



Islamabad POST

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President Zardari thanks, China, for unwavering support

Detailed News On Page-08

Bangladesh, Pak team up to boost ties

Detailed News On Page-06



No plan to recognize Taliban: FO

Detailed News On Page-08



PM indebted

Pakistan, WB resolve to achieve long-term goals

Dione appreciated Pakistan's ongoing macroeconomic recovery and praised the prime minister's government for steering the country toward financial stability and sustainable growth

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday met with Regional Vice President of the World Bank for the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan, and Pakistan (MENAAP) Ousmane Dione, where they expressed a shared commitment to further strengthening cooperation in the coming years to achieve long-term development goals and build a prosperous future for the people of Pakistan. During the meeting, the prime minister especially thanked World Bank President Ajay Banga and former Country Director for Pakistan Najib Benhassine for their pivotal role in advancing the new Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for Pakistan. Islamabad real estate market trends. Travel packages to Pakistan. He appreciated the strategic role of the CPF in supporting Pakistan's development priorities, particularly in the areas of energy, human capital, climate change, and governance reforms. He also acknowledged the World Bank's principled support for Pakistan's legitimate position in light of India's unilateral and unlawful actions undermining important international agreements such as the Indus Waters Treaty. The prime minister reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to upholding international law, achieving prosperity, and maintaining regional peace, and reiterated the country's resolve to resolve all issues through dialogue. Travel packages to Pakistan. The prime minister thanked the World Bank for its timely and generous assistance during the devastating floods of 2022, which helped

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Protest preparations: Imran not happy with party leaders

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Incarcerated PTI founder and ex-prime minister Imran Khan has decried the lack of any "meaningful momentum" for the party's planned August 5 protest and ordered its members to immediately shun all their differences. Imran, imprisoned since August 2023, is serving a sentence at the Adiala Jail in a £190 million corruption case and also faces pending trials under the Anti-Terrorism Act related to the protests of May 9, 2023. He has issued a nationwide protest call, which will reach its "peak" on Aug 5 to mark the second year of his incarceration in multiple cases. However, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur appeared to disrupt the nationwide protest plans and sow confusion by introducing a new 90-day timeline for what he described as 'a final push'. PTI Punjab chief organiser Aliya Hamza Malik later voiced her reservations about his announcement. The resulting discord in the party leadership and ranks had prompted Imran to prohibit his party members from publicly discussing the party's internal matters.



ISLAMABAD: Regional Vice President of the World Bank Ousmane Dione called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad on 24 July 2025. — DNA

All 50 onboard die in Russian plane crash

The aircraft, a twin-engine Antonov-24 operated by Angara Airlines, was headed to the town of Tynda

APP

MOSCOW: An Antonov An-24 passenger plane carrying about 50 people crashed in Russia's far east on Thursday and initial information suggested that everyone on board was killed, Russian emergency services officials said. The burning fuselage of the plane, which was from the Soviet era and was nearly 50 years old, was spotted on the ground by a helicopter and rescue crews were rushing to the scene. Unverified video, shot from a helicopter and posted on social media, appeared to show that the plane had come down in a densely forested area.

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TTAP-led opposition decides to hold APC on July 31 in Islamabad

"The first step of our movement is an all-party conference," says alliance leader

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: A coalition of several opposition parties, including Imran Khan-founded PTI — under the banner of Tehreek Tahafuz Ayeen-e-Pakistan (TTAP) — has decided to convene an all-party conference (APC) on July 31. "The first step of our movement is an all-party conference," TTAP leader Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar, a former member of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), told a press conference alongside TTAP chief Mahmood Khan Achakzai. "All those who feel oppressed under the current regime would be invited to participate in the APC. Everyone troubled by state repression is welcome," said Khokhar who once served as PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari's spokesperson. Clarifying the objective of the alliance, Achakzai said it was not formed for political theatrics but to restore true democratic representation through a neutral election commission. He emphasised that the coalition aims to dismantle the current government through public mandate. Criticising the ruling leadership, he pointed out that even the elected representatives of victorious parties are denied access to their detained leaders.

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ATC suspends arrest warrant of Omar Ayub

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: An Islamabad anti-terrorism court (ATC) suspended a bailable arrest warrant for National Assembly Opposition Leader Omar Ayub on Thursday in a case related to a protest in October last year. PTI protesters and the Islamabad police clashed on Oct 4, 2024, as hundreds of party activists defied security measures and road blockades to gather at multiple locations days before the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit. Over 100 PTI supporters, along with ex-premier Imran Khan's two sisters, were taken into custody. ATC Judge Tahir Abbas Sipra had issued the arrest warrant earlier today as he heard a case filed at the Shahzad Town police station last year. Advocates Sardar Masroof Khan, Zahid Bashir Dar, Murtaza Toori and Mirza Asim were among the lawyers present on the PTI leaders' behalf.

Briefs

T20: Pak outclass Bangladesh

DNA

DHAKA: Pakistan thumped Bangladesh by 74 runs in the third and final T20I match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur, Dhaka, on Thursday. Chasing a daunting 179-run target, Bangladesh's batting unit could muster 104 runs before getting bowled out in the 17th over, their third-lowest total against Pakistan in format. Bowling all-rounder Mohammad Saifuddin remained the top-scorer for the home side with a gutsy 35 off 34 deliveries, while opening batter Mohammad Naim (10) was the other to amass double figures as the rest of the Bangladesh batters failed against a ruthless Pakistan bowling attack. Left-arm pacer Salman was the standout bowler for Pakistan, taking three wickets for 19 runs in his four overs, followed by Faheem Ashraf and Mohammad Nawaz with two each.

Train bogie damaged in explosion

DNA

QUETTA: A bogie of a Quetta-bound Bolan Mail train was "partially damaged" on Thursday after an explosion struck a railway track in Balochistan's Sibi district, officials said. The 3Up train usually departs Karachi City Station in the day and arrives the next day in Quetta, with over 20 stops on its way, according to Pakistan Railways' website. "The railway track between Bakhitarabad and Damboli areas was blown up with explosives, resulting in the Bolan Mail heading from Karachi to Quetta being hit," station master Murtaza told reporters in Sibi. He added that bogie No. 7 of the train was "partially damaged" in the incident.

Rescue work continues

Pakistan's monsoon death toll nears 260

Three fatalities occurred in KP, two in Islamabad and one in Sindh in past 24 hours, says NDMA

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: At least six people were killed and five others injured due to heavy rainfall across the country in the past 24 hours, pushing the country's death toll from the monsoon spell to 258, according to the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). The agency reported on Thursday that three of the fatalities occurred in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where five individuals were also injured. Additionally, two people died in Islamabad and one person in Sindh as a result of rain-related incidents. The NDMA revealed that since the start of the recent monsoon spell, a total of 258 people have died across Pakistan, while 616 have sustained injuries. Among the deceased are 89 men, 46 women, and 123 children. The injured include 243 men, 170 women, and 203 children, highlighting the widespread human toll caused by the ongoing weather emergency. The rains have also caused extensive property and livestock damage. Over the last

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Next monsoon spell to start from July 28

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Deputy Director of the Meteorological Department Anjum Nazir Zaigham, Thursday, anticipated the present spell to persist through the 25th, with a fresh wave of monsoon rains arriving on July 28 expected to influence upper regions of the country, where the public has been urged to stay vigilant and prepared. In an exclusive conversation with a local news channel, the Deputy Director explained that this development could lead to heavy rainfall and potential flooding in upper regions, urging residents to remain cautious.

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Army officer among two martyred

Sepoy Nazam Hussain, 22, also embraces martyrdom, says ISPR

NEWS DESK

RAWALPINDI: An army major and another security personnel were martyred during an operation in Balochistan's Mastung district, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said on Thursday. In a statement, the military's media wing said the incident took place on Wednesday when the security Forces were conducting an intelligence-based operation in the district, on the reported presence of terrorists

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Pak seeks enhanced defense relations with Saudi Arabia

Vice Admiral Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Ghuraybi, Chief of the Naval Staff of the Royal Saudi Naval Forces, called on General Sahir Shamshad Mirza

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Vice Admiral Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Ghuraybi, Chief of the Naval Staff of the Royal Saudi Naval Forces, called on General

Sahir Shamshad Mirza, NI (M), Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJSC), at the Joint Staff Headquarters in Rawalpindi. The high-level meeting underscored the deep-rooted and time-tested ties between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic



Republic of Pakistan, with a particular emphasis on expanding defence and military cooperation. Both dignitaries engaged in wide-ranging discussions on the prevailing regional security environment, covering critical developments in the Middle East and South Asia. Special focus was placed on maritime security, counter-terrorism cooperation, and maintaining peace in strategically vital sea lanes. General Sahir Shamshad Mirza reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering commitment to strengthening defence collaboration with Saudi Arabia. He highlighted the importance of regular high-level engagements, joint training initiatives, and naval exercises in enhancing interoperability between the armed forces of the two brotherly nations.

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Woman's mother remanded after 'honour killing' confession in Balochistan

Gul Jan, in her social media video, can be seen admitting to killing Bano Bibi in the name of honour

DNA

QUETTA: A court in Quetta has remanded a woman to the Serious Crime Investigation Wing for two days in connection with the double murder case in Sanjidi involving her daughter, Bano Bibi. The anti-terrorism court (ATC) ordered the remand after Gul Jan was presented before it by investigating officials, who had requested custody for further probe. According to the investigation officer, Javed Buzdar, Gul Jan was arrested a day earlier after a video surfaced on social media in which she repeatedly confessed to the killing of her daughter. In the video, Gul Jan is seen holding the Holy Quran and admitting to killing Bano Bibi in the name of honour, citing

Baloch tribal customs. She further claimed that no unlawful action was taken by her tribe's elders, stating they had no role in the decision. The murder, which took place around six weeks ago, involved Bano Bibi and a man named Ehsanullah, both of whom were shot dead in the Degari area near Quetta in what police described as an honour-related incident. Authorities confirmed that two other suspects, Sardar Sherbaz and Bashir Ahmed, are already in custody under a 10-day remand with the Serious Crime Investigation Wing. Police continue to conduct raids to arrest additional suspects linked to the case. The incident came to light after a video circulating on social media showed more than a dozen men

gathered in a remote, mountainous desert area, with SUVs and pickup trucks parked nearby. The woman is ordered to stand facing away from the group before a man pulls out a gun and shoots her in the back. He then turns the weapon on a man and shoots him dead. As the video went viral, Balochistan government was prompted to register a case under terrorism charges. Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti described the incident as "heinous". According to the FIR, the case was registered under Sections 302 (murder), 149 (unlawful assembly), 148 (rioting while armed with a deadly weapon), 147 (rioting) of the Pakistan Penal Code and the Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997.

Govt wants no child to be deprived of edu due to poverty

PESHAWAR: Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Syed Imran Ahmad Shah here Thursday reiterated that the federal government wants no child to be deprived of education due to poverty. The Federal Minister expressed these views during his visit to Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal office Peshawar. Director, Bait-ul-Mal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Lal Badshah, briefed the Federal Minister about his department's initiatives and projects. He informed the minister said Bait-ul-Mal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was providing scholarships for the education of child laborers. Training centers have also been established for underprivileged women. While appreciating the initiatives taken by Bait-ul-Mal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Bait-ul-Mal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Federal Minister Syed Imran Ahmad Shah said Federal Govt has launched results oriented projects for poor and deserving widows and children to make them into national mainstream. "We are providing scholarships to poor children for continuity of their education," said the Federal Minister, adding Federal Govt wanted no student or child to be deprived of education due to poverty and lack of jobs of parents. The Minister was told that there are 30 training centers operating under Bait-ul-Mal across all districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. These centers are teaching underprivileged and deserving women various skills and provide them vocational training to take them out of poverty.—APP

IHC halts implementation of order to form blasphemy law commission

Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq's earlier directive has now been suspended

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has suspended the implementation of an earlier decision that directed the formation of a commission to investigate blasphemy-related allegations. A division bench comprising Justice Khadim Hussain and Justice Azam Khan issued the order on Thursday, effectively putting on hold the judgment

delivered by Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan last week. The suspension follows an intra-court appeal filed by Advocate Rao Abdul Rahim against the decision to form the commission. Previously, Justice Ejaz had accepted petitions seeking the formation of a commission to probe the handling and application of blasphemy laws. He had instructed the federal government to set up the body within 30 days and mandated that it complete its work

within four months. If more time was required, the commission was permitted to request an extension from the court. A report published by the government-run National Commission for Human Rights in October last year said there were 767 people, mostly young men, in jail awaiting trial over blasphemy allegations. On the previous order, lawyer Imaan Mazari had said: "This is a huge ray of hope and it's the first time that the families have felt heard."

Tribal elders be consulted for anti-terror policy

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister (CM) Ali Amin Gandapur on Thursday said any future strategy to counter terrorism in the province would be devised involving consultation with tribal elders. He announced that all district-level advisors would soon be called and a Grand Jirga would be convened in 15 days to develop a locally-driven, consensus-based peace framework. Talking to media after the All Parties Conference (APC), he said the meeting was convened to address the province's ongoing law and order challenges. The members of the provincial cabinet and provincial assembly and representatives from various political parties attended the APC. The primary objective of the APC was to develop a unified and consultative approach to restoring peace and ensuring public safety across the province. Gandapur categorically said that there was no place for terror groups in the province and any form of indirect support would not be tolerated. He stressed the need to prevent any further violations along the provincial borders and warned that, if necessary, the matter could be handed over to the border police for strict enforcement. During the conference, participants were briefed on the provincial government's ongoing efforts to improve law and order. The CM assured full transparency and cooperation with all political stakeholders, stating that the final strategy would be developed through consensus.—APP

CDA to launch electric tram buses in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: A high-level meeting was held at the CDA Headquarters under the chairmanship of Capital Development Authority (CDA) Chairman and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Muhammad Ali Randhawa. The meeting was attended by Member Administration and Estate Talat Mehmood, Member Finance Tahir Naem, Member Planning Dr. Khalid Hafiz, relevant DGs, representatives of NRTC, and other senior officers. Detailed discussions were held regarding introducing a state-of-the-art transport system for the citizens of the Federal Capital. Chairman CDA said that providing modern and efficient transport facilities is CDA's top priority. The meeting decided to introduce electric tram buses in Islamabad, ensuring citizens have access to advanced transport solutions. He directed the completion of a feasibility study for the tram system to facilitate modern bus services on the busiest routes. The trams will feature multiple compartments to accommodate more passengers and will be designed to be accessible for differently-abled individuals and women. During the briefing, it was informed that a feasibility report covering financial, operational and business models is being prepared. The electric bus project has already exceeded a daily ridership of 90,000 passengers, as these buses are eco-friendly, cost-effective and punctual, attracting appreciation from citizens. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa instructed officers to finalize the feasibility report, particularly focusing on financial sustainability. He emphasized developing a self-sustaining financial model and exploring public-private partnerships. Clear timelines and operational goals for the tram project were also established. Regarding electric feeder buses, the Chairman CDA directed route selection based on passenger data, prioritizing high-traffic areas. He also ordered the installation of modern digital screens at terminals displaying advertisements, schedules and safety guidelines. To enhance revenue, smart ticketing systems and in-bus advertisements will be introduced. Additionally, electric buses will also be allocated for CDA employees. The meeting was informed that 140 bus stops are being upgraded, with over 200 new stops to be constructed, featuring digital boards for non-fare revenue generation. Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad Muhammad Ali Randhawa said that these initiatives will ensure a modern, efficient, and eco-friendly transport system. They expressed confidence that these projects will transform Islamabad into a cleaner, smarter, and more attractive capital, with citizens playing their part in supporting this vision.—DNA



KARACHI: Vice Chief of the Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Ovais Ahmed Bilgrami and others at launching ceremony of PNS Sahiwal (Design) Gun Boat.

ISEM Solar exhibition opens at Expo center

DNA

KARACHI: The 11th International Solar Energy Meet (ISEM) 2025 officially opened at Expo Center on Thursday, marking a major step forward in Pakistan's transition to clean and sustainable energy. Organized by WPS (White Paper Summits), this three-day international exhibition brings together innovators, industry leaders, and policymakers from across the solar and renewable energy sectors.

ISEM 2025 features cutting-edge solar panels, hybrid systems, energy storage solutions and off-grid technologies – providing a platform for collaboration and innovation in the fight against energy shortages and climate change. Khawaja Wahaj-ul-Haque, Country Manager for WPS, remarked that our goal with ISEM is to go beyond exhibitions. Every technology displayed here is a step toward energy independence and a greener future for Pakistan. With Pakistan's growing focus on renewable energy and falling global solar costs, ISEM 2025 highlights the country's readiness to adopt a low-carbon, self-sufficient energy model. The three-day exhibition will continue until July 26, 2025, welcoming professionals, institutions, and the general public to engage with the future of clean energy.

Launching ceremony of PNS Sahiwal Gun Boat held

DNA

KARACHI: Launching ceremony of PNS Sahiwal (Design) Gun Boat was held at Karachi Shipyard & Engineering Works (KS&EW). PNS Sahiwal (Design) Gun Boat has been indigenously designed by Platform Design Wing (PDW) of Pakistan Navy and is under construction at KS&EW. This state-of-the-art vessel will be equipped with high-performance, long-range semi-automatic

guns, enhancing its operational effectiveness in maritime missions, said a news release issued by the Directorate General Public Relations (Pak Navy). Vice Chief of the Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Ovais Ahmed Bilgrami graced the occasion as Chief Guest. Speaking on the occasion, Chief Guest appreciated joint efforts of Platform Design Wing (PDW) of Pakistan Navy and KS&EW in furthering Pakistan Navy's policy of indigenization. He extended his gratitude to the Ministry of Defence

Production for its continued support to KS&EW. He also highlighted that the Gun Boat will be equipped to perform diverse maritime security tasks. He also stated that Pakistan Navy is considering additional production of gunboats. It would eventually boost both indigenization process and uplift of KS&EW. The launching ceremony was attended by high-ranking officials from Pakistan Navy including representatives from MODP, KS&EW and Shipbuilding Industry.

AIOU stem camp inspires youth

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) successfully concluded its transformative initiative, STEM Camp 4.0, a week-long program, marked by vibrant scientific activities, hands-on experiments and an atmosphere of academic enthusiasm. The camp has been widely praised as a significant milestone in fostering scientific curiosity, creative thinking and practical skills among the youth. The closing ceremony featured Professor Syed Komal Taibi, President of the prestigious Eco Science Foundation, as the chief guest. The event was moderated by Dr. Tanveer Afzal, Head of AIOU's Science Department, said a press release on Thursday. In his keynote

address, Professor Taibi described the modern era as one driven by research, observation and scientific consciousness. "To enable our youth to meet global challenges with confidence, we must move beyond traditional education models and engage them in scientific experimentation, innovation, and experiential learning," he remarked. Reflecting on the camp's achievements, Dr. Tanveer Afzal shared that 130 students and 30 volunteers actively participated in the week-long program. "The students not only conceptualized but also executed their own scientific projects," he noted. "We merely offered them a foundational idea – from there, it was their journey

of discovery, innovation, and self-driven learning. Through this process, we uncovered incredible talent and provided a platform for it to flourish," he said. Dr. Afzal also expressed his deep gratitude to the university leadership, especially Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood. "This success would not have been possible without the unwavering support, vision, and commitment of our Vice Chancellor to creating a progressive and dynamic educational environment," he said. A major highlight of the event was the engaging "Fun Science Show" by Abdul Rauf from the Pakistan Science Club, Karachi, which captivated participants with live, interactive scientific demonstrations.—DNA

Court Notice

IN THE COURT OF SABA ALAM JUDGE FAMILY COURT RAWALPINDI
Suit for Dissolution of Marriage on the Basis of Khula And recovery etc Mst. Raheela etc. Versus Muhammad Akram Notice to Muhammad Akram s/o Muhammad Farooq R/o Shafaqat Autos, car center workshop, sector I-9/4, Islamabad The service through ordinary means is difficult, so you are informed to attend the court personally, through counsel or attorney on 25-07-2025 at 8 am avoid ex-parte proceeding.

Ethiopia and Pakistan to Promote Food Security

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan have initiated cooperation on food security by holding the first-ever joint Green Legacy Forum to exchange knowledge and best practices in the crucial sector. H.E. Dr. Jemal Beker Abdula, Special Envoy and Ambassador of Ethiopia to Pakistan, presided over the Green Legacy Forum which was jointly organized by the Ethiopian Embassy Islamabad and the Ministry of National Food Security and Research at the National Agriculture Research Center. H.E. Amir Mohyuddin, Federal Secretary for National Food Security and Research, was the chief

guest of the Forum in which a large number of agriculture experts, researchers, and students took part to learn about Ethiopia's successful policies, tools, and outcomes in building a robust food system through green economic development. Highlighting the similarities between Ethiopia and Pakistan, Ambassador Dr. Jemal said both the countries are agro-economies and highly prone to climate change and its various manifestations. He explained the participants as to how Ethiopia transformed into a food-self-sufficient nation under the leadership of Prime Minister H.E. Dr. Abiy Ahmed, citing the Green Legacy and Yelemat Tirufat (Bounty of Basket) initiatives. In the past six years, he said Ethiopia has planted over 40.5 billion

seedlings of fruits, vegetables, animal fodder, and coffee, increasing forest cover from 17% to 23%. On the other hand, agricultural and livestock productivity in Ethiopia saw a substantial increase under the Bounty of Basket initiative. The Ambassador expressed Ethiopia's keenness to further cooperate with Pakistan to bolster both nations' food security. The Federal Secretary proposed twinning of the Green Legacy and Green Pakistan initiatives to facilitate knowledge sharing and best practices in food security, promoting joint research programs. He lauded Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's Green Legacy Initiative as a symbol of prosperity and green economic development in Africa. The Federal Secretary expressed strong interest in replicating Ethiopia's Green Legacy

in Pakistan, particularly due to its core features that include mass mobilization for afforestation and reforestation, participatory forest management, area enclosures, and sustainable land and water management programs to prevent soil erosion and ensure water conservation. H.E. Dr. Muhammad Azam Khan, Director General of NARC, underscored the importance of joint international efforts to address climate change and its severe consequences, including floods, food insecurity, famine, hunger, and poverty. Following the forum, the Ambassador along with the Federal Secretary inaugurated the Green Legacy Park at NARC, where they planted fruit tree seedlings to symbolize the growing fraternity between Ethiopia and Pakistan.

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

JULY

July 01/Japan Self Defence Day

July 01/Singapore Armed Forces Day

July 01 / Canada National Day

July 01/Somalia Independence Day

July 04/USA Independence Day

July 05/Algeria Independence Day

July 09/Argentine Independence Day

July 09/Mongolia Revolution Day

July 14/France National Day

July 15/Brunei Sultan's Birthday

July 21/Belgium National Day

July 20/TRNC Independence Day

July 23/Egypt National Day

July 26/Cuba National Day


July 26/Liberia National Day

July 30/Morocco National Day


Serena Hotel.....111 133 133

Marriott.....051- 2826121

Monal.....0334-5421812



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15

Bomb Disposal.....15

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


Emergency Ambulance.1122 & Rescue Services.4451122

Motorway Police.....9266044

Motorway Police.9270601-20

Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596

Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115

PIA Flight Info.....114


PIA Cargo.....9280979

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Railway Exchange9270831-5

WASA Rawalpindi..5555489

CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111

MH.....561116

Cantt Hospital...9270907-11

DHQ.....5556311-4

RGH.....9290301-7

Holy Family.....9290322-7

PIMS.....9261170-79

Polyclinic.....9218300-09

Shifa International 4603666



Departments

CDA.....9221334-43

CDA.....9208301-04

Met Office.....9250360-6

RDA.....5555864

TMA.....5770886

Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

FIA launches major reforms, sets up command & control room

FIA officials stated that when the detainees were asked to present legal travel documentation, they failed to produce satisfactory responses. Initial investigations suggest that the group was part of a co-ordinated effort to illegally migrate out of Pakistan. All suspects are currently in custody, and formal investigations have been launched

ISLAMABAD: In a series of bold institutional reforms, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has taken significant steps to enhance operational efficiency, improve public service delivery, and intensify its crackdown on human trafficking networks. The agency, under the leadership of Director General Rafat Mukhtar Raja, has not only initiated a complete organizational restructuring but also unveiled a modern Command & Control Room within its Anti-Corruption Wing – a landmark move aimed at strengthening real-time coordination and response mechanisms. The newly established Command & Control Room is designed to handle all calls and public complaints directly, allowing the agency to respond promptly and effectively to reports of crimes and irregularities.

Officials confirmed that FIA's helpline 1991 has now been officially integrated with the system, enabling a centralized and immediate response framework. "The primary goal of these reforms is to offer citizens fast, transparent, and accountable services," an FIA spokesperson said. "The Command & Control Room will significantly enhance the agency's performance and coordination capabilities." As part of its intensified campaign against human trafficking, FIA's Anti-Human Trafficking Circle in Taftan executed a major operation this week, resulting in the arrest of 33 foreign nationals attempting to cross the border illegally. According to officials, all detained individuals are Bangladeshi citizens who entered Pakistan on visit visas during June and

July. The suspects were apprehended near the Mashkhel border in Chagai district, a known hotspot for illegal crossings. The operation was conducted in collaboration with the Frontier Corps (FC), underscoring the importance of inter-agency cooperation in curbing transnational crimes. FIA officials stated that when the detainees were asked to present legal travel documentation, they failed to produce satisfactory responses. Initial investigations suggest that the group was part of a coordinated effort to illegally migrate out of Pakistan. All suspects are currently in custody, and formal investigations have been launched. In a parallel development, the Special Judge Central Gujranwala delivered a significant verdict in a high-pro-

file human trafficking case. The accused, Muhammad Kashif, was sentenced to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment and fined Rs. 1.4 million. The court awarded 10 years of imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 400,000 under the Immigration Ordinance, and an additional 10 years and Rs. 1 million fine under the Smuggling of Migrants Act. The convicted individual had reportedly taken Rs. 4 million from a citizen in exchange for illegally facilitating his travel to Spain. Tragically, the victim remains missing to date. FIA's Assistant Director Legal Asif-ah Akram Kang represented the prosecution, while the investigation was led by Sub-Inspector Shiraz Ahmed. "This verdict sends a strong message to traffickers and reflects FIA's unwavering commitment to eradicating human

smuggling," the spokesperson said. The FIA reiterated its zero-tolerance policy toward human trafficking, smuggling, and related transnational crimes. Agency officials emphasized that the recent reforms – including the establishment of the Command & Control Room, improved coordination channels, and enhanced legal action – are designed to modernize the institution and ensure swift justice. The reforms come at a time when Pakistan is under increasing international pressure to combat human trafficking and improve border control mechanisms. Analysts believe that such institutional measures could also aid in restoring public confidence in law enforcement agencies and improve Pakistan's standing in global anti-trafficking rankings.—APP

CDA conducts anti-dengue spray at NPC

ISLAMABAD: In their effort to combat the spread of dengue in the federal capital, the Directorate of Health Services Capital Development Authority (CDA) conducted an anti-dengue spray at National Press Club (NPC) on Thursday. In a statement issued here, Director General (DG) of Health Services CDA, Dr. Irshad Ali Jokhio, highlighted their commitment to protect the residents of the federal capital from dengue by conducting anti-mosquito spray. "Protecting the public from dengue is our top priority; in this regard, vigorous steps are underway to eliminate dengue from the federal capital," DG said, adding, "swift actions are being taken wherever complaints are reported." He further said that upon receiving the complaint from NPC, a rapid response team has been dispatched to carry out spraying at its premises, ensuring the safety of journalists, staff and visitors.—APP

EU, UNODC, NACTA, HRDN to promote peace among youth

ISLAMABAD: In a bid to promote peace and tolerance among Pakistan's youth, the European Union, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UN-ODC), National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) and Human Resource Development Network (HRDN) have joined forces to launch the Youth Engagement and Resilience Initiative (YERI). Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi attended the event as the chief guest. He highlighted the crucial role of youth in shaping Pakistan's future, said a press release here on Thursday. The Governor stressed that instead of polarizing young people, it's essential to harmonize them to support each other, fostering a culture of peace, tolerance, and unity. "By doing so, the youth can become a powerful force for positive change, working together to build a brighter future for the country," he added. He said, "Cultural exchange and youth determination to promote peace is critical for increasing tolerance in society and Pakistan's future is in the hands of these young people.—APP

NIMA concluded Maritime education, training workshop



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The four-day maritime training workshop organized by the National Institute of Maritime Affairs (NIMA) concluded successfully with engaging sessions on coral reef preservation, sustainable

maritime tourism, and value chain resilience in Pakistan's blue economy. Experts including Cdr Tariq Mahmood (R), Ms. Aneela Khan, and Ms. Sahar Malik emphasized the importance of environmental stewardship and innovative maritime strategies. The closing ceremony was

graced by Vice Admiral Raja Rab Nawaz HI (M), Deputy Chief of Naval Staff (Operations), as the chief guest. He commended NIMA's efforts in promoting maritime education and building the capacity of young professionals. The ceremony also featured certificate distribution and

closing remarks by NIMA's President and Vice President, who appreciated the active participation and enthusiasm of the attendees. The workshop concluded on a high note, reaffirming NIMA's commitment to maritime awareness, youth engagement, and sustainable development.

Expert supports social media age limit law

ISLAMABAD: In a bid to enhance online safety, a social media expert hailed the Senator's proposed "Social Media (Age Restriction for Users) Bill 2025," which aims to ban users under the age of 16 from accessing social media and calls for stronger parental oversight on certain platforms. In an exclusive conversation with a local news channel, he expressed his appreciation for the two senators who proposed the bill aimed at limiting the age for creating social media accounts, especially regarding the use of multiple accounts. He highlighted the importance of such legislation in protecting young users from the potential risks associated with unrestricted access to various online platforms. He emphasized that just as YouTube has implemented parental control features to safeguard children, other major platforms like Facebook, Instagram and other should follow suit. According to him, parental controls are essential tools that help parents monitor and regulate their children's online activities, ensuring a safer digital environment. Moreover, he stressed that the proposed bill is a crucial step of the present government towards enforcing these controls more effectively and holding social media companies accountable. By combining legislative measures with enhanced parental oversight, the goal is to create a balanced online space where young users can enjoy social media without exposing themselves to harmful content or behaviours, he mentioned. Responding to a query, he acknowledged that it is impossible to completely restrict online platforms for youngsters, especially since the world increasingly relies on digital technology for education, communication, and entertainment. He emphasized that young people need access to these platforms to stay connected and develop essential digital skills in today's fast-paced world. However, he stressed the importance of following international standards to ensure safe and responsible use. Instead of a complete ban, he advocated for implementing age-appropriate restrictions and robust parental controls to protect children from harmful content while allowing them to benefit from the opportunities digital platforms offer. He even mentioned the COVID-19 pandemic period, highlighting how access to online platforms became essential for remote learning during that time. He pointed out that many students relied heavily on digital resources to continue their education when schools were closed. Furthermore, he noted that even now, a majority of students depend on online books and information for their studies. This ongoing reliance underscores the need to balance access with appropriate safeguards, ensuring that young learners can benefit from digital tools while staying protected.—APP

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RAWALPINDI: Boys enjoying play in the street during heavy Monsoon rain in the city.

PBM, OPF set pathway for strategic collaboration in social protection field

ISLAMABAD: In a landmark move to advance social equity and humanitarian outreach, Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) and the Overseas Pakistanis Foundation (OPF) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to jointly launch initiatives targeting the country's economically vulnerable and underserved communities. In a glorious ceremony, Managing Director PBM Senator Capt. Shaheen Khalid Butt and Managing Director OPF Muhammad Afzaal Bhatti validated the MoU with their signatures. The ceremony was held here at PBM's Head Office, attended by Director General PBM Prof. Dr. Zeeshan Danish, Member OPF Muhammad Kamran Khan and other key representatives from both organizations. The agreement outlines a shared vision to implement sustainable projects focused on healthcare, education, food security, and livelihood development for the underprivileged. Best restaurants near me Speaking at the occasion, Managing Director PBM Senator Capt. Shaheen Khalid Butt, while expressing his long-standing relationship with OPF, stated that "This partnership marks a new chapter in our ongoing mission to bring hope and tangible support to those who need it most. Together, we will create a more inclusive and compassionate society." Capt. Shaheen also reaffirmed his commitment to implement the vision of the federal government for mitigating the sufferings of poor populace in the country. On the occasion, Managing Director OPF, Afzaal Bhatti remarked that by combining our resources, networks, and passion for service, we are confident this collaboration will make a meaningful impact in the lives of many beneficiaries of PBM. Terming it a memorable agreement, he anticipated for the accelerated efforts by the concerned officials of both organizations making it fruitful for the needy persons. Managing Director OPF also explained his passion for taking every possible step for the welfare of the Pakistani People, under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. The MoU is designed to promote the collaborative efforts of both organizations on identifying vulnerable communities, mobilizing resources, and implementing grassroots programs. The initiative emphasizes transparency, accountability, and long-term impact. It also aims to enable PBM beneficiaries, especially orphans, child laborers and other vulnerable groups to access quality education in OPF Schools as well as support in e-learning, capacity building and research.—DNA



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Briefs

IHC serves notices to FIA on bail plea

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday issued notices to federal government and FIA on post-arrest bail petition of Pakistan Agriculture and Research Council (PARC)'s Chairman Dr. Ghulam Muhammad Ali. Justice Muhammad Asif heard the post-arrest bail petition of the accused. During the hearing, Advocate Noman Paracha appeared in the court on behalf of the petitioner. The court issued notices to the federal government and the FIA, seeking a response, and adjourned the hearing until July 25. It should be noted that earlier, the Special Judge Central had rejected the bail application of Dr. Ghulam Muhammad Ali. The FIA has registered a case against PARC's Chairman and others for alleged irregularities in recruitment.—APP

RDA directs implementation of water conservation strategies

RAWALPINDI: Director General Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) Kinza Murtaza on Wednesday directed officials to implement robust water conservation strategies, especially within clusters of Private Housing Schemes (PHS). Presiding over a meeting to address pressing issues concerning water shortage, rainwater harvesting, wastewater recycling, and sewage treatment systems, she emphasized the enforcement of Right of Way (ROW) regulations for rivers. Additionally, the DG RDA issued strict instructions to immediately halt pollution of local water bodies by private housing developers. She highlighted the urgent need for all housing schemes to install and maintain proper sewage treatment systems and comply with environmental regulations. The DG warned that strict legal action will be taken against any schemes found violating these directives, reinforcing RDA's commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainable urban growth. These initiatives aim to safeguard local water resources, which are facing increasing stress due to rapid urbanisation and unregulated water consumption. Developers have been instructed to integrate sustainable practices, including rainwater harvesting, wastewater recycling, and the installation of water-efficient systems in all residential developments. She said, "This is not just about compliance, it's about securing our future. Water is a critical resource, and we must act now to protect it for the generations to come." The meeting concluded with a strong consensus on the need for collaborative action between public authorities, developers, and residents to protect natural resources and ensure sustainable urban planning in the region. The meeting was attended by the representatives from the Army Information Cell, Rawalpindi Cantonment Board, Chaklala Cantonment Board and others.—APP

NSU gains global spotlight

DNA

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). The rigor-

ous faculty development programme took place across leading UK institutions, including the National STEM Learning Centre at the University of York, the University of Birmingham, and King's College London, said a press release issued here on Wednesday. Dr. Maryam Subhani, Department of General Studies and Ms. Anita Bibi, Department of Health Sciences and Technology, represented NSU for this training. Their selection and success in this highly competitive programme reflect the institution's dedication to continuous learning, innovation, and pedagogical excellence, as well as their personal growth and dedication to their profession. Participants engaged in immersive sessions on Cutting-edge teaching frameworks

such as the Conceiving, Designing, Implementing, and Operating (CDIO) system and the responsible integration of generative AI in education; authentic assessment strategies paired with real-time student feedback; curriculum reform aligned with outcome-based education; and gender equity and sustainability in STEM teaching and research. In addition, the programme facilitated strategic academic exchange and research collaboration between Pakistani and UK institutions, advancing the global impact of Pakistani academia. Speaking on the occasion, Founding Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Muhammad Mukhtar lauded the achievement, stating: "This success is not only a personal milestone for Dr. Subhani and Ms. Bibi, but a testa-

ment to NSU's evolving academic ethos. As an internationally recognized institution, we aim to embed global best practices into our educational DNA and strengthen Pakistan's future workforce through world-class faculty." Prof. Dr. Mukhtar's leadership has been pivotal in transforming NSU from a national institution into a globally recognized hub of vocational and technical excellence. Through his vision, the university has earned international affiliations and continues to set benchmarks in STEM education, skills development, and inclusive academic innovation. This latest development reinforces NSU's strategic commitment to nurturing globally competent faculty, enriching student experiences, and elevating Pakistan's presence in international higher education forums.

Jordan envoy praises IIUI's role in Muslim edu

During his visit, Ambassador Khreasat met separately with IIUI's Rector, Prof. Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed and President, Prof. Dr. Ahmed Saad Alahmed

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Maen Khreasat, Ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to Pakistan, here on Wednesday visited the new campus of the International Islamic University, Islamabad (IIUI), where he discussed the areas of bilateral educational cooperation in high-level meetings. Islamabad real estate market trendsTravel packages to Pakistan During his visit, Ambassador Khreasat met separately with IIUI's Rector, Prof. Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed and President, Prof. Dr. Ahmed Saad Alahmed. The discussions during the meetings focused on enhancing mutual cooperation between IIUI and Jordanian universities, with emphasis on technical assistance-based scholarships, academic exchange, and the possibility of jointly organized international conferences, said a press release.



Welcoming the ambassador in his office, Rector Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed appreciated the ambassador's proposals, terming "education diplomacy" a key tool for promoting global peace, harmony, and development. He assured full support to strengthen academic ties between Pakistan and Jordan.

In a separate meeting, President IIUI Prof. Dr. Ahmed Saad Alahmed shared the university's vision, academic profile, and strategic goals. He expressed IIUI's commitment to expanding international educational linkages, particularly with institutions in the Muslim world. Ambassador Khreasat acknowledged IIUI's contributions to Muslim societies through education and termed the visit a step toward a "win-win situation" for both sides. He also emphasized the importance of cultural exchange and said he foresaw an increase in the number of Jordanian students at IIUI in the future. Travel packages to Pakistan.

NPC to organize two-day free surgical eye camp

ISLAMABAD: National Press Club (NPC), Islamabad, in collaboration with the Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital, Rawalpindi, would organize a two-day free surgical eye camp at its premises on July 26-27. According to a statement issued on Wednesday, the camp will provide free eye examinations and general medical consultations. The members and their families will also receive free medicines and eyeglasses, based on medical advice. Moreover, free laser (phaco) surgery will also be provided to those suffering with white cataracts. The camp will operate from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM on both days at the club.—APP

Board SSC results

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Education Board announced the top position holders of the 2025 Matric Exam today. According to the details, Muhammad Usman from Lawrence College, Murree, got first place with 1188/1200 marks (Roll No. 920738). Bisma Ali from Punjab Secondary School for Girls, Tala Gang, took second with 1177 marks (Roll No. 113530). Maryam Shehzadi from Bahria Foundation School, Chakwal, came third with 1175 marks (Roll No. 150056). In the Science Group, Muhammad Usman led the boys, followed by Saad Khan and Ayan Khan from Cadet College, Attock. For girls, Bisma Ali was first, Maryam Shehzadi second, and Adeela Ansar Raja from Dar-e-Arqam School, Chakwal, third. In the General Group, Muhammad Hanan Saeedi, Muhammad Usman, and Muhammad Ahmed topped for boys, while Asma Iman, Laiba Saeed, and Muneza Bibi led for girls.

The board congratulated all students. A prize ceremony will be held on July 24, 2025, at Fatima Jinnah Women University.

ANF seizes over 92 kg drugs

ISLAMABAD: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting seven operations across the country managed to recover over 92 kgs drugs worth more than Rs 18.5 million and arrested seven drug traffickers including two females. According to an ANF Headquarters spokesperson, in an operation near a university on Jhang Road, Faisalabad, 8.8 kgs ice drug was recovered from the possession of an accused. The arrested accused confessed selling drugs to the students of educational institutions. In second operation at a courier office in Karachi, 17,750 kgs ice soaked in carpet was recovered from a parcel sent from Quetta destined for Australia. From a courier office on Peshawar Ring Road, 7.2 kgs hashish was seized from a parcel destined for Lahore. In 4th operation near GT Road, Attock, 2.4 kgs hashish was confiscated from the possession of two women. In an operation in the Bonistan area of Panjgur, 36 kgs hashish hidden for smuggling was recovered. Near Colonel Sher Khan Toll Plaza, Peshawar, 16.8 kgs hashish was recovered from a vehicle and two suspects were sent behind the bars. In 7th operation near Iqbal Shaheed Toll Plaza, GT Road, Attock, 5.5 kgs hashish was recovered from a rickshaw and two drug traffickers were apprehended. Cases have been registered under the CNS Act against the arrested accused, informed the spokesperson.—APP

Efforts afoot to rescue tourists at Babusar Top

ISLAMABAD: Spokesman CM Gilgit-Baltistan Faizullah Faraq Thursday confirmed the government is taking all necessary measures to rescue tourists at Babusar Top following a deadly flash flood caused by a cloudburst. He informed that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has taken stern notice of the incident, while the Chief Minister has made it clear that negligence from any concerned quarter will be dealt with severely. In an exclusive interview with a local news channel, he emphasized that the PM's direct involvement has galvanized the government's efforts to manage the crisis swiftly and effectively, ensuring that all necessary resources are being deployed to rescue stranded tourists and provide relief to affected areas. The spokesperson further assured that the Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister has issued a tough warning against any negligence in handling the situation. He confirmed that the government has executed a rapid response plan, mobilizing rescue teams and emergency services to contain the damage and support the victims. The CM's firm stance reflects the commitment to accountability and urgent action in the face of this natural calamity. He said that this was the first time in history such an event had occurred at Babusar Top, but assured that no tourists remain trapped. So far, between 200 to 250 people have been successfully rescued and relocated to nearby hotels, where they are being provided free food and medical facilities, he said, adding that the government is fully committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of all affected visitors.—DNA

IRSA releases 513,000 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 513,000 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 557,300 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1530.00 feet which was 128.00 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 351,800 cusecs and 351,400 cusecs, respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1194.90 feet, which was 144.90 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 51,300 cusecs and 7,400 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 404,800, 353,600, 316,800 and 203,100 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 46,100 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 84,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

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Pakistan Hockey must seize the Pro League opportunity

THE recent invitation extended to Pakistan's national hockey team to participate in the prestigious FIH Pro League 2026-27 season presents a rare and much-needed opportunity for the revival of Pakistan's national sport. With the deadline to confirm participation looming—August 11, 2025—the urgency of the matter cannot be overstated. Pakistan earned this chance after finishing second in the FIH Nations Cup, as New Zealand, the winners, declined their Pro League spot due to financial constraints. Now, Pakistan stands at the brink of reentering elite international hockey—but only if it overcomes one critical hurdle: funding.

The Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) has expressed serious concerns regarding financial resources. With barely days left to confirm their participation, the lack of clarity and support could result in Pakistan missing out on one of the most significant international hockey events. This situation demands immediate and coordinated intervention from all stakeholders—the federal government, Pakistan Sports Board (PSB), and corporate sponsors.

Hockey in Pakistan is not just a sport; it is a cornerstone of the nation's sporting legacy and a source of immense national pride. Pakistan was once a dominant force in world hockey, having won four World Cup titles and three Olympic gold medals. However, in the past two decades, the sport has suffered a steep and heartbreaking decline. The causes are manifold: chronic mismanagement within the PHF, lack of government support, inadequate grassroots development, and insufficient exposure to international competition.

Yet, despite all these issues, the nation still retains a deep emotional connection with hockey. The sport is embedded in the fabric of Pakistan's history. The invitation to the FIH Pro League offers a timely and golden opportunity to revive that legacy, reengage fans, and inspire future generations. The FIH Pro League is not just another tournament—it is the premier international hockey league, featuring the best teams in the world, including Australia, the Netherlands, Germany, and India. Participation in the Pro League provides high-quality match exposure that is essential for player development. It also improves global rankings and opens up opportunities to qualify for mega-events such as the Olympics and the World Cup.

Playing regularly against top-tier opponents will give Pakistan's players invaluable experience, tactical exposure, and the competitive conditioning required to return to the world stage. This long-term investment in the national team is bound to pay dividends by enhancing performance, improving infrastructure, and reigniting public interest. Recognizing the importance of this opportunity, the federal government must act immediately. A recent high-level meeting of the Ministry of Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC),

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Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

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Phone: 051-8488394 / 051-2261960

Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad



chaired by PM's Adviser Rana Sanaullah, specifically addressed the issue. In the meeting, the PHF was asked to submit a comprehensive breakdown of the expenses required for Pro League participation. The adviser also raised concerns about the transparency of PHF's internal affairs and called for proper accountability before disbursing any funds. While transparency and accountability are essential, this should not delay critical funding for an opportunity that has come after years of isolation from elite-level hockey. The ministry must work in tandem with the PHF to ensure funds are released in time while simultaneously ensuring financial discipline and oversight.

In parallel, corporate sponsors—many of whom generously support cricket and football—must step forward. Hockey has a loyal and passionate fanbase and deserves to be supported as a national cause. The Pro League, with its media coverage and global viewership, also presents a strong branding opportunity for companies to associate with a sport of historical importance in Pakistan.

The conduct of the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) also warrants serious scrutiny. While it is mandated to promote sports in the country, its actions toward hockey have often appeared counterproductive. In recent months, PSB significantly increased fees for the use of national hockey grounds, rendering them unaffordable for most clubs. As a result, no regular hockey club is currently practicing at the main hockey venues, and the facilities are now deteriorating due to lack of use. This not only hampers talent development but also threatens the upkeep of national infrastructure built for the sport. Adviser Rana Sanaullah highlighted this issue in the recent IPC meeting and instructed PSB to reconsider its fee structure and policies, which have been detrimental to grassroots hockey.

The PSB must revise its approach. Supporting national sports requires more than administrative oversight; it demands enabling conditions for practice, development, and performance. In addition to government and corporate support, the hockey community and the public at large should consider launching crowdfunding initiatives. In the age of digital platforms and social media, mobilizing public sentiment can be a powerful tool. A campaign to support Pakistan's return to international hockey could galvanize widespread support and bring in supplementary funding, even if modest.

Furthermore, such an initiative could build community ownership of the sport's revival. When the public invests emotionally and financially, it also holds institutions accountable. This two-way engagement can lay the foundation for a sustainable revival of hockey in Pakistan.

New Zealand's refusal to join the Pro League due to financial reasons reflects the harsh reality of global sports financing, particularly for smaller nations. However, Pakistan must not follow suit. Unlike New Zealand, which has other thriving sports to bank on, hockey remains Pakistan's most historically successful sport. Missing this chance would be nothing short of a tragedy.

Pakistan has already proven its potential by reaching the final of the Nations Cup. The team is on an upward trajectory, and international exposure could accelerate its progress significantly. With high-level competition, the players will gain confidence, sharpen their skills, and carry the momentum into qualification events for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. Pakistan hockey stands at a defining moment. The FIH Pro League invitation is a beacon of hope—one that signals the country's potential reentry into the highest echelons of global hockey. The responsibility to seize this opportunity does not rest on the PHF alone.

Will the US Follow the Soviet Union's Collapse?

Qamar Bashir



True strength, Oberg contends, does not lie in flexing military muscles. It lies in diplomacy that solves conflicts, not escalates them. It lies in upholding human dignity, protecting freedom of speech, and respecting sovereignty. It lies in providing infrastructure, education, healthcare, and technological innovation—not merely funding the next generation of fighter jets. And America is increasingly failing to meet those criteria. The economic dimension of this decline is undeniable

THE warning comes not from an enemy, but from within the ranks of intellectual scrutiny. Peace Studies researcher Jan Oberg has sounded the alarm that the United States is dangerously close to walking the same doomed path as the Soviet Union. His theory is not based on ideological rhetoric but on a structural analysis of declining empires—those that prioritized militarism over diplomacy, war over peace, and brute force over political legitimacy. According to Oberg, and substantiated by today's geopolitical developments, the United States is eroding its foundational strength by investing in weapons while its economy weakens, its diplomacy falters, and its international credibility dwindles. His chilling comparison to the Soviet collapse, which came after overextension in an unwinnable arms race, holds a mirror to current American foreign policy—and the reflection is deeply troubling.

A powerful nation is not defined by its military might alone. Oberg argues that a truly enduring power must have equilibrium—military capability, yes, but equally robust economic resilience, diplomatic dexterity, adherence to international law, and a moral compass that commands global respect. America's current trajectory betrays this balance. It has increasingly become a nation that exports weapons instead of solutions, one that supplies bombs instead of brokering peace. In doing so, it is forfeiting not just friends but also its own values. While other economies—China, India, Brazil—grow rapidly, building infrastructure, trading in goods, and cultivating partnerships, the U.S. has become synonymous with conflict zones.

Nowhere is this truer than in Ukraine. Had the U.S. and NATO been willing to acknowledge Russia's core concern—its opposition to Ukraine joining NATO—this war may have been averted altogether. But instead of diplomacy, Washington chose to flood Ukraine with arms, sending billions in military aid, even as the nation's own cities crumble under the weight of failing infrastructure and economic stress. By turning Ukraine into a geopolitical battleground against Russia, the U.S. prolonged a war rather than seeking its resolution. It invested in firepower, not peace talks.

Then there is the U.S. alliance with Israel, which, more than any other, has morally bankrupted America's standing in the world. For decades, Israel has carried out operations in Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria, and now first the Biden and now Trump administration have stood complicit in enabling Israel's bom-

bardment of Gaza—an act many are calling ethnic cleansing. A nation that once claimed to champion democracy and human rights now vetoes UN resolutions aimed at feeding starving children. Stories abound of Gazan citizens collapsing from hunger at aid distribution points, mothers whose skeletal forms mirror images from the worst genocides in history, and children dying before they can reach food lines. The world watches in horror. And at the center of this horror, the United States is no longer seen as a neutral power, but as an accomplice to mass suffering.

It is not only distant nations that recoil from American policy. Even its closest allies, like Canada, are increasingly disillusioned. Long considered America's trusted neighbor and friend, Canada is now resisting U.S. economic pressure, building its own resilience to unjust restrictions and defining its foreign policy apart from Washington's dictates. Likewise, Europe, once united under the NATO umbrella, is slowly seeking independence from American dominance, investing in its own defense frameworks and strategic autonomy.

More alarming still is America's behavior toward Iran. The recent bombing of Iran's nuclear facilities—conducted without credible proof, international backing, or even meaningful justification—has shaken global confidence in the U.S. respect for sovereignty and due process. Iran, which has never been proven to develop nuclear weapons and which operates under the fatwa of its Supreme Leader forbidding such development, became a target not of deterrence, but of sheer political arrogance. Bomb first, ask later. This behavior no longer inspires awe; it invites isolation.

True strength, Oberg contends, does not lie in flexing military muscles. It lies in diplomacy that solves conflicts, not escalates them. It lies in upholding human dignity, protecting freedom of speech, and respecting sovereignty. It lies in providing infrastructure, education, healthcare, and technological innovation—not merely funding the next generation of fighter jets. And America is increasingly failing to meet those criteria. The economic dimension of this decline is undeniable. The United States has lost a significant part of its economic sovereignty, now burdened with record debt, trade imbalances, and an eroding manufacturing base. Instead of investing in domestic welfare, it chooses to finance wars abroad. While its people struggle with rising inflation, healthcare crises, and decaying infrastructure, Washington prioritizes regime changes, proxy wars, and military aid to allies that violate international norms.

The result is clear: America's legitimacy is in free fall. In contrast, China offers a different model of global power. It has not bombed a country in living memory. It has not participated in regime change operations. Its power grows not through war, but through trade, investment, and connectivity. The Belt and Road Initiative is a prime example—building railways, ports, and power plants from Asia to Africa without firing a single missile. China does not send tanks; it sends fiber-optic cables. It does not fund insurgencies; it builds high-speed rail. That is not to say China is perfect—but it has learned the art of gaining influence without generating destruction.

It is this contrast that should alarm American policymakers. If the U.S. continues to reject the values it once championed—rule of law, human rights, diplomacy—it will lose more than allies. It will lose the very moral compass that once made it a beacon of freedom. Even the Freedom of Press Index and Human Rights Index now show America sliding backward. A country that once condemned censorship now suppresses dissent. A nation that once prized civil liberties now spies on its citizens and arrests journalists. And all this while claiming to export democracy.

The lesson, as Jan Oberg suggests, is clear. Military power must be retained—but as a deterrent, not a default. It must protect the homeland, not destroy foreign ones. And it must be balanced with economic strength, political wisdom, moral authority, and diplomatic sophistication. No country has the right to decide another's destiny. The notion that America must bring "freedom" through war is a relic of failed imperial thinking. Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, Vietnam, Palestine—each a graveyard of American hubris.

To reverse course is still possible. The West is not without hope. Democratic societies can learn from their mistakes. They have the tools to self-correct—debate, dissent, elections, and institutions. But that self-correction requires courage: the courage to admit that wars are not solutions, that diplomacy is not weakness, and that power, unmoored from ethics, is merely force.

The 21st century demands a new model of strength. Not one built on coercion, but on cooperation. Not one built on regime change, but on mutual respect. The future will belong not to those who dominate with drones, but to those who uplift with ideas, dignity, and infrastructure. If the U.S. wants to lead this future, it must rediscover its soul before it loses its seat at the global table—forever.

Institutionalizing the cryptocurrency frontier

Dr. John Sfakianakis

This is not merely a regulatory footnote. It is a structural turning point. For the first time since the publication of Satoshi Nakamoto's white paper in 2008, the debate in Washington is no longer about whether to regulate crypto, but how — and, more importantly, who gets to define the rules. With bipartisan momentum and political backing from figures such as Trump, the US is stepping decisively into a global contest over digital financial infrastructure. The implications are material, especially for investors and financial institutions recalibrating their exposure to a space once seen as fringe

CRYPTOCURRENCIES have long existed in a legal and financial gray zone — praised as disruptive innovations, dismissed as speculative bubbles and often relegated to the periphery of serious capital markets. That era is over. New US federal regulation of digital assets, especially stablecoins, signals a shift from speculation to mainstream investment. Legislation known as the Genius Act is one of three cryptocurrency bills currently advancing in Washington with President Donald Trump's support.

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The implications are material, especially for investors and financial institutions recalibrating their exposure to a space once seen as fringe. Since the collapse of FTX, the crypto industry has not only recovered market capitalization but has also ramped up lobbying efforts, poured capital into US elections and achieved a legislative milestone that provides regulatory clarity for dollar-backed stablecoins. The new framework mandates full reserve backing with short-term, Treasury-like instruments and places oversight in the hands of state or federal regulators. What was once dismissed as internet play money is now being granted legal standing and policy legitimacy.

This clarity matters. It creates a regulatory perimeter in which US-based issuers like Circle can scale and in which institutional finance can enter without reputational or compliance risk. The regulatory moment resembles the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which sought to modernize laws for an internet-driven world. Like that law, today's crypto framework is racing to catch up with technological reality — aiming to open the gates to competition while preserving systemic resilience.

Major players such as Citigroup and JPMorgan are not just taking notice, they are moving in. Citigroup CEO Jane Fraser has pointed to rising client demand for "multi-asset, multi-bank, cross-border, always-on" payment solutions — characteristics that programmable, blockchain-based money can deliver. JPMorgan and Citibank are developing deposit tokens: bank-backed digital instruments designed to retain institutional control while mimicking the benefits of stablecoins. These moves underscore a deeper truth: stablecoins are not just a crypto niche — they are fast becoming a parallel

infrastructure for global payments. Settling instantly, operating continuously and increasingly functioning outside legacy banking rails, these instruments resemble nothing so much as the Eurodollar markets of the 1960s — offshore dollar liquidity that reshaped global finance while evading domestic regulatory control.

Stablecoins are already testing the limits of monetary sovereignty, with the potential to rival traditional payment networks in speed and reach. And like the Eurodollar, their evolution may define a generation of financial innovation — unless they are absorbed by the incumbents first.

Yet crypto-native firms are outpacing the banks. Circle has soared in valuation. Coinbase, benefiting from its stablecoin partnership, has seen record highs. The market is voting with capital. The era of programmable money is not coming — it is already underway.

For serious investors, this presents both an opportunity and a challenge. Regulation is no longer a threat to crypto. It is a prerequisite for scale. Just as the Securities Acts of the 1930s laid the foundation for modern capital markets, today's digital asset legislation seeks to institutionalize a new financial layer — without stifling its underlying dynamism. That historical moment transformed Wall Street; this one could do the same for the blockchain economy.

Still, this will not be a clean transition. A single token can be a governance tool, a medium of exchange and a speculative asset — simultaneously. Decentralized exchanges mimic brokerages but lack centralized accountability. Applying legacy legal frameworks to these hybrids is like regulating aviation with maritime law.

Critics, especially among Democrats like Elizabeth Warren and Maxine Waters, have raised red flags. They worry about insufficient consumer protections, the potential for systemic risk and — should stablecoin issuers fail — the possibility of future taxpayer bailouts. Their skepticism is not without merit. But their remedy — regulatory inaction or outright prohibition — risks pushing innovation into unregulated offshore zones and ceding global leadership to more agile jurisdictions. Critics argue the legislation introduces more risk than reward. After all, the US already has a functioning payment system — it is called the dollar and, for most purposes, it works just fine. So why reinvent the wheel?

For much of crypto's existence, its real-world use case — beyond underground transactions and speculative fervor — has remained elusive. While tokenization promises faster, more efficient payments, the volatility of most cryptocurrencies has made them a poor substitute for fiat money. They are not reliable stores of value and, thus, not viable as everyday currency.

Stablecoins attempt to square this circle by pegging themselves to the dollar, offering price stability without sacrificing speed. Most do so by backing their tokens with low-risk reserves like Treasury bills, effectively functioning as digital wrappers for existing US assets.

Europe's Markets in Crypto-Assets framework is more than consumer protection. It is strategic industrial policy. By offering a unified regulatory passport across the EU, it provides clarity, scale and first-mover advantage. While the US squabbled over jurisdiction, Europe built the infrastructure. Other jurisdictions — Singapore, the UAE and even Hong Kong — have embraced similar clarity. China has gone its own route with a state-backed digital yuan. The US, long caught in agency turf wars, is finally catching up — but only just.

This is not merely a new asset class. It is an emerging economic architecture. In countries like Argentina and Nigeria, crypto offers escape from monetary dysfunction. In Ukraine, it became a wartime financing tool. In the US, stablecoins increasingly serve as the foundation for faster, cheaper and programmable transactions.

This is not peripheral experimentation. It is foundational infrastructure.

What was once dismissed as internet play money is now being granted legal standing and policy legitimacy.

Dr. John Sfakianakis

Congress' move signals a shift in political perception: crypto is no longer an anarchic subculture but a matter of financial strategy and sovereign control. But this shift is not without its complications. Trump's vocal support of crypto — and financial ties to digital asset ventures — raises uncomfortable questions about transparency and influence. The intersection of public policy and private gain in the digital asset space will require vigilant scrutiny.

Nonetheless, the legislation, despite its imperfections, marks a belated but necessary leap forward. Without regulatory clarity, the US risks becoming a bystander to innovations it helped pioneer. With it, it has a credible chance to shape — not just respond to — the financial infrastructure of the 21st century.

As of now, the total crypto asset market exceeds \$4 trillion, driven by altcoin gains and positive regulatory developments. Options markets suggest growing investor confidence in continued upward movement.

For institutional investors, this is no longer a niche curiosity or a speculative side bet. It is a rapidly institutionalizing frontier. The verdict on crypto is not yet settled. But the idea that it can be ignored has been definitively laid to rest. The law has entered the ledger. The market has taken note.

Briefs

Pakistan, WB resolve to achieve long-term goals

FROM PAGE 01
Pakistan initiate immediate relief efforts and begin reconstruction and rehabilitation activities. Ousmane Dione expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for the warm hospitality extended during his visit to Pakistan. He reaffirmed the World Bank's commitment to deepening and expanding its longstanding partnership with Pakistan and enhancing collaboration in key sectors of the economy. Mr Dione appreciated Pakistan's ongoing macroeconomic recovery and praised the prime minister's government for steering the country toward financial stability and sustainable growth. He particularly commended the current administration's reform agenda, noting PM Shehbaz Sharif's strong leadership in advancing institutional reforms, restoring investor confidence, and promoting inclusive economic development.

Pak seeks enhanced defense relations...

FROM PAGE 01
He also appreciated the Royal Saudi Naval Forces' growing role in promoting regional maritime stability. Vice Admiral Al Ghuraybi acknowledged Pakistan's significant contributions to regional peace and security and expressed keen interest in furthering cooperation in areas of mutual interest. He conveyed his appreciation for the professionalism and capabilities of the Pakistan Armed Forces, especially the Pakistan Navy. Earlier, upon his arrival at the Joint Staff Headquarters, the visiting dignity was presented with a Guard of Honour by a smartly turned-out tri-services contingent. The warm welcome reflected the deep diplomatic and military affinity that continues to grow between the two nations. The visit of Vice Admiral Al Ghuraybi is seen as part of ongoing high-level military exchanges aimed at reinforcing the strategic partnership and enhancing operational collaboration between the armed forces of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

Pakistan's monsoon death toll nears 260

FROM PAGE 01
24 hours alone, 22 houses were reported destroyed, and 36 livestock animals perished. Since the beginning of the monsoon season, a total of 1,027 houses have been demolished by the rains, while 364 animals have died. Earlier on Wednesday, Punjab remained the worst-hit province with 139 deaths and 477 injuries, followed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (60 deaths) and Sindh (24 deaths). The casualties also include 16 in Balochistan, 6 in Islamabad, 5 in Gilgit-Baltistan, and 2 in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The primary cause of deaths is the collapse of houses (143 fatalities), followed by flash floods (41), drowning incidents (36), lightning strikes (13), electrocution (12), and landslides (4). One of the most harrowing incidents occurred at Babusar Top, where a cloudburst led to a deadly flash flood, sweeping away a family attempting to rescue a three-year-old boy, Abdul Hadi. Among the deceased was Dr Mishal, who jumped into the torrent to save the child. The NDMA continues to monitor the situation closely and urges the public to remain cautious and follow safety advisories during the ongoing monsoon season.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding civil services reforms. Islamabad, 24 July 2025. – DNA

Pakistan, Bangladesh team up to boost cricket

During the meeting, the two sides agreed to sign a formal memorandum of understanding between the PCB and the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to promote cricket and institutionalize training programs. Minister Naqvi invited Bangladeshi umpires to Pakistan for professional training, underscoring Pakistan's willingness to share technical expertise and resources for regional sporting development

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister and PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi met with Bangladesh's Minister for Youth and Sports, Local Government and Rural Development, Asif Mahmood, in Dhaka on Thursday for a friendly and forward-looking discussion. The two leaders talked about working together to promote cricket, train umpires and create more opportunities for young people in both countries. The talks resulted in a broad agreement to strengthen bilateral cooperation in sports—particularly cricket—and the development of umpiring and youth engagement programs. During the meeting, the two sides agreed to

sign a formal memorandum of understanding between the PCB and the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to promote cricket and institutionalize training programs. Minister Naqvi invited Bangladeshi umpires to Pakistan for professional training, underscoring Pakistan's willingness to share technical expertise and resources for regional sporting development. A special focus was placed on enhancing women's cricket, with both ministers agreeing to develop joint initiatives aimed at nurturing female athletes across both countries. In addition to sports, the agenda extended to youth skill-building, employment generation, and educational cooperation. Discussions included scholarship opportunities, higher education exchange

programs, and experience-sharing in educational reforms. The ministers also explored collaboration in renewable energy—particularly solar energy innovation—marking a growing interest in sustainable technology exchanges. Minister Naqvi also introduced Pakistan's secure identity infrastructure, highlighting the success and technological advancement of NADRA (National Database and Registration Authority). Minister Mahmood expressed strong interest in Pakistan's identity management systems and welcomed an invitation for a Bangladeshi delegation to visit NADRA. A high-level Bangladeshi delegation is expected to visit Pakistan in the near future to pursue this collaboration further. Emphasizing the demographic parallels be-

tween the two nations, Minister Naqvi stated that youth make up the majority of both populations. "By investing in sports, skills, and education, we can create lasting opportunities for our young people," he said. The meeting signaled a shared commitment to deepening multifaceted ties between Pakistan and Bangladesh, particularly in sports diplomacy and youth development. Also present at the meeting were Secretary of Bangladesh's Ministry of Youth and Sports, Mahboob Alam; Secretary for Local Government, Rezaul Maqsood; Charge d'Affaires of the Pakistani High Commission, Muhammad Wasif; Pakistan cricket team's Head Coach Mike Hesson; Team Manager Naveed Akram Cheema; and senior officials from both sides.

IFA approves list of match officials, video support system for U-20 World Cup

ZURICH: The FIFA Referees Committee has announced the appointment of 54 match officials for the FIFA U-20 World Cup Chile 2025, scheduled to take place from 27th September to 19th October. The officials include 18 referees and 36 assistant referees representing 22 FIFA Member Associations. Pierluigi Collina, Chairman of the FIFA Referees Committee, said on FIFA's official website that the selection of this group of officials is part of FIFA's ongoing

efforts to provide referees with opportunities to officiate at tournaments featuring emerging football talent. He noted that the competition will serve as a significant testing ground for the Football Video Support (FVS) system, which has delivered promising results so far. Collina explained that the use of FVS builds on its deployment during last year's FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup in Colombia and FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup in the Dominican Republic.

The system has been developed in response to requests from several national associations for a lower-cost alternative to the VAR system. Unlike VAR, the FVS does not rely on specialist video officials or review all match-impacting incidents. Instead, it provides coaches with a limited number of review requests for clear and obvious errors in critical situations such as goals, penalty decisions, direct red cards, or mistaken identity. – APP

Abdullah Nawaz falls short in World Jr Individual Squash C'ships

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Abdullah Nawaz lost in the pre-quarterfinals of the World Junior Individual Squash Championships at Egypt. He lost to Adam Hawal of Egypt by 3-0 (11-6, 11-5, 11-2), said a statement issued here. However the action continues for Pakistan as they gear up for the World Junior Team Squash Championship starting from July 27 in Egypt. – APP

Pak receives formal invitation to join FIH Hockey Pro League

DNA

LAUSANNE: After Hockey New Zealand notified the International Hockey Federation (FIH) of their decision not to participate in the next FIH Hockey Pro League Men's season despite having won the FIH Hockey Nations Cup last month, FIH has, in accordance with the regulations, extended an invitation to the Nations Cup runners-up, namely Pakistan, to join the 2025-26 Pro League edition. Travel packages to Pakistan.

Editorial on Page 5

The Pakistan Hockey Association has been given a deadline of 12 August to inform FIH of their decision to accept or deny the invitation. The 2024-25 FIH Hockey Pro League crowned both Dutch teams, Women's and Men's, as champions. The upcoming season will be the seventh one of the "League of the Best".

Fritz, Medvedev advance at DC Open

WASHINGTON: Top seed Taylor Fritz romped into the last 16 at the ATP/WTB DC Open on Wednesday as Russian eighth seed Daniil Medvedev overcame an early scare to advance to the third round. World number four Fritz, playing his first match since losing to Carlos Alcaraz in the semi-finals at Wimbledon earlier this month, cruised past Australia's Aleksandar Vukic 6-3, 6-2 in 59 minutes. The American dominated Vukic with a powerful service game while producing a slew of superb backhands in a stream of 28 winners to ease into a last 16 clash against Italy's Matteo Arnaldi. "I felt like I played pretty well all around, but the shot that stood out was the backhand line," Fritz told The Tennis Channel after his win. "I don't usually like that shot but it just felt like every single one I tried today was going in." Fritz was always in control of his game against the current world 105 Vukic, breaking to open up an early 3-0 lead before closing out the first set. A similarly dominant start saw him take a 4-0 lead early in the second before he wrapped up a comfortable win. Earlier, Russia's Medvedev was made to grind through a roller-coaster tussle with big-serving US player Reilly Opelka before coming through 3-6, 7-5, 6-1. – Agencies

Ex. Captain calls for promotion of hockey at grass-roots levels

PESHAWAR: Former Captain Pakistan Hockey Team, Olympian, Rahim Khan has called for promotion of hockey at school level to restore the glory of the nation in its national sports. Speaking at the Sports Heroes Awards ceremony held here at Nishtar Hall, the other day, the renowned hockey player attributed the current decline of hockey in the country to the lack of the patronage of the sports at the grassroots level. He emphasized that without structured and consistent hockey activities in schools, colleges, and universities, it is impossible to revive the national sport or reclaim Pakistan's lost status on the international stage. "In the past, hockey was used to flow in the veins of Pakistanis, but over time, we have drifted away from our national sport. If we want to attract youth back to hockey, the first step is to revive it at the school level by developing infrastructure, appointing qualified coaches, and organizing regular competitions," proposed the former national hockey team. He expressed disappointment over the lack of concrete

steps taken by successive governments to promote hockey, stating that a nation which once dominated the world stage now finds itself missing from global rankings.

"We need a transparent, merit-based system free from political interference to ensure young players can step onto the field with confidence and pride," he added. Rahim Khan urged federal and provincial sports authorities, especially the Directorate of Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan Hockey Federation, and the Ministry of Education, to integrate hockey into the academic curriculum and ensure that every district hosts a School Hockey League. "Unless children get the opportunity to hold a hockey stick from a young age, we won't be able to produce the next Wasim Ahmed, Shahbaz Senior, or Hassan Sardar," he remarked. Highlighting the challenges faced by aspiring players, Rahim Khan noted that many passionate and hardworking youngsters fail to progress due to the absence of basic facilities, trained coaches, and opportunities. – APP

MLS chief tightlipped on Messi ban after All-Star no-show

Messi has played nine games in 35 days - four in the Club World Cup and five in domestic competitions - and played 90 minutes in each game

LOS ANGELES: Major League Soccer commissioner Don Garber refused to be drawn on whether the league planned to sanction Lionel Messi after the Inter Miami and Argentina superstar was a late withdrawal from Wednesday's All-Star game. Messi and Miami teammate Jordi Alba were both due to start in Wednesday's showpiece in Austin, leading a combined MLS XI against an All-Star team from Mexico's Liga-MX. However news broke early Wednesday that Miami had informed MLS neither player would feature in the game, for reasons that were not immediately clear. The 11th-hour snub has left Messi and Alba facing a one-game suspension from MLS. Under league rules, players selected for the All-Star game must participate unless they have a valid reason – such as an injury – not to do so. Garber however was tightlipped on a pos-

sible sanction for Messi following his controversial no-show, declining to say if the league would go ahead and issue a ban against its biggest star, who could now miss Miami's game against FC Cincinnati this weekend. "Anything that's going to happen as relates to next weekend, we're not going to talk about today," Garber told reporters. "The game is not until this coming weekend and we don't need to answer that. We're managing through this process as we speak." While Messi, 38, showed no sign of injury while scoring twice in Miami's win over the New York Red Bulls last weekend, Garber did note that the Argentinian star has recently completed a punishing schedule of games. Messi has played nine games in 35 days – four in the Club World Cup and five in domestic competitions – and played 90 minutes in each game.

"Miami's had a schedule that is unlike any other team," Garber said. "Most of our teams had a 10-day break. Miami hasn't. So we have to manage through that as a league." But Garber added: "At the same time, we do have rules. And we have to manage that as well. So we would have loved to have Leo here and to have every player that was selected here." Garber said the league should have been made aware earlier that Messi planned to skip Wednesday's game. "We should have known earlier," Garber added. "We should have addressed it earlier. No doubt about that." Messi and Alba's participation in the All-Star game had been under a cloud after Miami coach Javier Mascherano indicated at the weekend he wanted Messi and Alba to rest. "The players are called up. I'd prefer they rest, but it's not my deci-

sion," Mascherano said. "I know how important the All-Star Game is, and as far as I know, there's no decision from the club – everything continues as normal." Messi, regarded by many as the greatest football player in history, joined MLS in 2023, just months after leading Argentina to victory in the 2022 World Cup. The eight-time Ballon D'Or winner has had a transformative impact on the league since his arrival, boosting the global profile of MLS and sending ticket sales skyrocketing. Asked at the end of Wednesday's press conference whether former England and Los Angeles Galaxy star David Beckham remained the most impactful player in the league's history, Garber replied: "MLS wouldn't be what it is today without David Beckham, but MLS wouldn't be what it is today without Leo Messi either." – Agencies

Next monsoon spell to start from July 28

FROM PAGE 01

He said the upcoming monsoon spell is likely to bring heavy rainfall to a wide range of areas, including Kasur, Sialkot, Narawal, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Attock and extending from central Punjab to Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir. According to him, Karachi and several areas across Sindh will see light showers and overcast conditions, with temperatures expected to remain between 30 and 35 degrees Celsius.

TTAP-led opposition decides to hold APC...

FROM PAGE 01

He added that the way "Shehbaz and company" have imposed control through force is undemocratic and unacceptable. Addressing the broader political environment, religious scholar Allama Nasir Abbas said that if democracy truly existed in Pakistan, controversial decisions regarding reserved seats would not have been made. He expressed disappointment that no other political party has condemned these decisions, accusing the system of playing a vile game with the public. Abbas stressed that although the alliance does not believe in armed struggle, it will not remain silent. He announced plans for a large-scale protest on August 5, warning that if the government tries to obstruct their demonstration, it alone will bear responsibility for the consequences. Meanwhile, Khokhar, highlighting the economic crisis, said: "People's purchasing power has collapsed. Salaried individuals are struggling to make ends meet."

All 50 onboard die in Russian plane crash

FROM PAGE 01

The plane, whose tail number showed it was built in 1976, was operated by a Siberia-based airline called Angara. It was en route from the city of Blagoveshchensk to Tynda and dropped off radar screens while approaching Tynda, a remote town in the Amur region bordering China. There were 43 passengers, including five children, and six crew members on board according to preliminary data, Vasily Orlov, the regional governor said.

The emergencies ministry put the number of people on board somewhat lower, at around 40. Debris from the plane was found on a hill around 15 km (10 miles) from Tynda, the Interfax news agency quoted emergency service officials as saying. "During the search operation, a Mi-8 helicopter belonging to Rossaviatsiya discovered the fuselage of the aircraft, which was on fire," Yuliya Petina, an emergency services official, wrote on Telegram. "Rescuers continue to make their way to the scene of the accident". Authorities announced an investigation into the crash.

Army officer among two martyred

FROM PAGE 01

belonging to the Indian proxy, Fitna al-Hindustan. During the conduct of the operation, the Pakistani troops effectively engaged the terrorists' location and as a result, three terrorists were sent to hell, the military's media wing said. However, during the intense fire exchange, Major Zeeyad Salim Awal, 31, a resident of Khushab, a brave officer who was leading his troops from the front, fought gallantly, paid the ultimate sacrifice and embraced shahadat. The ISPR statement added that apart from the major, another brave son of the soil, Sepoy Nazam Hussain, 22, a resident of Jhelum district, embraced martyrdom. A sanitisation operation is being conducted to eliminate any other Indian sponsored terrorists found in the area. The security forces of Pakistan, it said, are determined to wipe out the menace of Indian Sponsored Terrorism from the country, and such sacrifices of our brave men further strengthen our resolve.

Briefs

Australia, Britain to hold talks on boosting defense, economic ties

SYDNEY: Australia and Britain's defense and foreign ministers will hold talks in Sydney on Friday on boosting cooperation, coinciding with Australia's largest war games and the first visit by a British carrier strike group in three decades, Australia said. Following the Australia-United Kingdom Ministerial Consultations (AUKMIN), Britain's Foreign Minister David Lammy and Defense Secretary John Healey are scheduled to travel to the northern garrison city of Darwin, where the British aircraft carrier HMS Prince of Wales has arrived for the Talisman Sabre war games. Australia sees Britain as a critical partner and the two countries are working closely amid "shared strategic challenges in an increasingly complex and uncertain world," Defense Minister Richard Marles said in a statement. As many as 40,000 troops from 19 countries are taking part in the Talisman Sabre exercises held from July 13 to August 4, which Australia's military has said are a rehearsal of joint war fighting that contribute to stability in the Indo-Pacific. Britain has significantly increased its participation in the exercise co-hosted by Australia and the United States, with 3,000 troops taking part. —APP

Sugar profiteers' days numbered as noose tightens around mafia

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research, Rana Tanveer Hussain on Thursday said the government would ensure a smooth supply chain of sugar across the country, showing no leniency towards those involved in black marketing and profiteering of the commodity. "Sugar profiteers will be dealt with an iron hand and brought to justice by taking stern action and ensuring exemplary punishments through the due course of law," he said while speaking to APP. The minister said necessary directives had already been issued to all provincial chief secretaries and deputy commissioners to ensure the availability of sugar at controlled prices. Under the guidelines, he said, district administrations were required to enforce the ex-mill rate of sugar at Rs161 per kilogram and the retail rate at Rs173 per kilogram. Tanveer assured that a sufficient supply of sugar was being maintained, adding that no leniency would be shown to those exploiting the poor for profit, regardless of political affiliation. He warned that anyone acting against the public interest would face consequences in accordance with the law. The minister vowed that the government would protect the rights of the public at all costs and would not allow any mafia to operate or cause financial harm to any segment of society through hoarding and profiteering. —APP

Gold prices dip by Rs.5,900 at Rs359,000

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold decreased by Rs.5,900 and was traded at Rs.359,000 on Thursday as against its sale at Rs. 364,900 the previous day, All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported. The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also decreased by Rs.5,058 to Rs.307,784 from Rs. 312,842 whereas that of 10 grams of 22 karat gold went down by Rs.4,637 to Rs.282,145 from Rs. 286,782. However, the rates of per tola and ten gram silver decreased by Rs24 and Rs.20 to Rs.4,057 and Rs.3,478 respectively. The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$61 to \$3,363 from \$3,424, whereas that of silver decreased by \$0.26 to \$39.08 from \$39.34, the Association reported. —APP

Ambassador Alisher presents credentials to Lankan President

Ambassador Tukhtaev expressed his confidence that this new phase in bilateral ties would be grounded in trust, mutual respect, and shared interests, paving the way for a long-term and fruitful partnership between Uzbekistan and Sri Lanka

DNA

Ambassador Alisher Tukhtaev, Uzbekistan's Ambassador to Pakistan, formally presented his Letter of Credence to His Excellency Anura Kumara Dissanayake, President of Sri Lanka, thereby officially assuming duties as the first Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Uzbekistan to Sri Lanka with residence in Islamabad. The ceremony, held in Colombo, marked a historic milestone in Uzbekistan-Sri Lanka relations. Ambassador Tukhtaev and President Dissanayake discussed a wide range of issues concerning bilateral collaboration. Both sides emphasized the importance of expanding political dialogue and enhancing practical cooperation across various sectors. The Sri Lankan President expressed strong interest in establishing closer and multifaceted ties with Uzbekistan. Ambassador Tukhtaev conveyed greetings from the President of Uzbekistan, H.E. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, and



welcomed the appreciation expressed by President Dissanayake for Uzbekistan's progressive reforms under President Mirziyoyev's leadership. During the meeting, both parties

put forward concrete proposals to enhance collaboration in areas such as politics, economy, tourism, logistics, education, and investment. Emphasis was also placed on building direct connections

between the business communities and experts of both countries to foster people-to-people ties and sustainable growth. Ambassador Tukhtaev expressed his confidence that this new phase

in bilateral ties would be grounded in trust, mutual respect, and shared interests, paving the way for a long-term and fruitful partnership between Uzbekistan and Sri Lanka.

Sino-Pak joint lab on Modern Agr launched

BEIJING: Gansu Academy of Agricultural Sciences (GAAS) and Islamia University of Bahawalpur (IUB) signed an agreement on establishing the Joint Laboratory on Modern Agriculture Science and Technology to strengthen collaborative research in high-yield and high-quality crop breeding, sustainable agricultural development technologies, efficient agricultural resource utilization, and agricultural ecological environment protection. "The challenges facing Pakistan's agricultural development, such as water scarcity and insufficient equipment, are highly similar to the difficulties Gansu once encountered. With the Joint Laboratory as a link, our academy will transform the Chinese experience accumulated over the years - including dryland farming technologies, crop cultivation models, and agricultural mechanization supporting schemes - into localized solutions suitable for Pakistan," Chang Hong, GAAS President said according to a report carried by China Economic Net on Thursday. Under the agreement, the two sides will set up research bases in Gansu and Bahawalpur respectively, with a focus on promoting the localization of advanced technologies of GAAS in Pakistan. Key efforts will include introducing grain-legume intercropping and dryland water-saving technologies to arid areas in Pakistan to improve the stress resistance and yield of farmland, combining Gansu's high-quality crop breeding experience with Pakistani germplasm resources to develop high-yield crop varieties, and strengthening personnel exchanges and technical training for Pakistani agricultural professionals. "In Pakistan, where agriculture supports nearly 40% of the labor force, there is a pressing need for modernization and research-based solutions to ensure food security, climate resilience, and economic uplift. We envision this joint laboratory as a model of synergy - where Pakistani and Chinese scientists, researchers, and students will work hand in hand, benefitting from shared knowledge, cutting-edge facilities, and a spirit of co-creation," Prof. Muhammad Kamran, IUB Vice Chancellor remark. —DNA

Pakistani scholar calls for unity, connectivity at SCO Summit

ZHENGZHOU: Speaking at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Media and Think Tank Summit in Zhengzhou, Dr. Hassan Daud, Senior Associate Professor at Bahria University and Senior Advisor at CEEC Pakistan Branch, urged regional stakeholders to strengthen cooperation and adopt innovative strategies to tackle South Asia's development challenges. Dr. Daud emphasized that despite Asia's remarkable progress under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), South Asia remains one of the least integrated regions globally, with intraregional trade under 5 percent - sharply contrasting with the European Union's 60 percent. "Political fragmentation continues to hinder trade, investment, and mobility in the region," he noted. Highlighting the critical role of strategic infrastructure in transport and maritime sectors, Dr. Daud called for mobilization of new financing mechanisms and innovative cooperation models. "Arguing against globalization is like arguing against gravity," he said, quoting Kofi Annan, China Economic Net reported on Thursday. "In this age of vulnerability, we need platforms like BRI and SCO not just for connectivity, but also for collective resilience." He stressed the urgency to transform SCO from a framework of cooperation into an engine of transformation, promoting equitable access to education, finance, healthcare, and digital opportunity. "True development is inclusive, future-ready, and shared," he added. Dr. Daud praised China's leadership during its SCO presidency, which saw over 100 events and the launch of the "Year of Sustainable Development," promoting regional peace and mutual prosperity. As the world faces economic and environmental uncertainty, Dr. Daud called for unity, vision, and pragmatic cooperation to safeguard peace and development across Eurasia. —APP

Training program for Pakistani Agri professional begins at SWUST

This second batch follows the successful training of 300 agricultural professionals of Pakistan under the same initiative in April this year

BEIJING : One hundred Pakistani agriculture professionals officially commenced a six-month specialized training program at Southwest University of Science and Technology (SWUST) becoming the first group of the second batch under Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif's landmark Initiative for Capacity Building of 1,000 Agriculture Graduates Training Programme in China. The opening ceremony, attended by Pakistani Consul General in Chengdu Tanvir A. Bhatti and SWUST Party Secretary Yang Junhui, highlighted the growing agricultural cooperation between Pakistan and China. The program focuses on two critical areas for Pakistan's food security - crop breeding and genomics - with a curriculum specially designed to address Pakistan's agricultural challenges. "This training initiative represents a crucial step in strengthening Pakistan's agricultural capabilities," said the Consul General. "Agriculture remains the backbone of our economy, supporting millions of livelihoods, Gwadar Pro reported on Thursday. By learning from China's advanced agricultural technologies and best practices, our professionals will return home equipped to enhance our food production systems and contribute to the green development goals of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)." Yang Junhui emphasized the university's commitment to the partnership: "We see this training as an opportunity to innovate our collaboration models with Pakistani counterparts. Together, we can advance China-Pakistan agricultural cooperation into broader, deeper and higher-quality development." The ceremony featured remarks from representatives of the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, training faculty and participating professionals, all of whom expressed their enthusiasm for the knowledge exchange opportunity. The event concluded with guests jointly pressing the launch button to officially commence the program. This second batch follows the successful training of 300 agricultural professionals of Pakistan under the same initiative in April this year. Current participants will undergo intensive training and industry placements to gain hands-on experience with China's cutting-edge agricultural technologies before returning to implement their knowledge in Pakistan.—DNA

India, UK sign multibillion-dollar free trade deal

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi signed on Thursday a long-awaited free trade agreement with the UK, which will see tariffs cut on goods and increase market access for both countries. Modi arrived in London on Wednesday evening to meet his British counterpart Keir Starmer and witness the official signing of the deal by India's Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and UK Business Secretary Jonathan Reynolds in the Great Hall of Chequers in Aylesbury. "This agreement is not merely an economic partnership, but a plan for shared prosperity. On one hand, Indian textiles, footwear, gems and jewelry, seafood and engineering goods will get better market access in the UK. New opportunities will be created in the UK market for India's agriculture produce and processed food industry," Modi said during a joint press

conference with Starmer. "For India's youth, farmers, fishermen, and the MSME sector, this agreement will prove especially beneficial. On the other hand, for the people and industry of India, products made in the UK, such as medical devices and aerospace parts, will become available at accessible and affordable prices." A deal-in-principle was announced by Modi and Starmer in late May. Launched in January 2022, the FTA negotiations between India and the UK were set to conclude the same year, but despite more than a dozen formal rounds, talks have stalled over issues such as tariffs, rules of origin and mobility for services professionals. Under the new pact, about 99 percent of Indian goods will get duty-free access to the UK market. It will also halve import duties on UK-produced whiskey and gin from 150 percent, followed by a further decrease to 40 percent in a dec-

ade. Tariffs on automobiles will be reduced from 100 percent to 10 percent. The services part of the deal eases the movement of professionals - from independent practitioners such as yoga instructors, musicians and chefs, to business visitors, investors, contractual service providers and intra-corporate transferees. It also extends work and residence rights to their partners and dependent children. While the pact's opponents cited concerns that it could undercut British workers, Starmer said after its signing that it "will bring huge benefits to both of our countries, boosting wages, raising living standards and putting more money in the pockets of working people" and that it "is good for jobs, it is good for business, putting tariffs and making trade cheaper, quicker and easier." Current bilateral India-UK trade stands at about

\$54 billion, according to UK Department for Business and Trade data, with UK exports to India estimated at \$21.7 billion and imports at \$32.4 billion. Anupam Manur, professor of economics at the Takshashila Institution, told Arab News that the FTA is expected to increase it by more than 60 percent in the next decade. "The free trade deal with the UK is extremely significant for India, which would result in a \$34 billion boost in bilateral trade," he said. "From India's point of view, it stands to gain on both counts; greater choice of products at lower prices due to lower import rates, and free market access to a large, advanced economy." India has free trade agreements with more than 10 countries, including Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements with South Korea, Japan and the UAE. It is also in talks with the EU to conclude

an FTA by the end of 2025, and with Australia, with an interim deal signed in 2022 and a full one under negotiation. At the same time, the US is threatening tariffs on India; it wants broader access to several key sectors, including agriculture, automobiles, steel and aluminium - a concession New Delhi resists. Without a deal, Indian exports could face a 26-27 percent "reciprocal" tariff imposed by President Donald Trump's administration, starting Aug. 1. "The trade deal with the UK eases the pressure on the Indian side to sign a hastily negotiated deal with the US ... This also acts as a template for how a good trade deal is done without looming deadlines and threats," Manur said. "A trade deal with the UK, Australia and the EU will signal to the US administration that India is not desperate for a deal, but will instead negotiate on its own terms.—Agencies

Canada calls for immediate resumption of UN-led aid in Gaza

OTTAWA: The Canadian government said on Wednesday that Israeli military operations against civilians and aid workers in Gaza were unacceptable, and called for the immediate resumption of UN-led aid distribution in the war-torn enclave. "Israeli military operations against WHO staff and facilities, World Food Programme aid convoys, & the ongoing killing of Palestinians seeking urgently needed food and water are unacceptable," the Canadian foreign ministry said on X. "Hunger in Gaza has reached catastrophic levels ... Canada calls for the immediate resumption at scale of UN-led aid," the ministry added.—APP

Iraqi governor quits after mall fire

BAGHDAD: The governor of an Iraqi province where a fire in a shopping mall killed more than 60 people resigned Wednesday. The fire last Wednesday tore through a newly opened shopping center in the town of Kut in Wasit province. While an investigation is ongoing, officials and residents have said that lack of safety measures in the building exacerbated the tragedy. Provincial Gov. Mohammed Al-Miyahi said he had resigned "in honor of the blood of the martyrs, as they are in need of a gesture that may soothe part of their deep wounds, and in loyalty to them and to the people of this province." The provincial council elected a new governor, Hadi Majid Kazzar. The fire had sparked widespread public anger, with families of the victims demanding the governor's dismissal and that others responsible for negligence be held accountable. They asserted that the blaze was the result of a long history of administrative corruption and weak oversight. Iraqi parliament speaker Mahmoud Al-Mashhadani had sent an official request to Prime Minister Mohammad Shia Al-Sudani calling for the governor's dismissal, and the Cabinet decided in a session on Tuesday to refer Al-Miyahi to the investigation. Al-Miyahi previously said that the building owner did not implement fire safety measures and had not applied for required permits, and that legal complaints had been filed against the owner and shopping center owner.—APP

Cheema hails NIT-ASU collaboration as key to global edu for Pak

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Economic Affairs, Ahad Cheema, on Wednesday lauded the collaboration between the National Institute of Technology (NIT), Lahore and Arizona State University (ASU), calling it a pivotal step toward integrating Pakistan's education system with global standards. The minister made these remarks while meeting a delegation of representatives from NIT and ASU, who called on him to brief him about the ongoing collaboration between the two institutions. Cheema especially acknowledged Doug Becker, Chairman of Cintana Education, for his outstanding work and continued commitment to improving access and quality in higher education across the globe. He appreciated Cintana Education's role in helping universities modernize through research collaborations, faculty development and advanced learning tools in partnership with ASU. Cheema expressed confidence that the collaboration would open up opportunities for Pakistani students, including access to world-class academic resources, research partnerships, and exchange programs. He highlighted that the achievements of Arizona State University in the field of science and technology will be highly beneficial for Pakistan, offering valuable learning opportunities for Pakistani students. — APP

Briefs

Border clash escalates

Thailand, Cambodia clash with jets, rockets, artillery

"We have used air power against military targets as planned," says Thai army deputy spokesperson

FOREIGN DESK

BANGKOK: Thailand launched air strikes on Cambodian military targets on Thursday as Cambodia fired rockets and artillery, killing a civilian, in a dramatic escalation of a long-running border row between the two neighbours. The neighbours are locked in a bitter spat over an area known as the Emerald Triangle, where the borders of both countries and Laos meet, and which is home to several ancient temples. The squabble has dragged on for decades, flaring into bloody military clashes more than 15 years ago and again in May, when a Cambodian soldier was killed in a firefight. The conflict blazed up on Thursday, with Cambodia firing rockets and artillery shells into Thailand and the Thai military scrambling F-16 jets to carry out air strikes.

Pakistan, Afghanistan cut tariffs

Agreement will be effective for period of one year, commencing on August 1

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a major move toward normalising ties, Pakistan and Afghanistan have signed a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) to reduce tariffs on eight agricultural products. The agreement, signed by senior commerce officials from both countries, will reduce the customs duties on four Afghan exports to Pakistan — grapes, pomegranates, apples and tomatoes — and four Pakistani exports to Afghanistan — mangoes, kinnows, bananas and potatoes. Tariff rates on these items, which previously exceeded 60% will now be capped at 27%. "This agreement will be effective for a period of one year, commencing on August 1, 2025," the Afghan embassy said on X.

President thanks China for unwavering support

Chinese Ambassador Calls on President Asif Ali Zardari

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Pakistan, Mr. Jiang Zaidong, called on President Asif Ali Zardari at Aiwan-e-Sadr, reaffirming the historic and time-tested relations between the two countries. The meeting underscored the mutual commitment to strengthen cooperation in various sectors, promote regional peace, and reinforce the iron-brotherhood that continues to define China-Pakistan ties. During the discussion, President Zardari expressed deep appreciation for China's consistent and unwavering support to Pakistan across multiple spheres. He noted that the relationship between the two countries is built on mutual trust, strategic convergence, and shared vision for regional development and peace. "Pakistan attaches the highest importance to its relations with China," he said, adding that Islamabad is fully committed to taking the bilateral partnership to new heights, particularly in trade, economy, connectivity, and cultural exchanges. Highlighting the vast potential for economic collaboration, President Zardari emphasized the need to diversify and deepen economic ties through joint ventures, enhanced bilateral trade, and increased Chinese investments in Pakistan's industrial, energy, and infrastructure sectors. He especially pointed to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as a transformative project that has greatly contributed to Pakistan's development and regional integration. The President further stressed the importance of regional connectivity and cooperation through Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)-linked projects. He said that enhanced connectivity between South Asia, Central Asia, and China could serve as a powerful engine for regional growth, stability, and shared prosperity. "Through CPEC and allied initiatives, we can lay the foundations of a more prosperous and interconnected region," he noted.



ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of China to Pakistan, Mr. Jiang Zaidong, presents a birthday message from President Xi Jinping to President Asif Ali Zardari, conveying warm wishes on his upcoming birthday, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, Islamabad. — DNA

President Zardari also underscored the critical need for continued cooperation on issues of regional security and peace. He said that both China and Pakistan have a shared interest in promoting stability in the region, particularly in light of challenges such as terrorism, extremism, and great-power rivalries. He called for closer coordination between the two countries in forums such as the Shanghai

Cooperation Organization (SCO) and United Nations to advocate for a more just and inclusive international order. Recognizing China's significant contributions to Pakistan's socio-economic development, President Zardari thanked the Chinese leadership for its continued support in areas such as infrastructure, education, health, and disaster relief. He said that the people of Pakistan deeply value China's role as a trusted and all-weather friend. "China has stood by us in every moment of difficulty—be it economic distress, natural calamities, or diplomatic challenges," he remarked. President Zardari also highlighted the growing importance of people-to-people exchanges in further cementing bilateral ties. He called for greater cultural cooperation, academic linkages, and tourism promotion to foster deeper understanding and goodwill between the peoples of the two countries. On this special occasion, Ambassador Jiang Zaidong conveyed warm birthday greetings to President Zardari from Chinese President Xi Jinping. The personal message from the Chinese head of state extended heartfelt wishes for the President's good health, long life, and continued service to the people of Pakistan. President Zardari thanked President Xi for the gesture and expressed his sincere best wishes for the leadership and people of China.

The meeting concluded on a note of mutual goodwill and commitment to deepen the China-Pakistan strategic partnership. Both sides reiterated their resolve to work closely on shared goals and to continue standing by each other on core issues of mutual concern.

The visit of the Chinese Ambassador comes at a time of renewed momentum in bilateral relations, and serves as a reaffirmation of the enduring friendship that has long withstood the test of time, changes in leadership, and shifting global dynamics. As both countries prepare to mark new milestones in their diplomatic journey, the bond between Islamabad and Beijing remains strong, resilient, and future-focused.

Body of 3-year-old recovered as floods wreak havoc Diامر

Rescue efforts continue amid road closures, missing persons, and widespread damage across Chilas

DNA

CHILAS: The body of three-year-old Abdul Hadi, son of Dr Mishaal Fatima, was recovered on Wednesday evening near Dasar in the Thak Babusar region, three days after a deadly flash flood swept through Babusar Top. Local residents spotted the body near a stream around 7pm and promptly alerted the authorities. Gilgit Baltistan Scouts recovered the body and transported it to Chilas Hospital. Abdul Hadi had gone missing when a sudden cloudburst triggered a flash flood that swept away a family returning from Skardu. The tragedy claimed the lives of Dr Mishaal Fatima, who jumped into the torrent to save the child, and her brother-in-law Fahad Islam. A family from Lodhran, they were picnicking in the scenic region when disaster struck. The Director of Administration at Shahida Islam Medical College stated that their bodies will be transported to Lodhran by 2pm, with funeral prayers scheduled for 5:30pm in Adam Wahan graveyard.

Rs1.16bn privilege travel vouchers issued to MNAs

MONITORING DESK

ISLAMABAD: An audit report has revealed that the National Assembly Secretariat issued privilege travel vouchers worth Rs1.16 billion to MNAs during the financial years 2021-22 to 2023-24, with a discrepancy of Rs161 million between the vouchers issued and the expenditure officially reported. According to the AGP report, the National Assembly management reported an expenditure of one billion rupees on the reimbursement and encashment of privilege travel vouchers during the said period. However, audit officials observed that the NA Secretariat failed to reconcile the actual expenditure incurred on encashment of these vouchers, reimbursed by the State Bank of Pakistan and booked by AGPR.

Taliban govt recognition Reports speculative: FO

Pakistan, Afghanistan in contact over security and diplomatic visit schedules, says spokesperson

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan has dismissed reports regarding Pakistan's possible recognition of the Taliban government in Afghanistan as speculative. Speaking at the weekly press briefing on Thursday, the spox said that terrorist sanctuaries operating from Afghan soil remain a constant source of concern for Pakistan. Khan said consultations are underway between the foreign ministries of Pakistan and Afghanistan to finalise the schedule for the Afghan foreign minister's visit. He added that preparations are ongoing, but media reports about official recognition of the Taliban administration are premature and speculative. The FO spokesperson also said that the deadline for the return of registered Afghan refugees expired on June 30. "Proposals for an extension have been submitted to the government, but no decision has been taken yet. Final authority on the matter lies with the Ministry of Interior and relevant state institutions." Referring to the interior minister's recent visit to Kabul, Khan said it was of significant importance. During the visit, both sides held detailed discussions on security and counter-terrorism, including the issue

of handing over Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and other militants. He said the Afghan leadership responded positively to Pakistan's concerns, and technical-level security dialogue is ongoing. A visible improvement in bilateral relations has been observed, and both countries are working to build on this positive diplomatic trend. Russia, earlier this month, officially recognised the Taliban government in Afghanistan, becoming the first country to do so. No other country has formally recognised the Taliban regime that seized power in August 2021 as US-led forces staged a chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan after 20 years of war. However, China, the United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, and Pakistan have all designated ambassadors to Kabul. On Iran, Khan said that Islamabad views its relations with Tehran as multidimensional and people-centric. He expressed Pakistan's support for diplomatic efforts to revive the Iran nuclear agreement, saying that any resolution must be achieved through diplomatic channels. He clarified that the reported date of July 26 for the Iranian president's visit was never finalised and was speculative. Both countries will soon announce a mutually agreed date.

Israel examines Hamas response to Gaza ceasefire proposal

"Israel has agreed to the Qatari proposal and the updated (US special envoy Steve) Witkoff proposal, it is Hamas that is refusing," Mencer told reporters, adding that Israel's negotiating team was still in Doha and talks were ongoing

TEL AVIV: Israel is examining Hamas's response to a Gaza ceasefire proposal, the office of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Thursday. Hamas said on Wednesday it had submitted its response to mediators but did not disclose the content. Earlier, Hamas said on Thursday that it has responded to an Israeli proposal for a 60-day ceasefire in Gaza, after more than two weeks of indirect negotiations in Qatar failed to yield a truce. The Palestinian group said in a statement on Telegram that it has "just submitted its response and that of the Palestinian factions to the ceasefire proposal to the mediators". A statement from the office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu confirmed it had received the response. "It is currently being evaluated," it added. Hamas's response included proposed

amendments to clauses on the entry of aid, maps of areas from which the Israeli army should withdraw, and guarantees on securing a permanent end to the war, according to a Palestinian source familiar with the ongoing talks in Doha. Negotiators from both sides have been holding indirect talks in Doha through mediators in an attempt to reach an agreement on a truce deal that would see the release of Israeli hostages. Of the 251 hostages taken during Hamas's 2023 attack, 49 are still being held in Gaza, including 27 the Israeli military says are dead. But the talks have dragged on for more than two weeks without a breakthrough, with each side blaming the other for refusing to budge on their key demands. For Israel, dismantling Hamas's military and governing capabilities is non-negotiable, while Hamas demands firm guarantees on a lasting truce, a full withdrawal of Israeli troops and the free flow of aid into Gaza. Israeli government spokesman David Mencer on Wednesday accused Hamas of obstructing the talks. "Israel has agreed to the Qatari proposal and the updated (US special envoy Steve) Witkoff proposal, it is Hamas that is refusing," Mencer told reporters, adding that Israel's negotiating team was still in Doha and talks were ongoing. The United States said Witkoff will head to Europe this week for talks on a possible ceasefire and an aid corridor.

Russia, Ukraine agree on new prisoner swap at Istanbul talks

"As soon as the Ukrainian side is technically ready to receive them, the remains of the deceased will be transferred to Ukraine with the assistance of the Red Cross," he said. Moscow also called for declaring 24- to 48-hour ceasefires to evacuate wounded soldiers and reclaim the bodies of dead soldiers, he added

BAKU: Russia and Ukraine concluded a third round of peace talks in Istanbul, Türkiye, during which they agreed on a new prisoner exchange with at least 1,200 people from each side, according to Anadolu Agency. The meeting between the two countries' delegations began around 8.37 pm local time (1737GMT) and ended around 9.16 pm (1816GMT). Following the talks, Vladimir Medinsky, the head of the Russian delegation, said Russia suggested forming three online working groups, each of them addressing different subject areas — political, humanitarian and military. He also confirmed that the two sides agreed on a new prisoner exchange with at least 1,200 people from each side and that Moscow proposed exchanging not only military personnel but also civilians, including around 30 people that Ukraine captured in Russia's Kursk region last year. Medinsky also said that Russia has so far returned around 7,000 bodies of fallen Ukrainian soldiers and offered to transfer 3,000 more and receive any number of its own deceased soldiers from Ukraine.

"As soon as the Ukrainian side is technically ready to receive them, the remains of the deceased will be transferred to Ukraine with the assistance of the Red Cross," he said. Moscow also called for declaring 24- to 48-hour ceasefires to evacuate wounded soldiers and reclaim the bodies of dead soldiers, he added. "We have once again proposed to the Ukrainian side to consider what we believe is a critically important measure: declaring short-term ceasefires (24-48 hours) along the line of combat contact. This would allow medical teams to evacuate the

wounded and enable commanders to recover the bodies of fallen soldiers," he said. Currently in the so-called "gray zone," medical evacuation teams face extreme risks when retrieving wounded soldiers due to persistent drone patrols, making operations dangerously unpredictable, he said. "Concerning claims about tens of thousands of children supposedly taken from Ukraine, we have thoroughly reviewed the complete list of 339 Ukrainian children provided to us. Each name and surname has been processed, and some children have already been returned to Ukraine. Work continues on the remaining cases. If legal parents, close relatives, or legal representatives are located, these children will be immediately repatriated." Commenting on Ukraine's claims about the "deportation" of children, Medinsky said the majority of children on Kyiv's list submitted to Moscow for return to Ukraine were never actually in Russia. "Most likely, they are somewhere in Europe. We have no information about their current location," he said. As for the children that are currently in Russia, should their parents or close relatives be identified, he vowed that they will be returned without delay. Responding to a proposal by Ukraine to organize a presidential meeting by August, Medinsky said preliminary work must be done on what would be discussed at this meeting. "It's not about discussing the agreement at this meeting, but rather putting a full stop and signing it. Holding a meeting to start discussing everything from scratch again makes no sense," he said. Addressing rumors that there will be no fourth round of talks between Moscow and Kyiv, Medinsky said: "We hope it will take place." — Agencies