DPM/FM), Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, on Wednesday called for an inclusive dialogue and cooperative diplomacy over confrontation amid times of growing turbulence across the world as “the cost of unresolved disputes, long-running conflicts, unilateral actions, and disregard for international law are being felt in every region.”

In his address delivered at the reception hosted by Pakistan’s Mission in New York on the occasion of Pakistan’s Presidency of the UN Security Council, the DPM emphasized Pakistan’s unwavering commitment to multilateralism, peaceful dispute resolution, and the foundational principles of the UN Charter. Speaking to diplomats, UN officials and representatives of member states, Dar underscored that at the heart of Pakistan’s foreign policy was a firm belief in multilateralism and the rule of international law. “The purposes and principles enshrined in the UN Charter, especially the peaceful settlement of disputes and the non-use or threat of force, are foundational to the United Nations and indispensable for a just international order,” he stated.

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## ADB lauds Pak fiscal growth

The revised growth forecast in Pakistan accounted for the higher-than-expected uptick in the industry and services sector

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank has encouraged Pakistan’s economic growth in fiscal year 2024-25, with food and non-food prices declining and inflation under control in the first eleven months of the last fiscal year. In the midst of higher United States (U.S.) tariffs and global trade uncertainty, Pakistan provisionally grew 2.7 percent in FY2025 (ended 30 June 2025), resulting in the slight upward revision for FY2025, while the sustainable growth forecast for FY2026, according to Asian Development Outlook (ADO) July 2025 released Wednesday. In Pakistan, the accelerated decline in food and nonfood prices for the first 11 months of FY2025 revised the inflation forecast for FY2025 downward.

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## Couple killing ATC extends remand of tribal chief

Court hands over Sardar Sherbaz to Serious Crimes Investigation Wing for 10 more days

BUREAU REPORT

QUETTA: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Quetta on Wednesday extended the physical remand of tribal leader Sardar Sherbaz for 10 more days in connection with the killing of a couple who were shot dead ahead of Eid ul Adha for so-called honour. The woman, identified by police as Bano Bibi and the man, Ehsan Ullah, were both shot dead on the orders of a local tribal

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ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari presenting a souvenir to the outgoing ambassador of Austria Mrs. Andrea Wicke during a farewell meeting at Aiwan-e-Sadr. – DNA

## Farewell call

# Pakistan attaches great Importance to its ties With Austria: Zardari

*Outgoing Austrian Ambassador Pays Farewell Call on President*

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The outgoing Austrian Ambassador to Pakistan, Mrs. Andrea Wicke, paid a farewell call on President Asif Ali Zardari at Aiwan-e-Sadr on Tuesday. The meeting was marked by warmth, goodwill, and a shared commitment to further deepening bilateral ties between Austria and Pakistan. Also present during the meeting was Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, reflecting the significance attached by Pakistan’s leadership to the enduring and growing relationship with Austria. President Zardari lauded Ambassador Wicke for her dedicated service and her instrumental role in fostering cooperation between the two countries. He appreciated her active engagement across a range of sectors, particularly in promoting people-to-people contact, enhancing trade ties, and exploring new areas of collaboration during her diplomatic tenure in Islamabad. In his remarks, President Zardari reiterated that Pakistan values its longstanding relationship with Austria and looks

forward to further expanding the scope of cooperation in multiple domains. “Austria is a key partner in Europe, and we consider our relationship as both friendly and constructive,” he said. He particularly emphasized the untapped potential in trade and economic collaboration, noting that both countries could benefit from deeper commercial engagements. President Zardari pointed out that Pakistan offers diverse investment opportunities in tourism, information technology, energy, and infrastructure. “We have vast potential in the tourism sector, particularly alpine tourism, and Austria’s expertise in this field is well-recognized worldwide,” he said, inviting Austrian investors to explore opportunities in Pakistan’s northern mountainous regions. Speaking on the IT sector, President Zardari highlighted the remarkable growth of Pakistan’s tech industry and its expanding pool of young and skilled professionals. He suggested that Austrian tech firms could greatly benefit by tapping into Pakistan’s human capital.

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## Briefs

### India to resume issuing tourist visas to Chinese

Tourist visas for Indian nationals remained restricted until March this year

DNA

INDIA will resume issuing tourist visas to Chinese citizens from July 24 this year, its embassy in China announced on Wednesday, marking the first time in five years that both countries are working to repair their rocky relationship. Tensions between the two countries escalated following a 2020 military clash along their disputed Himalayan border. In response, India imposed restrictions on Chinese investments, banned hundreds of popular Chinese apps and cut passenger routes. China suspended visas to Indian citizens and other foreigners around the same time due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but lifted those restrictions in 2022, when it resumed issuing visas for students and business travellers.

### Climate change ‘existential threat’: ICJ

Non-binding opinion by international court is likely to determine course of future climate action across the world

NEWS DESK

THE HAGUE: The United Nations’ (UN) highest court on Wednesday underlined “the urgent and existential threat posed by climate change” as it started to read out an opinion on the legal obligations of states to take action. The non-binding opinion by the International Court of Justice (ICJ), also known as the World Court, is likely to determine the course of future climate action across the world.

## Ahead of protests

# Imran Khan's sons meet Trump aide

Advocating PTI founder’s release, Grenell shares photo with Kasim and Sulaiman on X, urges them to “stay strong”

DNA

WASHINGTON: Incarcerated former prime minister Imran Khan’s sons, Sulaiman Khan and Kasim Khan, met United States President Donald Trump’s aide Richard Grenell on Wednesday ahead of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf’s (PTI) protest for the party founder’s release from prison. The 71-year-old cricketer-turned-politician has been behind bars since August 2023 after he was booked in multiple cases ranging from corruption to terrorism since his ouster from power via the opposition’s no-trust motion in April 2022. Kasim called attention to their father’s imprisonment for the first time publicly in May. Taking to X in June, he expressed concern over Imran’s condition in the jail. He wrote, “My father, former prime minister Imran Khan, has now spent over 700 days in prison – held in solitary confinement. He is denied access to his lawyers, not allowed visits from his family, fully cut

off from us (his children), and even his personal doctor is refused entry. This is not justice. It is a deliberate attempt to isolate and break a man who stands for rule of law, democracy and Pakistan.” Following Tuesday’s meeting, Grenell, US special presidential envoy for special missions, took to X and said that he had met Sulaiman and Kasim in California, urging them to “stay strong”. “There are millions of people around the world who are sick of political prosecutions. You are not alone.” Meanwhile, Dr Asif Mahmood, a Pakistani-American physician, was also present on the occasion. He shared a picture along with Grenell and former premier’s sons. Earlier this month, Imran’s sister Aleema Khan told reporters in Rawalpindi that his sons, Sulaiman and Kasim, had decided to travel from the United Kingdom (UK) to the US and would eventually arrive in Pakistan to play their role in the PTI’s protest campaign against the government.

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# Pakistan indebted to UK for PIA flights resumption

British High Commissioner calls on the PM Shehbaz Sharif



MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Ms. Jane Marriott, called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at the Prime Minister’s House earlier today. During the meeting, the Prime Minister conveyed his warm wishes for His Majesty King Charles III and Prime Minister Keir Starmer and said he looked forward to his meeting with the U.K. leadership later this year. He welcomed the U.K. Government’s recent decision to resume PIA flights to and from the U.K., which he said, would go a

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## PM Shehbaz hails FBR reforms

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday chaired a high-level review meeting on the ongoing reforms in the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), lauding the progress made so far while stressing the need for sustained and time-bound efforts to overhaul the tax system in line with modern requirements. Terming the recent improvements in the tax machinery as “encouraging,” the prime minister emphasized that reforms must lead to the creation of a sustainable, digitized, and facilitative tax system, a Prime Minister’s Office news release said. “We have achieved important milestones,

Continued on Page 06

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# Total audit-flagged irregularities: Over Rs 17 billion

Minister Distances Himself from Gorakh Hills Audit Scandal, Blames Predecessor; Tourism Minister Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah says no funds were spent during his tenure; blames ex-Chairman PPP MNA Rafiq Ahmed Jamali for financial mismanagement

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: An important meeting regarding the Gorakh Hill Station was chaired by Sindh Minister for Culture and Tourism, Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah. The meeting was attended by the acting secretary, Director General of Gorakh Hill Station, MD Tourism, and other concerned officials. The participants expressed grief over recent unfortunate incidents involving tourists in northern areas and offered prayers for the deceased. Minister Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah was briefed on the current situation of Gorakh Hill Station, including developmental works and funding, after the dissolution of the Gorakh Hill Authority. The Minister issued strict instructions for action against corruption and irregularities in Gorakh Hill Station's funds. He revealed that no new budget or funds have been issued since the hill station was merged into the Department of Culture and Tourism. Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah clarified that since the merger, no new corruption cases have surfaced. He emphasized that the Auditor General's report highlighting irregularities is from two years ago, during the time when Gorakh Hill operated as an independent authority. He announced that the Culture and Tourism Department has decided to refer past corruption matters related to Gorakh Hill to the Anti-Corruption Establishment and NAB (National Ac-

countability Bureau). Furthermore, he stated that the recruitment of surplus employees at the hill station has been canceled and inquiries have been initiated. Strict action is being taken against officers, contractors, and employees found involved in corruption. With the special attention of Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah, a highway-style road is being constructed to improve access to Gorakh Hill Station. The Minister also highlighted that under the Public-Private Partnership model, providing better facilities and resources for tourists remains a top priority. Amid a damning audit exposing massive financial irregularities at the Gorakh Hills Station Authority, while, exclusively talking to a Senior Journalist, Sindh's Minister for Culture and Tourism, Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah, has publicly distanced himself from the scandal, attributing all questionable transactions to the tenure of former Chairman and PPP MNA Rafiq Ahmed Jamali. In a formal statement, Minister Shah clarified that he took charge as Chairman of the Authority only a year ago and has not utilized even a single rupee from the Rs 250 million grant allocated to the Authority under his leadership. "No payments have been made during my tenure, neither to contractors, daily wage staff, nor to any contract employees," he stated. He further noted that no official meetings of the Gorakh Hills Authority have taken place during his chairmanship, reinforcing his stance of non-in-

volvement in any of the audit-flagged transactions. Minister Shah affirmed that while the Culture and Tourism Department's other projects have been executed with transparency and in full compliance with rules, Gorakh Hills remains the only project under audit scrutiny. "This is precisely why I have chosen to stay away from its financial operations," he asserted. Turning attention to future plans, Shah emphasized his vision to develop Gorakh Hills through a public-private partnership. He shared that, at his request, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah approved a new road project to Gorakh Hills, which will be executed by the Frontier Works Organization (FWO) with provincial government funding. The Minister also highlighted his ongoing efforts to promote tourism, citing his recent visits to Fort Munro and Koh-e-Murree as part of a broader strategy to develop new destinations and infrastructure to boost domestic and international tourism. The statement comes as the audit report accuses the Gorakh Hills Authority of awarding fake contracts, overspending by billions, avoiding taxes, and failing to deliver on ground despite years of funding. The total audit-flagged mismanagement is estimated at over Rs 17 billion. Minister Shah's distancing signals potential political tension within PPP ranks, as accountability questions mount and pressure builds for judicial inquiry and recovery of funds misused under previous administrations.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Netherlands paid a farewell call on the Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazir Tarar. – DNA

## Urgent climate action stressed for uplift

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Hanif Abbasi on Wednesday stressed the need for "integrated and results-oriented efforts" to make Pakistan Railways a modern, active, and people-friendly institution. Chairing a high-level meeting, the Minister stressed the need to outline fresh objectives, bolster monsoon preparedness, and initiate new projects inspired by national resolve. All Divisional Superintendents (DSs) participated in the meeting online, reaffirming their commitment to coordinated efforts aimed at improving Pakistan's railway system. Upholding honesty, dedication, and national spirit in service is the urgent need of the hour for Pakistan Railways," said

## Efforts afoot for modern Railways, passenger-friendly

Hanif Abbasi. The Minister called for immediate inspection of all railway bridges, tracks, and infrastructure to mitigate monsoon-related risks. He emphasized the urgent need for proactive safety measures to prevent potential accidents. The Minister underscored the importance of railway personnel performing their duties with renewed national pride and dedication, aiming to elevate service standards and improve public perception of Pakistan Railways. Abbasi stressed the urgent need for proactive safety measures to prevent accidents. He reaffirmed that protecting the lives and property of passengers and staff remains Pakistan Railways' foremost national duty. Abbasi said reno-

vation work is underway at railway stations across Punjab under the "Saath Suthra Punjab" (Clean Punjab) campaign. The initiative aims to modernize facilities and implement a sustained system of sanitation, waste management, and cleanliness across the network. Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi said Pakistan Railways has launched a strict campaign against ticketless travel, warning that both violators and facilitators will face imprisonment. Appealing to the public for cooperation, he stated, "Railways are our national asset," and emphasized that the initiative is part of broader efforts to enhance services and improve the passenger experience.

## PIC issues show-cause notices to senior officers of multiple federal bodies

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Information Commission (PIC) has issued show cause notices to senior officers of various federal public bodies for their continued non-compliance with the provisions of the Right of Access to Information Act, 2017. The decision comes in the wake of repeated failures by these officials to appear before the Commission and provide public information requested by citizens under the law. In an order passed in Appeal No. 3875/08-24 titled Farooq Dawood vs Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the Commission noted that it had received yet another

request for extension from the designated officer of MOFA. This follows several previous requests for adjournments, which have already caused significant delay in the disposal of the appeal—delays the Commission stated are contrary to the spirit of the law. Taking serious notice of this pattern of non-cooperation, the Commission has issued a show cause notice under Section 20(1)(f) of the Right of Access to Information Act, 2017 to the designated officer (Spokesperson), asking him to explain why proceedings should not be initiated against him for non-compliance. The Com-

mission has also directed to issue show cause notice to the spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who is also the designated Public Information Officer, under the same section of the Act. The Commission has further ordered that the Secretary of MOFA, as head of the public body, be informed that if no response is received from the Ministry, the matter will be decided ex-parte. In a similar move, the Commission has issued show cause notices under Section 20(1)(f) of the Act to the Chief Executive Officer of Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO).—APP

## KP CM directs to accelerate flood relief operations

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has expressed profound grief and concern over the devastation caused by the recent heavy rains and flooding in the province. He emphasized that all relevant departments are working in close coordination to mitigate further damage in the affected areas. The Chief Minister highlighted that inter-departmental communication is being maintained continuously, with joint efforts underway to safeguard lives and property. Rescue 1122 has established emergency camps near rivers, streams, and other vulnerable locations, with relief operations actively ongoing.—APP

## Torrential rains hit peach growers hard in Swat valley

SWAT: The once-thriving peach orchards of Swat valley are under heightening threat, as climate change-induced erratic weather patterns have dealt a harsh blow to this year's peach harvest in the picturesque district. Torrential rains, flash floods and unseasonal hailstorms besides high temperatures have not only marred fruit quality but also left thousands of farmers reeling under financial stress in Swat Valley. Attaullah Khan, a lifelong peach grower from Mingora, looked over his water-logged orchard gardens with dismay after recent torrential rains inundated it completely. "This season has been unlike any other. The peaches are smaller, less juicy, and many trees hardly bore fruit which adversely affected

its growers financially," he said, echoing the sentiment of growers from Bahrain, Malam Jabba, Barikot, and Kalam regions once known for their lush peach harvests during monsoon season. He said that unchecked deforestation, illegal construction in Swat river beds, excessive pesticide and climate vulnerabilities have marred peach production in Swat. Attaullah said that 2022 devastated floods have caused irreparable financial losses to peach growers in Swat as PTI Govt has badly disappointed them with no significant relief. He said the damages of climate change especially of torrential rains are beyond understanding and urged KP Govt to provide comprehensive to the affected farmers. Peach is cultivated on about 20,000 acres

in Swat, making the region the heartland of Pakistan's peach industry. With Swat accounting for nearly 80 percent of the national production, its peaches are famed for their sweetness, affordability, and nutritional value. However, this year, yields have plummeted. According to the Agriculture Department, Swat's usual output of 400,000 kilograms of peaches has drastically reduced, triggering supply shortages and a sharp rise in market prices from Rs300 to Rs400 per kilogram in cities like Peshawar. Ali Syed, a former agriculture research officer, explained the broader impact of climate change on peach production in Swat. "This decline is not just about lost income. It affects food access, market stability.—APP

## Nuclear Security in the Middle East The Role of Saudi Arabia as rising stakeholder discussed

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) hosted an insightful talk on "Nuclear Security in the Middle East: The Role of Saudi Arabia as a Rising Stakeholder", focusing on the country's evolving nuclear trajectory amidst the complexities of a volatile regional landscape. Dr. Rizwan Naseer, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Regional Studies, delivered the opening remarks, emphasizing


the critical importance of nuclear politics for scholars in the field of strategic studies. He highlighted the growing relevance of nuclear governance regimes such as the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in light of increasing proliferation challenges and international pressure on nuclear-capable states. The principal talk was delivered by Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, Dean and Meritorious Professor at the School of Politics and International Relations, Quaid-i-Azam University. Dr. Jaspal discussed both the op-

portunities and challenges associated with nuclear energy for Saudi Arabia, noting its evolving nature, particularly in response to ongoing conflicts in the Middle East including the resurgence of inter-state warfare after nearly three decades. Jaspal identified four primary drivers behind Saudi Arabia's nuclear policy. "One of the drivers of Saudi Arabia's nuclear policy is the strategic competition with Iran, followed by Iran's ability to remain within the NPT and pursue its nuclear potential. The third driver is the trans-

formation in international politics, followed by the sustainability and durability of nuclear energy." Addressing concerns surrounding nuclear energy, Dr. Jaspal contended that much of the alarm is rooted in the nuclear energy's capacity to reshape the nature of warfare. He argued that while all forms of energy carry risks, the consequences of nuclear accidents are statistically less severe than those associated with coal mining, a point often highlighted by nuclear energy proponents.















ISLAMABAD: Newly appointed envoy of Nepal to Pakistan Rita Dhital called on Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani

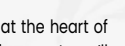
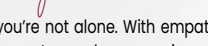
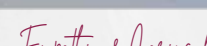
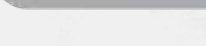







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July 01/Somalia Independence Day

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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

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July 20/TRNC Independence Day

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# Rwanda high commissioner, CDA chief discuss cooperation

Chairman CDA apprised H.E. Fatou Harerimana, the High Commissioner of Rwanda about the performance of CDA especially key development projects completed as well as the initiatives currently underway in Islamabad, including the Authority's vision for transforming the capital into a modern, inclusive, and environmentally sustainable city

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Fatou Harerimana, the High Commissioner of the Republic of Rwanda to Pakistan called on the Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Randhawa at CDA Headquarters today. The meeting held in a very cordial atmosphere in which matters of mutual interest, with a particular focus on strengthening bilateral cooperation in urban development, infrastructure and tourism development with a special focus on sustainable city management came under discussion. Chairman CDA apprised Fatou Harerimana, the High Commissioner of Rwanda about the performance of CDA especially key development projects completed as well as the initiatives currently underway in Islamabad, including the Authority's vision for transforming the capital into a modern, inclusive, and environmentally sustainable city. He also said that CDA is working for uplifting of diplomatic enclave, establishing a Safari Park in Islamabad. He highlighted that the proposed Safari Park would feature a jungle-themed environment and close animal encounter experiences transforming Islamabad into a best tourist destination in



the years to come due to its pleasant weather and beautification. He said that CDA is also concentrating on conservation-driven recreational facility for the citizens of Islamabad as well as tourists at large.

Chairman CDA welcomed the idea to establish a sister-city relationship between Islamabad and Kigali the capital of Rwanda, aimed at fostering enduring people-to-people contact, cultural exchange, and collaboration in areas such as

municipal management, urban regeneration, and green urban solutions. He emphasized that Rwanda's expertise in sustainable urban planning and wildlife conservation could be of immense benefit to Islamabad's future development.

H.E. Fatou Harerimana, The High Commissioner of Rwanda appreciated CDA's excellent performance under the leadership of Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa for making Islamabad beautiful as well as completion of impressive devel-

opment projects and expressed Rwanda's keen interest in enhancing bilateral cooperation, particularly in capital city governance, sustainable development, and eco-friendly capital city. The High Commissioner also expressed Rwanda's keen interest in learning from Pakistan's experience in managing capital city development. Both sides agreed to explore new avenues of collaboration in the areas of smart city solutions, green spaces, tourism development and capacity building through exchange of expertise and institutional linkages. The meeting concluded on a positive note, with a shared commitment to enhancing people-to-people ties and building strong institutional relationships between Rwanda and Pakistan. At the end, Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Randhawa presented a souvenir to H.E. Fatou Harerimana High Commissioner of the Republic of Rwanda as a token of friendship, symbolizing the shared ambition of building a lasting partnership between the two nations. This initiative reflects Pakistan's commitment to international cooperation in mutual respect. Randhawa said, expressing optimism about the future of Islamabad and Kigali the capital of Rwanda collaboration as sister cities in future at CDA Headquarters.

## Five held, one shop sealed in action against overpriced sugar sellers

ISLAMABAD: The price control magistrates on Wednesday sealed one shop and arrested five shopkeepers as part of ongoing operation by the Islamabad district administration against retailers charging above the official sugar price. According to the spokesman of ICT administration, in response to rising complaints about overpriced sugar in markets, the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration has intensified its action against profiteers. Acting on the directives of Deputy Commissioner Irfan Nawaz Memon, the price control magistrates carried out surprise inspections in various parts of the city. Several grocery stores were found selling sugar at rates higher than those set by the government. As a result, one shop was sealed, and five shopkeepers were taken into custody for violating official price guidelines. Deputy Commissioner Irfan Memon has directed that action must be taken without discrimination against all retailers who fail to comply with the notified sugar rates. He instructed officials to ensure that no store is allowed to overcharge, and strict penalties should be imposed where violations are found. The crackdown aims to ensure price stability and protect citizens from unjustified increases in daily-use commodities. Memon emphasized that any officer found negligent in enforcing the official sugar rate in their assigned area would also face disciplinary action. "Strict enforcement is necessary. If sugar is being sold at inflated prices in any locality, the concerned area officer will be held accountable," he stated during a meeting with monitoring teams. The district administration has also urged the public to support the effort by reporting shops that are charging more than the official rate. "We request citizens to help us identify those selling sugar at inflated prices. Their cooperation is important to keep prices under control," the DC said. To improve monitoring, the Additional Deputy Commissioner General has been tasked with submitting detailed reports on price compliance across all zones of Islamabad. The goal is to maintain transparency in market operations and address pricing irregularities quickly. Teams of price control magistrates will continue inspections in both urban and rural sectors, including busy commercial areas and small neighborhoods. They have been told to check not only sugar prices but also other essential items listed under government-fixed rates.—APP

## Drive to comprehensively address marine pollution

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Maritime Affairs launched the campaign to comprehensively address the marine pollution threatening to the blue economy, harming biodiversity, fisheries, and tourism, while contributing to climate change, public health risks, and economic losses. Talking to APP, Ministry of Maritime Affairs' official told on Wednesday that Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry has already established two committees to identify issues and submit a report with suggestions to promote cleaner coastlines, a healthier marine ecosystem, and a stronger system for pollution control. He said that the committees will focus on the Sewage Treatment Plant-III (SPT-III) project and the Combined Effluent Treatment Plant (CETP), a treating wastewater from various industrial sources and will submit report to the Marine Pollution Control Board within 20 days. He stressed the urgent need for a comprehensive public awareness campaign, calling for the active involvement of all stakeholders to foster community engagement in efforts to combat marine pollution. "Land-based marine pollution particularly the discharge of untreated sewage and solid waste into coastal waters can be reduced by up to 90 percent through targeted and effective measures," he added. He elaborated on the wide-ranging consequences of marine pollution, noting that it undermines fisheries and tourism, inflicts economic losses, poses public health risks through contaminated seafood, exacerbates climate change, and endangers the livelihoods of fishermen and coastal communities. To combat solid waste pollution, the official said several mitigation measures have been taken by the ministry such as installing nets on storm-water drains (nullahs), fencing rivers, and deploying systems to remove floating trash from the harbor.—APP

## Pakistan not ready for any water crisis: Sherry

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson of Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change, Senator Sherry Rehman, convened the committee meeting on Wednesday to address the alarming scale of climate-induced disasters and Pakistan's growing vulnerability to extreme weather events. The committee took serious note of the monsoon devastation, outdated disaster response infrastructure, and rapid groundwater depletion that is exacerbating the country's water crisis, said a press release. Senator Rehman underscored that from June 26 to July 22, Pakistan has already lost 242 lives, while 598 people have been injured due to heavy monsoon rains. "Just in the past 24 hours, 21 people have died, and 6 were injured. This is not a one-off tragedy—this is climate change in motion, and Pakistan is ranked number one in climate vulnerability," she stated. She condemned the unplanned construction on natural waterways, citing

Saidpur Village and DHA Rawalpindi as examples where negligence led to lives lost and infrastructure destroyed. "We cannot call this a natural disaster anymore. That absolves us of responsibility. These are human-induced disasters fueled by poor planning and inaction in the face of climate change," she remarked. Senator Rehman noted that search operations are still underway for a father and daughter swept away in DHA Rawalpindi. She stressed that tourist activity must be restricted in Gilgit-Baltistan, where emergency conditions continue. Sherry Rehman noted that no ministry could provide a map of Pakistan's groundwater extraction on any scale. Groundwater extraction and water scarcity were on the agenda of the Senate Standing Committee for Climate Change. The Water Resource Ministry was also struggling with answers on surface water consumption per capita, as well as how many tube wells we have working in the country for agriculture,

and how many are recharging. No ability to map the scale of usage for irrigation or normal consumption. She noted, "For a country that has been declared water scarce by the U.N. this year, no evidence of harvesting water in PSDP or other planning, especially while we go through a torrential monsoon. It was a totally fragmented and inadequate response." Senator Rehman further pointed out that Pakistan lacks a modern early warning system, despite the UN Secretary-General's repeated calls to treat early warning as a basic human right. "We are still using a 1912 model to issue warnings. Meanwhile, the rest of the world is using real-time, AI-enabled systems," she said. Officials requested that the Senate Committee issue directions to the provinces to strengthen their early warning efforts, to which Senator Rehman assured full cooperation, stating that directives would be issued to both provincial and district administrations.—APP

## AIOU holds 'Career Fair 2025' to highlight student innovation

ISLAMABAD: "Pakistan has a bright future in the field of technology, and if student-led projects are commercialised, they can unlock significant business opportunities for the country," said Professor. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, Vice Chancellor, Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU). He was speaking at the inauguration of the "Open House Career Fair 2025," held at the university on Wednesday, said a press release. Dr Nasir lauded the creativity and technical skills displayed by final-year Computer Science students and emphasised that such initiatives not only showcase academic talent but also prepare students to meet the demands of professional life. "AIOU is committed to blending academic education with practical training, and this is reflected in the rapid progress of the Department of Computer Science," he added. The event featured a wide range of student projects, attracting industry professionals, sponsors, and academics. A research corner was also set up to highlight research-based student initiatives. Dean of the Faculty of Sciences, Professor. Dr. Sher Muhammad, noted that bringing students, industry partners, and sponsors together under one roof fosters meaningful engagement and opens new employment avenues. He stressed the need for students to not only graduate but also thrive in economic, scientific, and technological fields. Chairman, Computer Science Depart.—DNA

## NSU two faculty members complete STEM Programme

ISLAMABAD: The National Skills University (NSU) Islamabad, already on the international map as a UNESCO-UNEVOC Centre and European Training Foundation Centre of Vocational Excellence, has once again demonstrated its global academic reach. Two of its female faculty members have completed the prestigious STEM Faculty Development Programme at King's College London. This milestone underscores NSU's rapidly rising profile in global skills-based education. This achievement stems from the broader Pak-UK Education Gateway Project, a collaborative initiative supported by the British Council and Pakistan's National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE/HEC).

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## Briefs

**Pakistani students marvel at Xinjiang's cultural harmony**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Dressed in her traditional Balochi attire, Aidah stood out as a vibrant symbol of cultural exchange during the recent "Discover SCO - Explore Magnificent Xinjiang" learning expedition held recently. The event brought together 100 international students from 35 countries representing nearly 50 Chinese universities, including a vibrant contingent from Pakistan, to explore China's culturally rich northwest, Gwadar Pro reported on Wednesday. "I'm completely overwhelmed by Xinjiang's beauty!" the Ocean University of China student exclaimed. "The multicultural harmony here is breathtaking – the colorful traditional costumes, the rich cultural diversity, the mouthwatering cuisine and stunning landscapes have created memories I'll cherish forever." During a visit to the 2,000-year-old ruins of the Jiaohe City in Turpan-a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the world's largest, oldest and best-preserved earthen architectural complex, Aidah reflected on the profound history surrounding her. "These ancient walls tell stories of peaceful coexistence that no textbook could capture," she said. "Seeing Uyghur, Han, Kazakh, and other communities thriving together in Xinjiang has completely reshaped my understanding of multicultural societies.—APP

**Mandatory CSR bill threatens fragile business climate**

ISLAMABAD: President of the Pakistan Business Network, Omar Butt, has voiced strong opposition to the proposed Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Bill 2025, warning that it could impose unjustified financial burdens on Pakistan's already struggling business sector.

The bill aims to require corporations with an annual turnover exceeding Rs 1 billion to allocate at least 1% of their net profits to community welfare and development projects. While the intent is to institutionalize CSR, Butt argues that the approach is flawed and risks undermining business viability. "CSR should be encouraged, not enforced through legislation," Omar Butt said while speaking to the business community. Pakistan's corporate sector is already grappling with high energy costs, erratic taxation, and policy instability. Adding another mandatory financial obligation will only discourage investment and growth, he warned. The business leader criticized the bill for ignoring the diversity of business models and profit margins across industries. Not all companies operate with surplus profits. Forcing a uniform CSR quota disregards economic realities and penalizes responsible businesses that already contribute voluntarily.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting to review progress on FBR reforms.

# Dam spillways reopened as rain raises water level

According to the spokesperson of the ICT administration, heavy and uninterrupted rainfall in Islamabad pushed the water level in Rawal Dam to 1,749 feet, slightly above its prescribed limit. After reviewing the situation, the administration decided to reopen the dam's spillways to control the excess water

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The district administration of Islamabad decided to reopen the dam's spillways on Wednesday to manage the rising water, as Rawal Dam's water level crossed the safety threshold following continuous rainfall. According to the spokesperson of the ICT administration, heavy and uninterrupted rainfall in Islamabad pushed the water level in Rawal Dam to 1,749 feet, slightly above its prescribed limit. After review-

ing the situation, the administration decided to reopen the dam's spillways to control the excess water. Official sources confirmed that the spillways were opened at 11 a.m. today. The step aims to ensure safe water discharge and prevent any overflow that could impact surrounding areas. The district administration has also directed all relevant departments to implement precautionary measures. Authorities have been instructed to remain alert and follow standard procedures during the water release. Residents liv-

ing in nearby areas have also been advised to stay cautious. The administration urged people in low-lying and adjoining localities to remain informed and take necessary safety steps. There have been several instances in recent days when the spillways were opened due to rising water levels. With forecasts predicting more rain, officials say the situation is being closely monitored.

All concerned departments, including the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) adminis-

tration, Rescue 1122, and the Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA), remain on high alert. Rescue and emergency teams have been placed on standby to handle any emergency. Meanwhile, the public has been asked to avoid unnecessary movement near the spillway and dam areas during the water release operation. Officials reiterated that the measure is a routine response to prevent flooding and ensure the safety of infrastructure and nearby communities. Continuous rain

in Islamabad over the past few days has led to waterlogging in various parts of the city. Drainage teams have been deployed to clear blocked water channels, and field staff are inspecting low-lying zones. Authorities have urged citizens to report any emergencies via the helplines established by the district administration. The administration stated that it will issue further updates if the situation changes and has appealed for public cooperation during this period.

## Resolution of Kashmir dispute indispensable

MAHOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: At a discussion hosted by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), Amb Jauhar Saleem, the President of IRS, emphasized the critical importance of addressing ongoing regional political disputes in light of emerging and potentially destructive technologies. He cautioned that mismanaged regional disputes, especially Kashmir, combined with increased military technology, could escalate conflicts to catastrophic levels. He stressed the urgency of taking action now to prevent such a scenario. Amb. Saleem praised Pakistan for its timely and effective response during the recent conflict with India, despite a significant disparity in defense budgets. Dr. Naeem Salik, Executive Director of the Strategic

Vision Institute (SVI), emphasized the impact of evolving technologies on non-contact warfare between India and Pakistan. He stated that future conflicts would likely be brief, characterized by standoff weapon exchanges, which would challenge traditional nuclear deterrence and strategic stability concepts. An arms race is expected, driven by both conventional weapons and new technology acquisition methods. Consequently, the risk of accidental escalation is high, necessitating a focus on developing counter-drone weapons for effective warfare. Dr. Salik urged Pakistan to invest heavily in modern technologies to compete with advanced countries in this complex future.

Dr. Adil Sultan, Dean of Faculty of Aerospace and Strategic Studies at Air University, highlighted the potential for

advanced technologies to make conventional wars in the unresolved Jammu and Kashmir dispute more devastating and fundamentally different. He added that the imbalance in South Asia is growing due to India's access to the modern and sophisticated technologies from around the world. He believed that the recent conflict unequivocally demonstrated China's leading position in sophisticated technologies and its role as a key defensive support for Pakistan. "The conflict proved that despite India's huge resources it failed in achieving its military objectives. Pakistan's befitting response, termed as the quid pro quo plus, changed the entire geostrategic scenario, the ramifications of which are still being felt", he emphasized.

In his presentation, he highlighted the importance of

institutional focus on rapidly advancing technologies like quantum computing, AI, cyberspace, and integrated drones, which are crucial for enhancing the efficiency and decision-making capabilities of future military systems. While discussing the challenges of these emerging advanced technologies, Dr. Sultan stressed on their disruptive nature as well especially in the hands of non-state actors and adversary's exploitive grasp once artificial intelligence and cyber syndicates, leading towards minimum human involvement in future wars. "The incorporating of cyber quantum technology into defensive capabilities transforms the second-strike concept, he said adding that, Pakistan should invest in commercially available drones to achieve future military expertise.

## FTA essential to boost bilateral trade between Pakistan and UK: Aman Pracha

ISLAMABAD: The Vice President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Muhammad Aman Pracha, has emphasized the need for implementing key developments aimed at strengthening bilateral trade relations between Pakistan and the United Kingdom. He stated that a trade agreement has been reached between Pakistan and the UK, which seeks to enhance economic cooperation and reduce trade barriers.

Under this agreement, there is a need to establish joint working groups and conduct regular review meetings, focusing on cooperation in areas such as digital trade, renewable energy, agriculture, and pharmaceuticals. However, in order to truly boost bilateral trade, a formal Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is essential, Pracha stressed. He further noted that a "Trade Dialogue Mechanism Agreement" has also been signed between the two countries, aimed at reinforcing bilateral economic cooperation, exploring trade opportunities, removing barriers, and promoting mutual investment. Pakistan can also benefit from the UK's Developing Countries Trading Scheme (DCTS), which will help boost exports in sectors like IT, agricultural technology, and pharmaceuticals. Pracha highlighted the need to engage the Pakistani diaspora in the UK to promote trade between the two countries. He pointed out that the current trade volume between Pakistan and the UK stands at around £4.7 billion, and that non-tariff barriers affecting this trade must be addressed. He acknowledged that while negotiating an FTA requires significant resources and time, such an agreement would align with the economic priorities of both nations. At present, no bilateral FTA exists between Pakistan and the UK, but authorities on both sides are working realistically towards laying the groundwork for a possible future agreement. Pracha also emphasized that Pakistan's technology and digital services sector is the most dynamic segment of its economy, and the UK is interested in having more Pakistani tech companies use the UK as a platform to access European and global markets. British development finance institutions are playing a key role in this effort, helping promote digital infrastructure and financial inclusion in Pakistan. Meanwhile, UK Export Finance is supporting Pakistani companies looking to expand exports or partner with British firms. He urged the Pakistani government to pay special attention to this opportunity.—DNA

## ANF recovers over 738 kg drugs

ISLAMABAD: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 11 operations across the country managed to recover over 738 kg drugs worth more than over Rs 253 million and arrested 12 drug traffickers during two days. According to an ANF Headquarters spokesperson, in an operation at Allama Iqbal International Airport, cargo shed, 300 grams opium was recovered from a parcel booked for Canada. In second operation at Faisal Bus Terminal near Islamabad, 2.5 kgs heroin, 2.4 kgs hashish, & 1 kg ice were recovered from the possession of three suspects. ANF recovered 56 kgs hashish from a vehicle checked near University Road, Peshawar, and a drug trafficker was arrested. In 4th operation near Garh Mor Road, Muzaffargarh, 7 kgs ice was recovered from two suspects, traveling in a truck while in an operation near DG Khan Road in Loralai, 168 kgs heroin hidden for smuggling was recovered. In an operation against drug traffickers near Toll Plaza Road, Mansehra, 18 kgs hashish was recovered from a vehicle and a drug smuggler was rounded up. The spokesperson informed that in an operation, 2 kgs hashish and 7 kgs suspicious material were recovered from a parcel sent to Karachi at a Cargo Office in Rawalpindi. Near RCD Road, Hub, 24 kgs hashish was recovered from a vehicle and two accused arrested while in an operation near RCD Road, Hub, 64.8 kgs hashish was recovered from the secret cavities of a vehicle. ANF also arrested an accused during the operation.—APP

## Action against overpriced sugar sellers in ICT

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad district administration on Wednesday launched a crackdown on retailers charging above the official sugar price and several shops have been sealed and shopkeepers arrested as part of the ongoing operation led by price control magistrates. According to the spokesman of ICT administration, in response to rising complaints about overpriced sugar in markets, the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration has intensified its action against profiteers. Acting on the directives of Deputy Commissioner Irfan Nawaz Memon, price control magistrates carried out surprise inspections in various parts of the city. Several grocery stores were found selling sugar at rates higher than those set by the government. As a result, multiple shops were sealed, and one shopkeepers were taken into custody for violating official

price guidelines. Deputy Commissioner Irfan Memon has directed that action must be taken without discrimination against all retailers who fail to comply with the notified sugar rates. He instructed officials to ensure that no store is allowed to overcharge, and strict penalties should be imposed where violations are found. The crackdown aims to ensure price stability and protect citizens from unjustified increases in daily-use commodities. Memon emphasized that any officer found negligent in enforcing the official sugar rate in their assigned area would also face disciplinary action. "Strict enforcement is necessary. If sugar is being sold at inflated prices in any locality, the concerned area officer will be held accountable," he stated during a meeting with monitoring teams. The district administration has also urged the public to

support the effort by reporting shops that are charging more than the official rate. "We request citizens to help us identify those selling sugar at inflated prices. Their cooperation is important to keep prices under control," the DC said. To improve monitoring, the Additional Deputy Commissioner General has been tasked with submitting detailed reports on price compliance across all zones of Islamabad. The goal is to maintain transparency in market operations and address pricing irregularities quickly. Teams of price control magistrates will continue inspections in both urban and rural sectors, including busy commercial areas and small neighborhoods. They have been told to check not only sugar prices but also other essential items listed under government-fixed rates.—APP

**Pakistan's seafood exports to China surge in H1 2025**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's seafood exports to the Chinese market showed significant growth in the first six months of 2025, with several categories experiencing a sharp increase in demand, according to data from the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC). A major contributor to this trend was frozen fish (HS Code 03038990), with exports from H1 2025 valued at \$27.51 million, a 26% increase from the \$21.88 million recorded during the same period last year. Pakistan shipped 15.47 million kilograms of this product, at an average price of \$1.77 per kilogram. Other seafood categories also performed strongly during this period, sources from Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce told Gwadar Pro.

Frozen cuttlefish exports reached \$14.31 million from 5.76 million kilograms shipped. Chilled crab exports grew by 12% to \$12.85 million. Frozen octopus exports saw a remarkable 63% rise, reaching \$9.018 million compared to \$5.53 million in the previous year. Notably, Frozen sardines, sardinella, and brisling category experienced a 340% surge in value, with exports totaling \$7.49 million, up from \$1.70 million last year. The export volume was 12.39 million kilograms, making Pakistan the top supplier of this category to China.

**Wajiha Qamar meets WFP country director**

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training, Ms. Wajiha Qamar met here on Wednesday, with Ms. Coco Ushiyama, Country Director of the World Food Programme (WFP) Pakistan, to strengthen collaboration in school nutrition, early childhood development, and parenting support across the country. Ms. Qamar expressed appreciation for WFP's continued support in improving children's health and educational access, particularly through its school meals programme in food-insecure districts, said a press release. She highlighted the Ministry's growing focus on holistic child development, including the rollout of parenting manuals AGHOSH and PARVARISH, which aim to equip caregivers with knowledge on nutrition, emotional care, and school readiness. "We recognize that a hungry child cannot learn," said Ms. Qamar. "Our goal is to build stronger foundations for learning by integrating nutrition and parenting awareness into Pakistan's education system, especially in the early years." Ms. Coco Ushiyama commended the Ministry's leadership in placing child well-being at the center of education policy. She reaffirmed WFP's commitment to supporting Pakistan's national priorities through joint programmes that link food security with education, gender equity, and community resilience. The two sides discussed opportunities to scale up school meal programmes, integrate parenting education into nutrition interventions, and explore targeted initiatives in remote.—APP

JULY 2025

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Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 06 Issue: 68

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## Justice or political targeting?

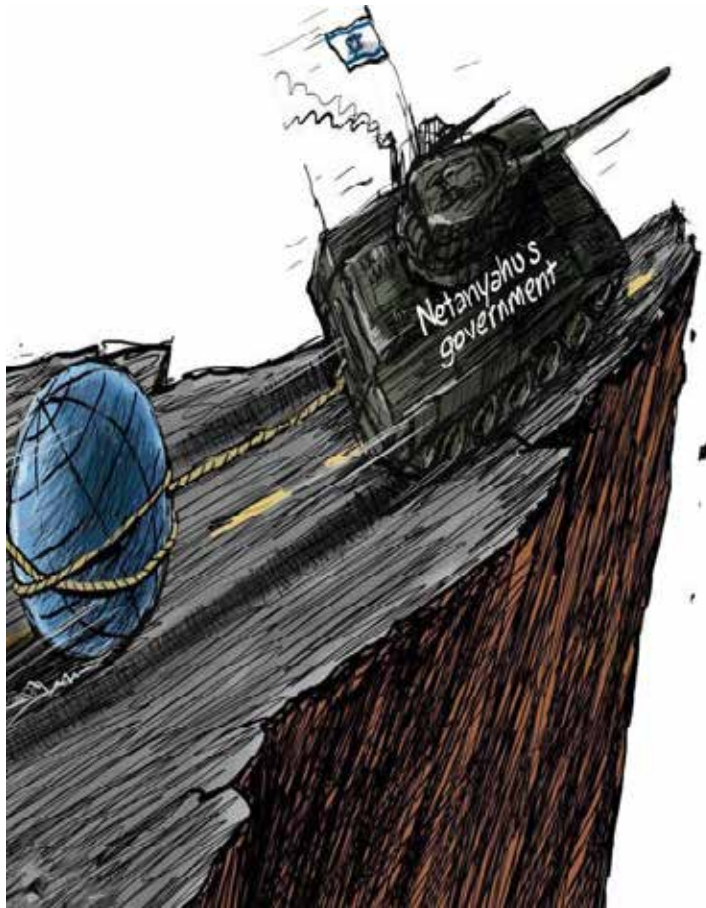
**I**N a development that has sent shockwaves through Pakistan's political landscape, several senior leaders of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), including the Leader of the Opposition in the Punjab Assembly, have been sentenced to ten years in prison in connection with the May 9 incident. While there can be no disagreement that those who break the law must be held accountable, the line between justice and political persecution is growing increasingly blurred.

There is no doubt that the events of May 9, 2023, were deeply troubling. Acts of vandalism, arson, and attacks on military installations are unacceptable in any democratic state. Those found guilty through a transparent judicial process must face consequences. However, what is equally important is that justice must not only be done but must be seen to be done – and that includes ensuring due process and avoiding the appearance of selective or politically motivated trials.

In the current case, the optics are difficult to ignore. With nearly all top PTI leaders now behind bars or facing long-term disqualification, one cannot help but question whether the true goal is justice or political annihilation. The Punjab government's role in this is especially concerning. Rather than demonstrating political maturity and engaging with its opponents, it appears to be pursuing a scorched-earth strategy – one that aims to clear the field of any viable opposition. This is not how democracies function. The elimination of political rivals through the courts – even under the veneer of legality – is a dangerous precedent. Today, the government may believe it is securing stability or clearing space for unchallenged governance, but tomorrow, the same instruments of state power could be used against them. Political vendettas dressed up as accountability are a game no one wins in the long term. More importantly, the marginalization of a major political force like PTI, which still commands a substantial support base across the country, weakens the democratic fabric of the state. A healthy democracy thrives on competition, dialogue, and the ability of all political actors to participate freely and fairly. By sidelining opponents through legal overreach or administrative muscle, the state risks fostering resentment, polarization, and long-term instability.

Pakistan's fragile democracy does not need another era of political engineering. It needs inclusivity, a commitment to constitutionalism, and an end to the cycle of winner-takes-all politics. The courts must ensure that justice is blind – not selective. And the government must remember that a strong democracy is built not by eliminating dissent, but by engaging with it.

If Pakistan is to move forward, it must resist the temptation to use accountability as a political weapon. Law must take its course, yes – but it must do so in a way that commands public confidence and upholds democratic norms. Anything less would be a disservice to both justice and democracy.



## Businessmen reject federal budget: FBR powers draw fire

**T**HE business community has strongly rejected the federal budget for the fiscal year 2025–26, particularly objecting to the controversial proposal granting arrest powers to Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) officials. Terming the move “draconian,” several trade and industry bodies have warned the government of a nationwide strike if the provision is not immediately withdrawn. This backlash is not surprising. At a time when businesses are already reeling under inflation, high energy costs, and economic uncertainty, this additional threat of arbitrary arrest has only deepened their sense of insecurity and alienation. Business leaders argue—rightfully—that the move will further erode confidence and deter investment. The FBR, they say, already has a reputation for harassment and overreach. Giving its officials unchecked authority to arrest businessmen without due process could open the floodgates for abuse, vendettas, and corruption. While the intent behind the move may be to tighten the noose around habitual tax evaders, in practice, it may end up targeting genuine taxpayers—those who are already contributing to the national exchequer and struggling to stay afloat.

The reality is that Pakistan's tax base is narrow not because of a lack of legislation, but because of inconsistent implementation and selective accountability. There is no doubt that tax evasion is a serious problem. It has long plagued the country, depriving the national treasury of critical revenues needed for infrastructure, health, and education. But blanket punitive measures against the entire business class are not the solution. They risk alienating key economic players who are vital to job creation and growth. Reports indicate that the government is reconsidering this proposal after severe backlash, which is a step in the right direction. However, a mere rollback is not enough. There must be a clear and transparent mechanism to distinguish between habitual tax dodgers and compliant taxpayers. Technology, data analytics, and third-party audits can play a vital role in achieving this without infringing on individual rights or disrupting economic activity. Moreover, the FBR itself needs institutional reform. Without improving internal accountability, training, and efficiency, no legislative change will yield long-term results. Trust between the tax authorities and the business community is essential—and that can only be built through transparency, fairness, and dialogue, not intimidation. Ultimately, while tax reform is crucial for Pakistan's financial future, it must be pursued with wisdom and balance. Policies that scare away business will only deepen the economic crisis. The government must adopt a consultative approach, address genuine concerns, and ensure that any anti-evasion measures are implemented with justice and due process. A thriving business community and an efficient, accountable tax system are not mutually exclusive—they are two sides of the same coin.

# Replacing India with China in SAARC: A Strategic Masterstroke

Qamar Bashir



China's inclusion brings with it unmatched potential for infrastructure development, trade expansion, digital connectivity, and strategic outreach. Having already committed over \$62 billion to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and more than \$1 trillion across its global Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China's proven commitment to long-term infrastructure and investment is unparalleled. If this new bloc materializes, it could witness infrastructure investments exceeding \$250 to \$300 billion by 2035. These would span across rail and road networks connecting Gwadar to Kabul

FOR decades, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was envisioned as a platform for unity, prosperity, and regional integration among the diverse and populous nations of South Asia. With over two billion people and a wealth of natural and human resources, the SAARC region held tremendous promise. Yet despite this potential, SAARC has remained paralyzed—reduced to ceremonial meetings, unfulfilled resolutions, and a legacy of frustration. The principal reason for its failure has been the hegemonic posture and political intransigence of India, which consistently prioritized its own bilateral disputes over collective regional interests. Whenever India had tensions with Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, or Sri Lanka, it weaponized its influence within SAARC to paralyze the forum, suffocating any genuine attempt at regional cooperation.

Now, a new door has opened, and through it lies the opportunity for a historic transformation. Pakistan and China are reportedly working toward creating a new regional bloc that excludes India—the very actor that has repeatedly blocked progress—and instead includes willing and cooperative regional players. The envisioned alliance includes Pakistan, China, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, and potentially Iran. By replacing India with China, this restructured bloc is poised to deliver what SAARC never could: unity, stability, and development rooted in mutual respect and economic advancement. It is a masterstroke in regional diplomacy, one that offers South Asia a second chance at integration—this time with an engine powerful enough to carry the weight of transformation.

China's inclusion brings with it unmatched potential for infrastructure development, trade expansion, digital connectivity, and strategic outreach. Having already committed over \$62 billion to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and more than \$1 trillion across its global Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China's proven commitment to long-term infrastructure and investment is unparalleled. If this new bloc materializes, it could witness infrastructure investments exceeding \$250 to \$300 billion by 2035. These would span across rail and road networks connecting Gwadar to Kabul, Chabahar to Dhaka, and Kathmandu to Colombo. High-speed rail corridors, smart ports, integrated energy grids, and region-wide highway systems could form the physical backbone of this new South Asian alliance.

Trade, long crippled under SAARC due to political interference, has a chance to flourish. Intra-SAARC trade has languished at a pitiful 5% of total regional trade, while ASEAN boasts over 25% and the EU surpasses 60%. With India out and China in, intra-regional trade

in South Asia could rise to 20% by 2030, translating into over \$250 billion in trade volume, compared to \$67 billion today. China's economic ties with Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal are already strong, and its access to Pakistan's warm-water ports offers landlocked Central Asian and South Asian countries a direct outlet to global markets. The potential for growth in textiles, agri-processing, electronics, construction materials, and green technologies is immense, laying the foundation for self-sustaining regional value chains.

Foreign direct investment is also expected to surge. China, the world's second-largest source of outbound FDI, invested over \$136 billion globally in 2023. In the current SAARC bloc, most Chinese FDI is confined to Pakistan. But a restructured bloc with China at the center could see FDI flows jump from the current \$10 billion to over \$100 billion by 2035. These funds would likely target special economic zones, digital infrastructure, energy projects, manufacturing clusters, and agricultural modernization—unlocking employment and industrialization at a scale the region has never witnessed before. The digital revolution would also accelerate. China's Digital Silk Road offers undersea cables, fiber optics, cloud computing, AI platforms, and next-gen telecom. Expansion of this model to the region could deliver high-speed internet to over 400 million currently underserved users, transforming education, healthcare, banking, and governance. Regional cloud computing systems, digital currency interoperability, and fintech solutions would enable real-time trade, financial inclusion, and cyber-resilience. China's BeiDou satellite navigation system could replace the region's dependence on U.S. GPS, empowering the bloc with sovereign control over aviation, logistics, and defense mapping—an essential step in building technological independence.

Strategically, the inclusion of Afghanistan is a geopolitical pivot. Afghanistan connects the bloc to Central Asia and, through China and Pakistan, to Iran and the Middle East. With Iran's Chabahar Port and Pakistan's Gwadar Port acting as twin maritime gateways, and with China constructing transit and trade corridors through the region, this alliance becomes a global artery of commerce. Central Asian energy and minerals could flow southward to the Arabian Sea, while South Asian goods find shorter, cheaper routes to Europe and Africa. Transportation costs across the region could fall by 30–50%, according to the Asian Development Bank, directly improving the competitiveness of exports and reducing the price of imports. The human impact is equally transformative. With China's support, the region could lift over 300 million

people out of poverty by 2040 through job creation, industrial expansion, and rural upliftment. Unemployment across Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan could decline by 15 to 20%, and access to clean water, electricity, healthcare, and digital literacy would expand exponentially. China's model of non-interference—unlike Western or Indian models—ensures that sovereignty remains intact. Beijing does not fund regime change, nor does it meddle in domestic politics. It delivers roads, power plants, ports, and platforms—not political ultimatums. It respects its partners and uplifts their capacity.

India's exclusion is not an act of retaliation but of necessity. Its leadership has repeatedly failed to grasp the essence of regional cooperation. New Delhi's rigid nationalism, refusal to separate bilateral issues from multilateral platforms, and its track record of stalling progress made SAARC unworkable. Its foreign policy has alienated neighbors and irritated allies. Even its Western backers are increasingly wary of India's refusal to align on key global issues, such as sanctions on Russia or trade cooperation. India sees itself as a regional giant, but in practice it has been a disruptive force in South Asian diplomacy. This realignment offers South Asia a future where roads replace borders, where fiber optics replace fences, and where mutual progress replaces mutual suspicion. It envisions a regional community where ports connect producers to consumers, where satellites link students to teachers, and where dignity replaces desperation. The potential is no longer theoretical. It is tangible, measurable, and achievable—if the political will aligns with regional ambition.

South Asia has waited long enough. While other regions moved forward, we remained frozen in a structure designed to fail. But with China's entry and India's exclusion, we now have the opportunity to design a platform that works—for people, for peace, and for prosperity. It is not merely about replacing a nation with another. It is about replacing a mindset of dominance with one of partnership. It is about building a future that no longer depends on the whims of one capital but is driven by the shared dreams of a billion people.

If the vision is pursued with clarity and courage, this new South Asian bloc—backed by China's resources and guided by mutual interest—will not only transform the region. It will set a global example of how fractured regions can reinvent themselves, not through confrontation, but through cooperation.

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

# Infanticide at the heart of Gaza genocide

Osama Al-Sharif

Israel is already facing genocide charges at the International Court of Justice. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his former defense minister are wanted by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity. But the list of charges should not stop there. Israel is in clear and direct violation of a handful of international legal instruments that protect children in armed conflicts. These include the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which establishes fundamental protections for civilians, including children, during times of war

**W**ITH tens of Palestinian infants and children dying daily as a result of starvation – a direct outcome of a deliberate Israeli policy of denying more than 2 million Gazans unfettered access to food, water, baby formula, fuel and medication since March – the war on Gaza is entering its final stage: extermination or depopulation. The images of starving children are harrowing, but the world's inability to stop this human-made catastrophe is staggering and shameful. This multifarious tragedy is not the result of a natural disaster, but a war crime, a crime against humanity and a form of genocide that is a sanctioned Israeli government policy. It is indefensible. The extermination of Gazans, whether by constant Israeli bombardment of homes, schools, hospitals, places of worship, shelters and tent camps or through other means, is now normalized. The Israeli blockade is a matter of fact. The killing of more than 20,000 children since Oct. 7, 2023, is a mere statistic. More than 70,000 children under the age of five are at risk of acute malnutrition within the year if the blockade and conflict persist, according to the UN. Approximately 17,000 children are reported to be struggling with severe malnutrition amid medical shortages due to this engineered humanitarian crisis. Healthcare workers report that mothers are unable to breastfeed due to their malnutrition, forcing them to resort to unsafe feeding methods. Press reports speak of elderly Gazans dropping in the streets or at Israeli-run aid distribution centers, which have become death traps, claiming the lives of more than 1,000 people in the past two months. Children have become an easy target at these centers, which are staffed by American and Israeli contractors. Western doctors who have served at the few remaining health centers and hospitals in Gaza speak of children sustaining bullet wounds in the head, torso, neck and legs.

With UN aid agencies declaring that their storage facilities are now empty across the beleaguered Strip, the number of children dying as a result of starvation will only increase daily. But we are yet to see a serious move on behalf of the UN Security Council, the Trump administration, the EU or the UK to order Israel to stop the carnage and open the borders so that aid can flow into Gaza. Monday's statement by the UK, France and more than 20 other countries will do nothing unless it is backed by action.

Israel is already facing genocide charges at the International Court of Justice. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his former defense minister are wanted by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity. But the list of charges should not stop there. Israel is in clear and direct violation of a handful of international legal instruments that protect children in armed conflicts. These include the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which establishes fundamental protections for civilians, including children, during times of war. Israel is also in violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989, which is the world's most widely ratified human rights treaty. The UNSC has adopted several resolutions on this issue, particularly 1612 of 2005, which established monitoring and reporting mechanisms for grave violations against children in armed conflict. Israel's use of collective punishment against Palestinians is not new. It has resorted to such criminal acts in the past, both in Gaza and the West Bank. As of this month, Israeli forces have killed at least 204 Palestinian children in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, since Oct. 7, 2023, accounting for about 20 percent of all child fatalities in the West Bank since the year 2000. Despite growing condemnation by UN agencies and human rights organizations of Israel's weaponization

of food and its use of starvation as a state policy, there are no signs that Israel is about to roll back its policy. It is not coming under enough pressure from Western governments, especially the US, to end its illegal blockade and let aid into Gaza. It is doubling down by expanding the areas under its military control, while doing nothing to address the spreading famine and deliberate starvation. It is moving ahead with the forced transfer of millions to Rafah, where it plans to build a concentration camp ahead of pushing Gazans to leave the Strip. On average, it is killing between 80 and 120 people daily, with the majority shot dead at food distribution centers under its control.

Israel's sense of impunity is on the rise, even when its military declares that displacing people by force is a war crime. It does not have to defend itself when images of starving children in Gaza go viral on social media. That task is handed to US lawmakers and the White House, which waste no time in imposing sanctions on international courts and UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese for opposing the ongoing genocide. While ceasefire talks in Doha are going nowhere, Netanyahu is using the stalemate to drive Gazans to the brink, to carry out their mass displacement. Even if a temporary truce is reached, there are no guarantees that Netanyahu will not resume the war, under false pretenses, to realize that final goal. There are two key considerations to take into account. One, the rebuilding of Gaza – a multibillion-dollar task that will take decades to achieve – is unlikely to happen. If and when the war does stop, there will be an endemic humanitarian crisis in Gaza that will keep the world busy for years. Many children will die of disease and malnutrition. Tens of thousands of surviving children will need physical and psychological treatment for years to come. There are thousands of amputees and orphans with no surviving relatives.



## Briefs

## Pakistan hits back at India

FROM PAGE 01  
“First of all,” the Pakistani envoy asserted that India was in illegal occupation of the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir.  
“While claiming to abide by the UN Charter and purportedly the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes, India has been in violation of Security Council resolutions on the Jammu & Kashmir dispute, and has refused to implement those resolutions, thereby denying the Kashmiri people the exercise of their inalienable right to self-determination,” he added. “India’s egregious violations of human rights – which extend beyond the occupied territory of Jammu and Kashmir – and encompass its appalling treatment of minorities has been widely reported by international human rights organizations,” Ambassador Jadoon pointed out.

## Dar for inclusive dialogue

FROM PAGE 01  
Dar’s remarks came as Pakistan holds the presidency of the UN Security Council this month. He noted that Pakistan’s leadership has been guided by these very principles in both deliberations and concrete actions taken during its tenure.  
Under Pakistan’s presidency, the Security Council adopted Resolution 2788 earlier today, following a high-level open debate on the peaceful settlement of disputes, the first of three key priorities outlined by Dar. He described this core principle of the UN Charter as “too often sidelined,” and emphasized the need to bring it back to the center of the Council’s work. Dar also stressed the importance of revitalizing multilateralism, describing it not as a slogan but as a necessity. “The Security Council must be seen not only as a chamber of reaction but as a forum of prevention, problem-solving, and principled leadership,” he asserted.

## Imran Khan’s sons meet Trump aide

FROM PAGE 01  
“Firstly, they are going to America and they’re telling all their friends, ‘And we will go and tell them [US administration] about the human rights [situation] and what injustice is being done to their father [in Pakistan],’ Aleema said.  
“Secondly, Sulaiman [and] Qasim have said, ‘After that, we will come to Pakistan.’ And they want to play their part in the [protest] movement.” Following Aleema’s comments, senior government officials suggested that Khan’s sons could be arrested if they enter Pakistan and participate in the PTI protest, scheduled for later this month or the next. Responding to the development, Jemima Goldsmith – Imran’s former wife – strongly criticised the Pakistani government for threatening to deny her sons any contact with their father.

## Pakistan indebted...

FROM PAGE 01  
long way in alleviating the hardships faced by the British Pakistani community as well as enhancing people-to-people exchanges. He particularly appreciated the role of the High Commissioner in this regard. On Pakistan-U.K. relations, the Prime Minister expressed satisfaction at the positive trajectory of bilateral cooperation and said that the recently held trade talks between the two countries would lead to mutually beneficial opportunities for both sides. He said Pakistan was also cooperating closely with the U.K. at the UN Security Council, where Pakistan currently held the monthly Presidency. The regional situation in South Asia and the Middle East was also discussed. The Prime Minister expressed his appreciation for the U.K.’s role in de-escalation of tensions during the Pakistan-India stand off and reiterated that Pakistan was ready for a meaningful dialogue with India on all outstanding issues.

# FIH set to offer 2026 Pro League spot to Pakistan

## New Zealand’s withdrawal opens door for Pakistan; PHF faces uphill task amid financial woes

DNA

ISLAMABAD: : In what could potentially mark a defining moment in Pakistan’s hockey history, the country is set to receive a formal invitation to compete in the 2026 edition of the FIH Pro League, the International Hockey Federation’s premier global competition. The opportunity has arisen following New Zealand’s official withdrawal from the tournament due to financial constraints. New Zealand, winners of the 2025 FIH Nations Cup, were initially slated to participate in the 2026 Pro League. However, after missing the FIH’s July 21 deadline to confirm participation, the Kiwis formally informed the federation of their inability to manage the financial demands of the elite competition. “Yes, we have received written confirmation from Hockey New Zealand that they will not be in a position to compete in the 2026 Pro League,” a senior FIH official confirmed. “As per the structure, the next-in-line, in this case, Pakistan – the silver medalist of the 2025 Nations Cup – will be officially offered the place, along with a formal deadline to confirm their acceptance.” Pakistan’s return to the FIH Pro League, after years in the international wilderness, could mark a long-awaited comeback for a nation that once dominated world hockey. Once the proud home of multiple World Cup and Olympic titles, Pakistan has

gradually slipped from the top tier due to internal mismanagement, dwindling investment, and the rise of professionalism in other countries’ hockey setups. The FIH Pro League features top-ranked international sides battling it out in a competitive home-and-away format. Beyond prestige and exposure, participation provides vital ranking points, financial opportunities, and a more direct pathway to Olympic qualification – all of which could breathe new life into Pakistan hockey if managed correctly. However, the opportunity does not come without substantial challenges. According to sources within the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF), participation in the 2026 Pro League will require an estimated budget of Rs 600 million. The costs include international travel for multiple legs of the league, accommodation, team allowances, training camps, and hosting home matches against some of the world’s best sides. “The cost of participation is significant, but so are the potential returns in terms of player development, international visibility, and the revival of the



sport’s image in Pakistan,” said a former PHF official, speaking on condition of anonymity. “But unless the federation secures immediate and transparent financial backing, this opportunity may slip away like many others before it.” The PHF has long been under fire for its administrative inefficiencies and lack of long-term planning. Critics argue that mismanagement and factionalism within the federation have been key reasons for the decline of hockey in Pakistan. Frequent changes in leadership, delayed domestic calendars, and opaque financial dealings have alienated sponsors and government backers alike. While the current PHF leadership maintains that efforts are underway to streamline operations and restore public trust, many stakeholders remain skeptical. “Even if Pakistan is offered the Pro League spot, the question remains: Is the PHF prepared administratively and financially to take this on?” asked a senior sports journalist. In past instances, Pakistan has had to withdraw from international events, including the Pro League itself, due to lack of preparation or finan-

cial support. A repeat of such missteps in 2026 would not only damage the country’s credibility on the global stage but could also lead to sanctions from the FIH. To seize this moment, the PHF will need immediate financial backing, ideally from a combination of federal support and private sponsorship. Government funding has been irregular in recent years, while corporate sponsors remain wary of investing without structural reforms and financial transparency. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif have both voiced general support for reviving national sports, but concrete commitments for hockey have yet to materialize. Some analysts believe that a formal FIH invitation might provide the spark needed to push the government and potential sponsors into action. For Pakistan, participation in the 2026 FIH Pro League isn’t just about joining a tournament – it’s about reclaiming a lost legacy. It’s an opportunity to re-establish itself among the hockey elite, inspire a new generation of players, and restore public faith in the sport that once brought the nation global glory. But the road ahead is steep and will require decisive action, strategic planning, and above all, a transparent and competent administration. As Pakistan awaits the official invitation from the FIH, the spotlight turns to the PHF – will it rise to the occasion or fumble yet another opportunity?

## Trump announces Japan trade deal

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump announced Tuesday a “massive” trade deal with Japan, as a deadline looms for other major US trade partners to strike agreements before the end of the month. In an attempt to slash his country’s colossal trade deficit, the US president has vowed to hit dozens of countries with punitive “reciprocal” tariffs if they do not hammer out a pact with Washington by August 1. The Japan agreement, along with another pact with the Philippines also announced on Tuesday, means Trump has now secured five agreements since his administration promised in April “90 deals in 90 days.” The others were with Britain, Vietnam and Indonesia, which the White House said Tuesday would ease critical mineral export restrictions. “We just completed a massive Deal with Japan, perhaps the largest Deal ever made,” Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform. He said that under the deal, “Japan will invest, at my direction, \$550 Billion Dollars into the United States,

which will receive 90% of the Profits”. He did not provide further details on the unusual investment plan, but said it “will create Hundreds of Thousands of Jobs”. Japanese exports to the United States were already subject to a 10 percent tariff, which would have risen to 25 percent on August 1 without a deal. Duties of 25 percent on Japanese autos – an industry accounting for eight percent of Japanese jobs – were also already in place, plus 50 percent on steel and aluminum. Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba said that the autos levy had now been cut to 15 percent, sending Japanese car stocks soaring, with Toyota and Mitsubishi up around 14 percent each. The Nikkei rose 3.5 percent. “We are the first (country) in the world to reduce tariffs on automobiles and auto parts, with no limits on volume,” he told reporters. “By protecting what needs to be protected, we continued the negotiations with an aim to reach an agreement that meets the national interest of both Japan and the United States,” Ishiba added. However, Japan’s trade

envoy Ryosei Akazawa, who secured the deal on his eighth visit to Washington, said the 50 percent tariffs on steel and aluminium would remain. Akazawa also said increased defense spending by Japan – something Trump has pressed for – was not part of the agreement. Trump said Tuesday Japan has also agreed to “open their Country to Trade including Cars and Trucks, Rice and certain other Agricultural Products, and other things.” Rice imports are a sensitive issue in Japan, and Ishiba’s government – which lost its upper house majority in elections on Sunday – had previously ruled out any concessions. Japan currently imports 770,000 tonnes of rice tariff-free under its World Trade Organization commitments, and Ishiba said it would import more US grain within this. Ishiba said Wednesday that the deal does not “sacrifice” Japan’s agricultural sector. Tatsuo Yasunaga, the chair of Japan Foreign Trade Council welcomed the trade deal announcement but said the business community needed to see details to assess its impact. – Agencies

## Britain’s Norrie ousts Musetti to advance at DC Open

WASHINGTON: Britain’s Cameron Norrie rallied to defeat world number seven Lorenzo Musetti 3-6, 6-2, 6-3 on Tuesday, reaching the third round at the ATP and WTA DC Open. Norrie, seeking his sixth ATP title, captured his first victory over a top-10 player in 2 1/2 years by eliminating the second seed at the first hardcourt tuneup for the US Open. “I made it very difficult for him,” Norrie said. “My backhand was coming through the court low. My forehand was jumping. I’m just enjoying my tennis a lot more these days.” Norrie, whose most recent title was in February 2023 at Rio, snapped a 14-match losing streak against top-10 foes with a fightback after taking a time violation to reset in the fifth game of the last set. “I was sweating so much I literally had to, my sweatband was moving on my arm and my shirt was bothering me,” Norrie said. “I said whatever, I’m just going to take the time violation and reset... I think I played maybe the three best points of the match after that. “Held that game and I think that was the difference. It was a great move looking back.” Norrie said he was playing “like a kid again.” “I just kind of let go of the expectations and I’m playing tennis more to enjoy now,” he said. “You’ve got to enjoy it otherwise you can get burned out on this long schedule.” Also hoping to turn back the clock was seven-time Grand Slam singles champion Venus Williams, who will make her return to singles after a 16-month hiatus later. The 45-year-old American will face compatriot Peyton Stearns while Japan’s Naomi Osaka, a four-time Grand Slam champion, meets Yulia Putintseva of Kazakhstan in another later match. Musetti, who had a first-round bye, reached three semi-finals and a final on clay earlier this year, falling to eventual champion Carlos Alcaraz in a French Open semi-final. But he dropped his opener at Wimbledon and suffered his third loss in a row at Washington. Norrie managed only three winners in the first set, two of them on aces, but dominated the second set to force a third. Norrie saved five break points to hold in the fifth game of the final set then broke Musetti on his fourth chance in the sixth game, grabbing a 4-2 lead on an errant backhand by the Italian. Musetti fought off two match points in the final game, one on a Norrie double fault, but fell to the 29-year-old left-hander by sending a backhand beyond the baseline after two hours and seven minutes. Chinese qualifier Wu Yibing beat France’s Gael Monfils 6-3, 6-1 for his first tour-level triumph since last year at Shanghai after the Frenchman ran into a clock at the rear corner of the court in the first set, hitting it with his right ankle. “I saw him falling down there,” Wu said. I don’t know what happened but after I asked him. He said his foot actually maybe stuck under the clock. “Hopefully he’s OK. I didn’t feel any difference (in his game). He was still reaching balls and good rallies.” – Agencies

## PM Shehbaz hails FBR reforms

FROM PAGE 01  
but more dedicated efforts are required,” he said. The prime minister directed the FBR to accelerate digital transformation, restructure its digital wing with a clear roadmap, and enhance enforcement to curb the informal economy. He also stressed the importance of stakeholder consultation in the reform process, particularly with businesses, traders, and taxpayers. He reiterated that improving the tax system should contribute to boosting national revenue while reducing the tax burden on the common citizen.

## Pakistan attaches great...

FROM PAGE 01  
“Our youth are highly talented in software development, AI, and digital services. Austrian companies can benefit from outsourcing and collaboration in this space,” the President added. Ambassador Andrea Wicke expressed her gratitude to the government and people of Pakistan for their hospitality and cooperation during her tenure. She stated that her experience in Pakistan had been immensely rewarding and that she would continue to advocate for stronger Austria-Pakistan relations even after completing her assignment.

## ADB lauds Pak fiscal...

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while the outlook for FY2026 remains unchanged. The revised growth forecast in Pakistan accounted for the higher-than-expected uptick in the industry and services sector and also needed reform in the agricultural sector. According to the report, developing Asia’s outlook has worsened since the April 2025 ADO, as trade and other risks loom large. GDP growth in the region accelerated in the first quarter (Q1) of 2025, underpinned by resilient consumption and front-loading of exports as firms anticipated tariff hikes in Q2 in the United States (US).

## ATC extends remand...

FROM PAGE 01  
jirga for honour in Dagari, situated on the outskirts of the provincial capital. The incident gained attention after a video circulating on social media last week sparked outrage in Pakistan after it showed a couple being shot dead in Dagari. Sherbaz was produced before the court today following the completion of his two-day remand. During the hearing, police sought more time for further interrogation, which the court approved and handed him over to SCIW. According to post-mortem examinations, the woman was shot seven times and the man nine times. The autopsies were carried out at the Dagari coal mine graveyard.



ISLAMABAD: PM Adviser on Inter-Provincial Co-ordination, Rana Sana Ullah Khan is presiding over PSB 34th meeting in Islamabad on July 23, 2025. Federal Secretary, Mohyudin Wani, and DG Sport Board are also present on the occasion. – DNA

## Pakistan to feature in World Jr Padel C’ship

ISLAMABAD: For the first time in history, Pakistan will participate in the World Junior Padel Championship, scheduled to take place in Spain from September 29 to October 4 this year. According to Muhammad Mateen, President of the Pakistan Padel Federation, the country is gearing up for the mega event, with players from 40 countries expected to participate in the extravaganza. To select the best players for the World Championship, the Naveena Steel National Junior Padel Championship 2025 will be held from July 31 to August 3 at Maidan KMC in Karachi. The championship will feature boys and girls from across the country, competing in three age categories including Under-14, Under-16, and Under-18. The tournament will be played under the rules of the International Padel Federation (FIP) and Padel Asia. The final matches will take place on August 3, followed by a concluding ceremony where cash prizes, medals, and certificates will be awarded to the winning players. The Organizing Committee of the Naveena Steel National Junior Padel Championship 2025 will meet on July 27 to finalize all arrangements for the event. The top players from the championship will be selected to represent Pakistan in the World Junior Padel Championship in Spain. – APP

## England coach Wiegman hails reaching Euro 2025 final

GENEVA: England coach Sarina Wiegman said she felt “many emotions” after her team produced another dramatic comeback to beat Italy in extra time on Tuesday and reach the final of the Women’s Euro 2025. “I have many emotions again. I feel relief, I feel happy – it feels a bit surreal but we are here and we are going to the final,” Wiegman said following the 2-1 win in Geneva, secured thanks to a Chloe Kelly goal in the 119th minute. Italy were seconds away from a shock victory over the defending champions and a place in the final as they led deep into injury time thanks to Barbara Bonansea’s 33rd-minute goal. But substitute Michelle Agyemang equalised for England in the sixth minute of stoppage time to force the extra period, before Kelly – who had also come off the bench – followed in to score the deciding goal after her penalty had been saved, just as another shoot-out loomed. “It does feel like a movie. When it finishes like that I am enjoying it but it was a little bit dramatic,” smiled Wiegman. Her team had already produced a stunning comeback against Sweden in the quarter-finals, when they trailed 2-0 before two goals by Lucy Bronze and Agyemang in the space of three minutes late on forced extra time and they

eventually advanced on penalties. “We know with the players we have in the squad that we can always score more because we have shown that multiple times,” Wiegman added. “At the end we did it and then we got extra time, and then we got the penalty. We were a bit lucky to score it in the second stage but we are through.” England, who saw winger Lauren James come off at half-time with an ankle injury, will now go to Basel for the final on Sunday against either Spain or Germany – they meet in their last-four clash on Wednesday. It will be a third consecutive major tournament final for the Lionesses, who beat Germany in extra time in the Euro 2022 final at Wembley and then lost to Spain in the deciding game at the following year’s World Cup in Sydney. “That is what happens when a great team comes together and makes things happen – three consecutive finals playing under an unbelievable manager in Sarina,” said Kelly, the Arsenal forward who got the winner in the 2022 Euro final. “It is incredible to be part of this special team. I am so proud.” She added: “I can’t believe what has just happened. The belief in the squad, the resilience and the togetherness in this group is just so special.” – Agencies

# PSB meeting approves reforms for sports federations’ accountability

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The 34th meeting of the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) was held under the chairmanship of Prime Minister’s Adviser on Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC), Rana Sanaullah Khan. The session brought together top officials, including IPC Secretary Mohyuddin Wani, Director General PSB Mohammad Yasir Pirzada, and

Major General Irfan Arshad. Notable members such as Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed (Chairman HEC), Zargham Ishaq Khan, Aisam-ul-Haq, and Andaleeb Sandhu participated in the meeting. Two new members – Major General Irfan Arshad and Andaleeb Sandhu – were formally welcomed by the board. Rana Sanaullah emphasized the board’s responsibility in supporting smart and efficient sports federations and promoting new talent in the

country. He also assured full support from the Ministry and PSB to all federations. Key Highlights of the PSB Meeting: Hockey Federation Funding Concerns: The board expressed disappointment over the federation’s lack of transparency and accountability. FIH Pro League Participation: PSB to write an official letter outlining the objectives and benefits of participating in the international hockey league.

Mountaineering as a Sport: A sub-committee was established to consider the formal inclusion of mountaineering. Federation Registrations: Registration of Chak Ball, Paragliding & Hand Gliding, and Canoeing Federations canceled due to missing documentation. Conditional registration granted to Basketball, Archery, and Long Range Shooting Federations based on SECP incorporation. Archery Federation must

get its election results verified by PSB. Futsal Oversight: Football Federation will now oversee Futsal due to their close relation. Blind Sports Federation: The case has been sent to the Panel of Adjudicators for resolution. New Sports Funding Regulations Approved: Age limit of 70 years set for federation officials. Presidents of federations will be invited to PSB board meetings.

Establishment of Contributory Pension Fund approved to reduce financial burden. Full implementation of federal pension policies instructed. Junior Teams Age Fraud Policy: PSB praised the DG’s initiative to formulate policies to prevent age fraud in junior sports teams. This comprehensive meeting of the Pakistan Sports Board is expected to bring reforms and accountability to the country’s sports structure and federations.



## Briefs

Gold price  
ups by Rs  
3,700 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs.3,700 and was traded at Rs.364,900 on Wednesday as against its sale at Rs.361,200 the previous day, All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported. The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also increased by Rs.3,171 to Rs.312,842 from Rs.309,671 whereas that of 10 grams of 22 karat gold went up by Rs.2,917 to Rs.286,782 from Rs.283,865. However, the rates of per tola and ten gram silver increased by Rs46 and Rs.39 to Rs.4,081 and Rs.3,498 respectively. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$37 to \$3,424 from \$3,387, whereas that of silver increased by \$0.46 to \$39.34 to \$38.88, the Association reported.—APP

Rupee gains  
22 paisa  
against US  
Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Wednesday appreciated by 22 paisa against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 284.75 against the previous day's closing Rs 284.97. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 287 and Rs 288.30, respectively. The price of the Euro increased by Rs 3.22 to close at Rs334.40 against the last day's closing of Rs 331.18, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen gained 01 paisa and closed at Rs 1.94, whereas a surge of Rs 1.75 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 385.70 compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 383.95. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal came down by 06 paisa to close at Rs 77.52 and Rs 75.90, respectively.—APP

UN staff in  
Gaza now faint-  
ing from hun-  
ger, WHO work-  
er detained

UNITED NATIONS, Jul 23 (APP): Worrying alerts from United Nations staff in the Gaza Strip who have been fainting from hunger and exhaustion over the past 48 hours have increased fears for people's survival in the devastated enclave, UN humanitarian officials said Tuesday. "Doctors, nurses, journalists, humanitarians, among them UNRWA staff, are hungry...fainting due to hunger and exhaustion while performing their duties," said Juliette Touma, Director of Communications with the UN agency for Palestine refugees, UNRWA. Speaking from Amman, she stressed that seeking food "has become as deadly as the bombardments". The development comes as the UN human rights office, OHCHR, announced on Tuesday that more than 1,000 Palestinians have now been killed by the Israeli military.—APP

Dar invites investors for  
consumer base leverage

Dar stressed the critical role of the Pakistani diaspora toward realizing the trade, investment and economic ties between Pakistan and the US, the statement added

**DNA**  
ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar on Wednesday urged investors in New York to leverage Pakistan's young population and large consumer base for diverse investment opportunities, Pakistan's foreign ministry said. mPakistan has increasingly eyed foreign investment from regional allies and partners, particularly since it formed the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) in 2023, to escape a prolonged macroeconomic crisis. The SIFC aims to attract investment in key economic sectors such as minerals, IT, tourism, agriculture and livestock. Dar, who also serves as Pakistan's foreign minister, arrived in the United States on July 21 and is scheduled to lead high-level signature events at the UN headquarters till July 28. The deputy premier met a group of businessmen and investors in New York to share his perspective on Pakistan's improving economic landscape, the foreign ministry said. "He encouraged the participants



to explore diverse investment opportunities in Pakistan with a view to leveraging the large consumer base, young population, growing digital economy, and advantageous geographic positioning toward mutually rewarding outcomes," the statement said. Pakistan has a sizable population of over 240 million people, where nearly 64 percent are under the

age of 30. Islamabad has recently taken several measures to adopt digital financial assets to ensure economic growth as the world embraces new forms of currency. Dar stressed the critical role of the Pakistani diaspora toward realizing the trade, investment and economic ties between Pakistan and the US, the statement added. He informed investors about the

SIFC's streamlined processes for investors across priority sectors such as agriculture, IT, minerals, energy and tourism. "The participants expressed their commitment to fostering deeper economic collaboration and long-term investment engagement between the two countries," the ministry concluded. Pakistan considers the US an

important trade ally as it is the South Asian country's top export destination. Pakistan's exports to the US totaled \$5.44 billion in FY2024, as per official data. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's government has linked Pakistan's economic revival to an export-driven growth and partnerships based on what the premier describes as "mutually beneficial" with allies.

ICCI all set to host “Pak-  
Qatar Business Expo in Doha

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) is all set to organize two-day "Pak-Qatar Business Expo 2025" on 25th and 26th July in Doha to promote country's investment landscape and foster stronger economic relations with Qatar. This high-profile event is expected to open new vistas of economic cooperation and business partnerships, particularly in the real estate, construction, and industrial sectors, according to press release issued by ICCI here Wednesday. A 60-member delegation led by ICCI President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, comprising prominent business leaders and top marketing officials from Pakistan's leading real estate entities—including DHA Islamabad, Lahore, and Multan—will represent the country at the Expo. The visit also features several high-level sideline meetings, including scheduled interactions at the Doha Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and dignitaries at the Embassy of Pakistan in Doha. These engagements aim to build institutional linkages and lay the groundwork for future joint ventures and economic cooperation between the two brotherly nations. Nasir Mansoor Qureshi said, the initiative highlights ICCI's continued commitment to boost trade, attract foreign investment, and deepen commercial ties with the Gulf region. The Expo is being viewed as a golden opportunity for the vibrant Pakistani diaspora in Qatar to engage with homegrown business leaders and explore meaningful collaborative ventures, he added. Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, Senior Vice President ICCI—who is already in Doha overseeing the final arrangements, said the business community, especially the Pakistani entrepreneurs residing in Qatar, were eagerly looking forward to this Expo. "It is a moment of pride that ICCI and DHA have joined hands for the collective economic uplift of our country," he remarked. Vice President ICCI Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry said that the mega event was poised to be a milestone in bilateral business relations and was expected to yield tangible outcomes in terms of investment generation, trade facilitation, and economic diplomacy. Meanwhile, President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Nasir Mansoor Quraishi on Wednesday said that ICCI would organize an international level industrial exhibition in the federal capital in September. The exhibition will be significant for local industrialists, in whom 80 stalls from small and large sectors will be set up; it will prove to be a milestone for the country's economy, Nasir Mansoor Quraishi told APP here Wednesday. Replying to a question, he said that ICCI would soon establish the state-of-the-art 'Exhibition Centre' in Islamabad and declared it a milestone for the business community of the federal capital. This modern state-of-the-art exhibition centre in the federal capital would not only be of significance for the traders of Islamabad but would also be a central place for regional and international trade and industry, the President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), he said.—DNA

Audit report not reflective  
of current reforms: Power  
Division clarifies

ISLAMABAD: The Power Division on Wednesday clarified a news appeared in a section of press related to an audit report, stating that it pertains to the fiscal year 2023-24 and does not reflect the performance or actions of the present government. According to the spokesperson for the Power Division, the audit report under discussion is outdated and covers a period prior to the current administration's tenure. "This is not a report of the current financial year, and it must not be viewed in the context of the reforms and corrective measures introduced by the present government," he added. The Power Division added that the report is preliminary in nature and is subject to review, further documentation, and evidence submission. "The findings will be examined across relevant forums, and final figures are yet to be presented," it said, urging stakeholders not to draw conclusions from the initial observations. The spokesperson said that both the ministry and the government were already aware of the systemic challenges in the power sector, particularly the long-standing issue of overbilling and inaccurate meter readings. "This has been repeatedly highlighted by Minister for Power Sardar Awaiz Ahmad Khan Leghari," the spokesperson added. In response to these concerns, the Power Division said the government has launched decisive and far-reaching reforms. Among these initiatives is the introduction of the "Power Smart" app under the "Apna Meter, Apni Reading" campaign. \_DNA

Call for actionable outcomes of  
‘Socio-Economic Domain’ committee

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday chaired the fifth meeting of the Prime Minister's Committee on the Socio-Economic Domain. It brought together key stakeholders, including Secretary Planning Awaiz Manzoor Sumra, representatives from NACTA, Finance Ministers from all four provinces and Azad Jammu & Kashmir, senior officials from federal and provincial ministries, and members of provincial socio-political committees, a news release said. Member Governance Dr Adnan Rafiq presented a detailed review of the progress made by provincial governments on the committee's earlier decisions, alongside the compliance status of outcomes from the fourth meeting. Discussions centered around ensuring equitable socio-economic development in Balochistan, Newly Merged Districts (NMDs), South Punjab, and Interior Sindh. Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal emphasized that meetings of this nature should not merely serve as discussion forums; rather, they must produce actionable outcomes with a strong focus on implementation. "If we only take decisions without ensuring implementation, there will be no tangible results," he stressed. He called for a robust mechanism to evaluate performance based on implementation metrics and urged the provinces to develop and share their respective action plans and KPIs so that a consolidated report could be prepared with mutual consensus. He particularly asked Balochistan to expedite its action plan for submission to the APEX Committee. Ahsan Iqbal highlighted the need to reframe the national narrative around conflict-prone areas. "This is a fifth-generation war," the nation that produces better ideas and narratives will succeed," he stated, underlining the importance of transforming the youth mindset in Balochistan and other vulnerable districts through positive engagement, education, and skill-building. He directed that targeted interventions begin with select districts in FATA and Balochistan, focusing on youth development, entrepreneurship, alternative livelihoods, macro-level and socio-economic empowerment. Special emphasis was laid on creating inclusive opportunities and removing ethnic biases, especially within universities and hostels. "No hostels will allow allotments based on caste or ethnicity. Allotments will be mixed, and this directive must be implemented strictly," he directed. The Minister also expressed concern about the lack of engaging mechanisms for scholarship recipients. He revealed that from 2013 to 2018, scholarships were awarded to over 5,000 students in Balochistan, but there is little to no data on their current status or contributions. "The state must ensure that those it supports financially are given opportunities to contribute positively to society," he remarked. Ahsan Iqbal emphasized the importance of nurturing a culture of good citizenship from the primary level to university education and called upon the Higher Education Commission (HEC) to work in this domain. He also directed vice-chancellors across Punjab and Federal universities to take direct responsibility for mentoring students from Balochistan and the Newly Merged Districts, suggesting biweekly career counseling sessions and a structured mentorship program.—DNA

Turkiye,  
Britain sign  
preliminary  
deal for  
Eurofighter  
Typhoon jets

ANKARA: Türkiye and Britain on Wednesday signed a preliminary agreement for the sale of Eurofighter Typhoon fighter jets to Türkiye, a significant step in Ankara's efforts to modernize its air fleet. Turkish Defense Minister Yasar Guler and his British counterpart, John Healey, inked a memorandum of understanding during a defense industry fair in Istanbul, Türkiye's Ministry of National Defense said. NATO member Türkiye has long aimed to buy 40 Eurofighter jets, which are built by a consortium of British, German and Italian companies. Germany reportedly initially opposed the sale but later reversed its position. Britain led negotiations on behalf of the consortium. A Turkish defense ministry statement said the memorandum takes the two countries' "one step closer to a full agreement on the Typhoon." "Both Ministers welcome signature as a positive step toward bringing Türkiye into the Typhoon club and share a mutual ambition to conclude the necessary arrangements as soon as possible," it added. Britain's BAE Systems, which is part of the consortium, welcomed the agreement, saying it would continue working with the Turkish and British governments to finalize the procurement deal. Turkish officials have said that they are still negotiating over pricing and technical terms, saying that they have received an initial offer and expect to submit a counter-proposal.—APP

Heat wave hits  
water, electric-  
ity supplies  
across much  
of Iran

TEHRAN: A severe heat wave sweeping Iran has disrupted water and electricity supplies in much of the country, with reservoir levels falling to their lowest in a century, state media said on Tuesday. Extreme temperatures, which began on Friday, are expected to ease gradually by Thursday. Government officials in at least 15 of Iran's 31 provinces, including the capital Tehran, have been ordered to close on Wednesday in a bid to conserve water and electricity. The measure comes as temperatures in parts of southern and southwestern Iran topped 50 degrees Celsius. Government spokeswoman Fatemeh MoHajjerani said authorities would extend office closures "if it deems necessary," while warning of the "critical situation" in Tehran regarding water supplies. The heat wave has been accompanied by drought, with the capital experiencing its lowest rainfall in 60 years. Water levels in the reservoirs which supply Tehran have fallen to "their lowest level in a century," said the Tehran Provincial Water Supply Company, advising people to use a tank and pump to cope with mains disruption. Tehran provincial governor, Mohammad Sadegh Motamedian said the dams are only filled to 14 percent, adding that the capital is going through its fifth year of drought. \_APP

## Taxes on mobile devices: It's FBR, not PTA

MUHAMMAD FAROOQ



ISLAMABAD: FBR taxes and duties—commonly referred to as PTA taxes on mobile phones—have become a growing concern across Pakistan, affecting users from all walks of life. In a country with a rapidly expanding digital landscape, mobile phones are more than just devices—they are essential tools for communication, commerce, education, and daily living. With over 198 million mobile subscribers, a teledensity of 80.10%, and more than 150 million broadband users (penetration rate of 60.14%), the telecom sector continues to thrive. In this context, mobile connectivity is deeply integrated into the everyday lives

of citizens. Yet, a widespread and persistent misconception remains that the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) is responsible for the FBR taxes and duties imposed on mobile phones. This is not only inaccurate but also misdirects public frustration away from the actual authority: the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR). FBR's Role in Mobile Phone Taxes and Duties In reality, all mobile phone taxes and duties-related matters fall under the jurisdiction of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), not PTA. The organization responsible for setting and collecting all mobile device levies (taxes and duties) is the FBR, not the PTA. The FBR is the sole institution responsible for defining, imposing, and collecting taxes and duties on mobile devices in Pakistan. It has issued key regulations and various statutory notifications such as S.R.O. 50(I)/2019, S.R.O. 51(I)/2019, and Customs General Order No. 01 of 2019, along with subsequent amendments. Additionally, the FBR publishes updated duties charts based on different models and market categories, which can be accessed on the FBR website. All payments made during the

device registration process are deposited directly into FBR's account. Attributing such levies to PTA is misinformation and shifts liability away from the actual organization. PTA neither levies nor collects any taxes and duties on mobile phones; its actual role is regulatory, involving technical evaluation and support. This distinction is crucial but often overlooked, particularly in online discussions, social media posts, and even marketplace conversations, where the term "PTA tax" is casually thrown around. What is DIRBS and How Does It Work? To understand the process of mobile device registration, it is important to look at the Device Identification, Registration and Blocking System (DIRBS). Launched in 2019 under the broader framework of the Telecom Policy 2015, DIRBS ensures that all mobile devices in use meet quality and authenticity standards. It prevents the use of non-compliant, smuggled, or counterfeit devices by identifying and blocking those with lost/stolen, fake, tampered, cloned, or duplicate IMEIs. The system adheres to both GSMA international standards and PTA's type approval criteria. DIRBS is fully automated and links PTA, FBR, GSMA, mobile network op-

erators, and users into a unified digital ecosystem that enforces device compliance. Mobile users can register their phones via: • Dialing \*8484# Visiting the DIRBS web portal (https://dirbs.pta.gov.pk) Visiting any cellular mobile network franchise Once a user submits device IMEI(s) for registration, FBR, through its system WeBOC, generates a Payment Slip ID (PSID) based on the applicable taxes and duties. The user then pays this amount directly to FBR's account by visiting any commercial bank in Pakistan. It is essential to note that all payments go to FBR—not PTA. PTA does not charge even a single penny for individual registration. Upon successful payment and confirmation from the FBR, the device IMEIs are shared with Mobile Network Operators (MNOs), enabling them to operate on Pakistani mobile networks. Consumers can check their mobile device registration status by: Sending the IMEI number to 8484 via SMS Visiting the PTA website Using the DIRBS (DVS) app FBR Revenue and Overseas Pakistani Incentives Since the introduction of DIRBS in 2019, individual mobile users have paid approximately Rs. 83 billion in taxes and duties to the FBR. When commercial im-

port duties are included, the total rises significantly. To encourage overseas Pakistanis to comply with legal registration requirements, the government has introduced incentives and facilities: 10% discount on taxes/custom duties for international travelers if the device is registered within 60 days of arrival A 120-day temporary tax-free registration window for one mobile device per visit These measures provide relief and promote legal imports while discouraging black-market alternatives. Where to Seek Help? For tax-related inquiries, users are advised to contact FBR helpline: 051-111-772-772 Email: helpline@fbr.gov.pk For registration or technical issues, PTA can be contacted at: Helpline: 0800-55555 Complaint Management System, call centers, emails, and walk-in services Despite being wrongly blamed for mobile taxes and duties, PTA continues to support telecom consumers across the country. On average, 150 to 200 people visit the PTA headquarters daily for assistance with registration, IMEI compliance, or device activation issues. In 2024 alone, PTA received and resolved 199,722 DIRBS-related complaints. PTA's Broader Role:

Regulation, Industry Growth & Consumer Protection Parallel to its regulatory functions, PTA also plays a vital role in developing Pakistan's local mobile phone manufacturing industry. In 2024, over 31 million devices were produced locally. Between January and May 2025, another 12.05 million devices were manufactured. These figures signal a promising shift toward import substitution and greater economic self-reliance. PTA's contributions to the national exchequer are also significant, with: • Rs. 112.71 billion deposited in 2021–22 Rs. 99 billion in 2022–23 Rs. 54 billion in 2023–24 These revenues arise from regulatory activities such as license fees, spectrum auctions, and compliance penalties—not from mobile taxes and duties. PTA also ensures service quality across Pakistan. It conducts regular Quality of Service (QoS) surveys and issues show-cause notices, followed by fines for licensees who fail to meet their obligations. In addition, PTA plays a key role in monitoring and regulating online content under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA)—blocking access to illegal material such as hate speech, pornography,

and content harmful to children. The Need for Tax Reform To address public dissatisfaction with mobile taxes and improve compliance, policymakers may consider revising the current duties structure. Suggested reforms include: • Reducing duties on older or mid-range devices, using the GSMA TAC database • Adjusting duty slabs for high-end smartphones to encourage legal registration Such reforms would expand the legal tax net and support revenue generation without overburdening the public. While FBR mobile phone taxes and duties are a necessary source of national revenue, criticism and concerns regarding high mobile taxes should be directed to the FBR—not the PTA. The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) is a regulatory body, not a tax-collecting agency. Understanding this distinction between regulation and taxation is crucial for fair public debate, informed policy advocacy, and responsible journalism. A better-informed public can help drive smarter dialogue and policy reforms that support digital inclusion, legal imports, and a stronger digital economy in Pakistan.



## Briefs

NHA clears  
key routes  
in landslide-  
hit Baltistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In the wake of cloudburst-triggered floods and landslides in Gilgit-Baltistan, the National Highway Authority (NHA), continued its full-scale operation to restore traffic flow along multiple sections of the Karakoram Highway (KKH), which has been severely disrupted by debris and road blockages. According to the NHA spokesperson on Wednesday, acting swiftly on the directives of the Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan, teams are working round the clock, using heavy machinery to clear blocked routes. At Tatta Pani, where a landslide had recently disrupted traffic, the road has once again been cleared. The highway at this location had also been previously reopened just two days ago but was again blocked due to fresh landslides.

The vital stretch between "Loshi Bridge" to Naran, has been fully cleared and opened to traffic. Similarly, roads in Chilas Main Bazaar and Babusar Bazaar have been reopened, restoring access to local residents and travelers, he added. Traffic restoration work is also actively underway at the landslide-affected "Loshi Bridge" area. Essential materials have already started arriving at the site, and the NHA has pledged to resume traffic at the earliest possible time.

Sugar mills  
face govt  
crackdown

Some mills have halted their sales resulting in artificial shortages and price hikes

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Sugar Mills Association (PSMA), despite recently agreeing to cap the ex-mill sugar price at Rs165 per kilogramme, has failed to honor the deal – prompting a stern warning from the government after reports emerged that several mills are not only overcharging but have also halted market supply of the sweetener. Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research, Rana Tanveer Hussain, who chaired a meeting on Tuesday, slammed the sugar sector's non-compliance and vowed strict action against profiteering, hoarding, and price manipulation. "The government will not tolerate market distortion at the expense of consumers," he warned. On 14 July, the PSMA and the Ministry of National Food Security had inked the agreement to ensure ex-mill supplies at Rs165 per kg from July 15 to August 15 (for first month), then with an addition of Rs2 per kg every successive month till 15 October.

PTI MNA  
Mian Azhar  
passes away

Namaz-e-Janaza offered in Lahore; President, PM condole his death

DNA



LAHORE: Mian Muhammad Azhar, a member of the National Assembly from Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and former Punjab governor, passed away in Lahore on Tuesday after a long illness. He was the father of PTI leader Hammad Azhar and had been seriously unwell for several months. Mian Azhar held important roles throughout his long political career. He served as Punjab's governor during Nawaz Sharif's first term as prime minister in the early 1990s and later became the federal commerce minister. After the 1999 military coup, he helped form the Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q).

Pak, Bangladesh cement ties  
with accords on visa free travel

A major breakthrough was achieved as both countries agreed in principle to implement visa-free entry for holders of diplomatic and official passports, marking a pivotal step in facilitating smoother official exchanges between Pakistan and Bangladesh

DNA

DHAKA: Federal Interior Minister of Pakistan, Mohsin Naqvi, held a significant meeting with Bangladesh's Interior Minister, Lieutenant General (Retd.) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury, during his official visit to Dhaka. The Bangladeshi minister extended a warm welcome to Minister Naqvi upon his arrival at the Ministry of Interior, where he was also presented with a Guard of Honor in a formal ceremony. The discussions between the two ministers focused on enhancing bilateral relations and advancing mutual cooperation in key areas of shared interest. A major breakthrough was achieved as both countries agreed in principle to implement visa-free entry for holders of diplomatic and official passports, marking a pivotal step in facilitating smoother official exchanges between Pakistan and Bangladesh. Strengthening collaboration in security and law enforcement was a key agenda item, with both sides agreeing to intensify efforts in internal security and police training. The ministers explored opportunities for exchanging training programs between their respective



police academies to bolster professional development and operational efficiency. The meeting also emphasized joint initiatives to combat terrorism, drug trafficking, and human smuggling, underscoring the shared commitment to regional security. To further institutionalize cooperation, the two

nations decided to establish a joint committee, which will be led by Pakistan's Federal Secretary of Interior, Khurram Agha. In a gesture of deepening ties, Bangladesh announced plans to send a high-level delegation to Islamabad in the near future to review Pakistan's Safe City Project and the

National Police Academy, reflecting the growing interest in shared technological and training advancements. Expressing his gratitude for the hospitality, Bangladesh's Interior Minister stated, "I warmly welcome my brother from the depths of my heart upon his arrival in Dhaka. This visit is extremely important in strengthening Pakistan-Bangladesh relations." He also thanked Minister Naqvi for Pakistan's offer to support police training initiatives. The meeting was attended by senior officials from both sides, including Bangladesh's State Minister for Interior Khoda Bakhsh, Secretary Interior Nasim Ul Ghani, Additional Secretary Security Division Shamim Khan, and representatives from the Pakistan High Commission, including Chargé d'Affaires Muhammad Wasif and Political Counsellor Kamran Dahingal. This high-level engagement marks a milestone in fostering closer ties between Pakistan and Bangladesh, paving the way for enhanced collaboration in security, law enforcement, and diplomatic exchanges. Both nations reaffirmed their commitment to working together for regional stability and mutual prosperity.

Pakistan presses for  
global emissions cuts

DNA

BAKU: Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr Musadik Malik has called for urgent and equitable global action to tackle climate change – including deeper emission cuts and enhanced resilience financing for vulnerable nations. He made these remarks during bilateral meetings with COP-29 President and Special Envoy on Environment to the President of Azerbaijan, Mukhtar Babayev, and Azerbaijan's Deputy Foreign Minister and COP-29 Lead Negotiator, Yalchin Rafiyev. The meetings were held on the sidelines of the COP Heads of Delegation Retreat in Shamakhi. The minister stressed that while countries of the Global South face the harshest consequences of climate disasters, the Global North continues to be the primary contributor to historical and present-day greenhouse gas emissions.

Malik said that Pakistan's location next to two of the world's top carbon emitters compounds its climate vulnerability. He reiterated the need for developed countries to fulfil their climate finance commitments and lead the charge in reducing emissions. He highlighted that climate change is a transboundary challenge, with environmental degradation and extreme weather impacting populations across borders. He called for strengthened international cooperation rooted in justice, science, and sustainability. The two sides also discussed avenues for deepening green cooperation between Pakistan and Azerbaijan, including renewable energy, climate-smart agriculture, disaster risk reduction, and adaptation strategies. Malik reaffirmed Pakistan's support for multilateral climate governance and expressed hope that COP-29 would deliver meaningful progress toward inclusive and science-based global climate solutions.

Third round of  
Ukraine-Russia takes  
place in Turkey

ISTANBUL: Ukrainian and Russian officials could meet in Istanbul for a third round of peace talks, their first meeting in more than seven weeks amid US pressure to reach a ceasefire. Expectations of a breakthrough are low. The two sides previously met in May and June, but failed to agree an end to the nearly three-and-a-half year war. The Kremlin has not explicitly confirmed it will attend on Wednesday, but cautioned earlier not to expect any "miraculous breakthroughs" if it does. The two sides have wildly different positions for ending the conflict. Russia has called on Ukraine to effectively retreat from the four Ukrainian regions it claims to have annexed in September 2022, a demand Kyiv has called unacceptable.

Ukraine has ruled out any negotiations on territory until after a ceasefire and says it will never recognise Russia's claims over occupied territory – including Crimea, which Moscow annexed in 2014. Russia's full-scale invasion, launched in February 2022, has ravaged parts of eastern and southern Ukraine and resulted in tens of thousands of military and civilian deaths. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said he hoped the two sides would discuss the release of prisoners and prepare a meeting between himself and Russian leader Vladimir Putin. Moscow has said that "a lot of work" is needed before even discussions can take place about possible talks between Putin and Zelensky, who last met in 2019.

Noor Mukadam murder: Zahir Jaffer files  
review plea in SC against death sentence

Petition highlights reliance on video recording, lack of formation of medical board to assess Jaffer's mental state

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Noor Mukadam's convicted killer Zahir Jaffer on Wednesday filed a review petition in the Supreme Court against the top court's May 20 verdict which upheld his death sentence for gruesome murder of the 27-year-old at his sprawling Islamabad mansion in 2021. A three-member bench, led by Justice Hashim Kakar and comprising Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Ali Baqar Najafi had upheld Jaffer's death penalty and fine earlier this year. The apex court further reduced the sentences of



co-accused i.e., Jaffer's watchman and gardener and ruled that the punishments already served by both would suffice. The high-profile case had garnered public attention back in 2021 when Jaffer, the son of an industrialist, brutally assaulted and murdered Mukadam, the daughter of a former ambassador. The victim had made repeated attempts to escape the night she was killed, but was blocked by two members of Jaffer's household staff. The killer then resorted to torturing her with a knuckleduster and used a "sharp-edged weapon" to behead her. Mukadam had made repeated attempts to escape the night she was killed, but was blocked by two members of Jaffer's household staff. In February 2022, a district and sessions court sentenced Jaffer to death, alongside a 25-year prison term with hard labour and a fine of Rs200,000, concluding the trial that continued for over four months. Almost a year later, in March 2023, the Islamabad High Court upheld Jaffer's death sentence and upgraded his 25-year sentence to an additional death penalty, on the appeals filed against the punishment awarded to the convicts. In the review petition filed by Advocate Muhammad Usman Mirze, Jaffer has argued the prosecution's reliance on video recordings. The plea argues that the May 20 SC judgment failed to consider the fact that the recordings were not proved during the course of the trial.

Scientists  
develop  
vaccine  
to target  
all types  
of cancer

BAKU: University of Florida (UF) scientists have developed a groundbreaking mRNA vaccine capable of activating the immune system to destroy various types of tumors, offering hope for a universal cancer treatment, Kazinform News Agency reports. The experimental vaccine, which builds on a successful glioblastoma trial, uses mRNA technology similar to COVID-19 vaccines. However, instead of targeting viruses, it trains immune cells to recognize and attack tumors regardless of cancer type. "This paper describes a very unexpected and exciting observation: that even a vaccine not specific to any particular tumor or virus – so long as it is an mRNA vaccine – could lead to tumor-specific effects," said Dr. Elias Saylor, principal investigator at the UF RNA Engineering Laboratory. "This finding is a proof of concept that these vaccines potentially could be commercialized as universal cancer vaccines to sensitize the immune system against a patient's individual tumor." – APP

Afghan  
national  
arrested

MANSEHRA: Mansehra Police on Tuesday claimed to have solved the mystery behind the brutal murder of a 9-year-old boy, a guest from Karachi, whose decapitated body was recovered in the jurisdiction of Baffa Police Station. SP City Resham Jahangir, while briefing the media, confirmed the arrest of an Afghan national who has confessed to the crime. Taking prompt notice of the incident, DIG Hazara Nasir Mehmood Satti directed DPO Mansehra Shafiqullah Gandapur to ensure the arrest of the unknown suspect(s) involved in the heinous crime. Following directives, DPO Gandapur constituted a special investigative team led by SP City Resham Jahangir and SP Investigation Shiraz Khan. The team launched a thorough investigation, examining the case from multiple angles and interrogating several individuals. During the probe, police apprehended Najeebullah, son of Kazim, an Afghan resident of Achhriana Camp. – APP

Karachi couple  
welcomes  
quintuplets  
in rare birth

Couple from Baldia Town blessed with three daughters and two sons via emergency surgery

DNA

KARACHI: In a rare and high-risk case, a couple from Baldia Town, Karachi, has welcomed quintuplets, three girls and two boys, delivered prematurely via emergency caesarean section at a local hospital. The father, Adnan Sheikh, said it was the couple's first pregnancy, one year into their marriage. Doctors stated the babies were born at just 29 weeks of gestation – significantly earlier than the standard 37 to 40 weeks – classifying them as extremely premature. All five infants have very low birth weights and required immediate oxygen support due to underdeveloped lungs, a frequent concern in preterm deliveries. They are currently under round-the-clock care in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), with their condition being closely monitored. Hospital officials confirmed that while all five infants are showing signs of gradual improvement, the first few weeks remain critical. Premature babies born before 32 weeks are at a high risk of life-threatening complications including respiratory distress syndrome, brain haemorrhage, infections and long-term developmental delays. "The birth of quintuplets is extremely rare and medically challenging for both mother and babies," a neonatologist at the hospital told The News. "Survival and healthy development depend heavily on immediate neonatal support and ongoing specialized care."

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