



# Islamabad POST

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**Ukraine President to meet US President Trump at White House**

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**Malaysia envoy hosts sports family gala**

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**KP govt claims**

## Relief efforts continue in affected areas

KP's death toll crosses 400 figure, with Buner reporting 209 fatalities; National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Chairman Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik said that that rehabilitation work was underway in areas where communication roads had been damaged

BUREAU REPORT / DNA

PESHAWAR/RAWALPINDI: With the country's northern areas, predominantly Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, facing wide-scale destruction and loss of life due to rains and floods, the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has warned of more intense torrential rains across the country commencing today (Sunday). "Strong monsoon currents from the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal are continuously penetrating into the country. Low Pressure System (LPA) over the Bay of Bengal is likely to move westward from August 17 (today) and intensify this monsoon activity," the Met Office said in a statement. Also, a westerly wave was present over the country under the influence of these meteorological conditions, it added. Widespread rain-wind/thundershowers (with scattered heavy falls at times very heavy) are expected in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Dir, Chitral, Swat, Kohistan, Shangla, Battagram, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Buner, Malakand, Bajaur, Mohmand, Kohat and Peshawar. Heavy downpour is likely in Charsadda, Nowshera, Mardan, Swabi, Khyber, Orakzai, Kurrum, Hangu, Karak, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Waziristan, Tank and Dera Ismail Khan till August 19 (Tuesday). The forecast comes as the deaths in rain-related incidents across the country, mostly KP, GB

and AJK, have surpassed the grim 300-mark with KP reporting the highest tally of 314 fatalities as per a statement issued by the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) on Sunday. GB and AJK have reported 12 and 11 fatalities so far – pushing the total death toll in northern areas to at least 337. Giving a breakdown of the deaths in KP, the PDMA said that those killed in various incidents include 264 men, 29 women and 21 children. With 156 left wounded, the rains and floods damaged 159 houses, out of which 97 were partially damaged and 62 have been completely destroyed. Flood-ravaged Buner has reported the highest tally with 209 fatalities, the authority said, adding that rain and flood-related incidents have been reported in Bajaur, Torgar, Mansehra, Shangla and Battagram as well. PDMA relief teams and district administration are in full communication with each other, it said. Speaking during a media briefing, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Chairman Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik said that that rehabilitation work was underway in areas where communication roads had been damaged. "Relief supplies and food will be provided in the affected districts. NDMA is in constant contact with the provincial governments," Lt Gen Malik said, adding that a search for missing persons was underway. Noting that rehabilitation work was being carried out in Buner, Bajaur and Battagram, the NDMA chief called for evacuation of people from low lying areas.

**Upon PM's directive**

## Relief goods dispatched to flood-affected areas

The prime minister has instructed the Chairman NDMA to stay in constant contact with the disaster management authorities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Azad Jammu and Kashmir to make relief activities more coordinated

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: On the special instructions of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, additional relief goods were being dispatched to the flood-affected areas. On the prime minister's directives, federal ministers will participate in relief operations in the flood-hit districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. As per the prime minister's instructions, Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Engineer Amir Muqam will oversee the distribution of relief goods in districts Shangla and Buner; Federal Minister for Power Division will assist in Buner; Federal Minister for Religious Affairs

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## British Secretary Lammy conveys condolences

DNA

ISLAMABAD: British Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs David Lammy on Sunday contacted Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohamud Ishaq Dar to convey his condolences on the tragic loss of lives caused by the recent flash floods in Pakistan.

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## NDMA warns of intensified monsoon spells

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Chairman National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Lieutenant General Inam Haider on Sunday warned that two to three additional monsoon spells are likely in the coming weeks, with rainfall intensity projected to surge 50 to 60 percent above previous years. Addressing a media briefing on rain-related damages and flood response, the NDMA chief said this year's monsoon spread has expanded significantly due to unusually high summer temperatures, which triggered atmospheric

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## PM chairs meeting on cashless economy

MEHTAB PIRZDA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday chaired a review meeting on the transition towards a cashless and digital economy. The Prime Minister expressed satisfaction over the measures taken and progress achieved so far in moving the country towards a cashless economic system. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to prioritize the digitization of the economy and to shift financial transactions onto a digital and cashless framework. During the meeting, the Prime Minister

Continued on Page 06

## Federal Reserve police help flood victims: Naqvi

DNA

SWAT: On the special instructions of Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, teams of the Federal Reserve Police have been actively engaged in rescue and relief operations for flood-affected people in Swat. Under the supervision of District Officer Maria, Federal Reserve Police teams have been carrying out rescue and relief operations in the worst-affected areas.

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LAHORE: Former Federal Minister Khawaja Saad Rafique calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on 17 August, 2025. – DNA

**Meeting with Trump**

## European leaders to join Zelensky in White House

French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen are among those expected to join Zelensky for the discussions

DNA

WASHINGTON/BRUSSELS: A high-stakes round of diplomacy is set to unfold in Washington on Monday as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky arrives in the US capital for talks with President Donald Trump. A number of senior European leaders have confirmed their participation in the White House meeting, underscoring Europe's push to be seen as central to any settlement of the Ukraine war. French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen are among those expected to join Zelensky for the discussions. Their presence is widely interpreted as an effort to convince Trump that Eu-

rope remains indispensable to the peace deal he has repeatedly said he wants to secure. According to reports, European capitals are wary of being sidelined as Trump seeks to directly broker a deal with Moscow and Kyiv. By standing alongside Zelensky in Washington, leaders hope to remind the US president that any sustainable peace will require transatlantic coordination and European guarantees. The White House talks will follow a Sunday conference call between France, Germany, the UK, Ukraine, and other allies to align positions ahead of the Washington meeting. Diplomats say the call will focus on both military realities on the ground and potential frameworks for a political settlement.

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**Japan also extends condolences**

## Australian envoy expresses solidarity with Pakistan over flood tragedy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan Neil Hawkins has expressed deep sorrow over the devastating floods that have claimed more than 200 lives across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan, and other regions of the country. In a message on social media, the envoy said he was "saddened by the tragic flash floods across Pakistan, claiming over 200 lives across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan and beyond—including



brave rescuers in a helicopter crash." The High Commissioner reaffirmed Australia's support and sympathy for the people of Pakistan during this difficult time. "Australia stands in solidarity with our Pakistani friends at this tough time. Our thoughts are with all affected," he added.

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## Floods, terror, and the nation's unending crisis

OPINION

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI



AUGUST 15, 2025, will be remembered as yet another dark day in Pakistan's troubled history. In the past 48 hours, devastating floods in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), and parts of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) have claimed more than 200 lives. Entire villages have been washed away, roads destroyed, and families torn apart by nature's fury. The tragedy comes barely a day after terrorists struck in KP on August 14 – a day meant for national pride and celebration – killing scores of innocent citizens.

What is there to celebrate when the country remains engulfed in crisis? What joy can be found in waving flags and singing anthems while our fellow countrymen drown, are buried under debris, or are killed by bullets? The reality is grim: amidst Independence Day parades, fireworks, and official speeches, Pakistan bleeds, mourns, and waits in vain for genuine change. The latest floods have been described as among the worst in recent memory. Torrential rains over the past week swelled rivers beyond capacity. The Swat River, once again, became a symbol of devasta-

tion – a haunting reminder of past tragedies that we never truly learned from. Entire stretches of road have collapsed into rushing waters, bridges have been swept away, and communication lines in several areas have gone dead.

Villagers in upper KP recount harrowing scenes of loved ones being swept away in seconds. In GB, rescue operations have been severely hampered by landslides blocking access routes. In AJK, already fragile infrastructure has been completely overwhelmed, leaving thousands stranded. Relief is slow, rescue efforts are disorganized, and for many, help will come too late.

The Swat River tragedy few weeks ago should have been a turning point in Pakistan's disaster preparedness. It wasn't. Lessons were never learned; systems were never fixed. Instead, year after year, we witness the same script: heavy rains lead to floods, people die, the government announces relief packages, and then life moves on – until the next tragedy strikes. We keep asking the same questions: When will we awaken from this national slumber? When will we shift from lip service to real, practical measures? When will we take the safety of ordinary citizens seriously, instead of treating disasters as mere seasonal inconveniences? The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), created to coordinate disaster response, has once again failed to deliver. Each time tragedy strikes, the Prime Minister rushes to the NDMA headquarters, where officials present elaborate PowerPoint slides filled with

charts, forecasts, and "strategies." And that's where it ends.

The irony is that crisis management in Pakistan was often more effective before the NDMA existed. Back then, response relied on swift, on-ground action by local administrations, armed forces, and volunteers. Today, bureaucracy and red tape slow everything down, while NDMA remains an organization that talks big but acts little. As the floods claimed lives in the north, terrorism reared its head once again in KP. On August 14, when the rest of the country was busy celebrating Independence Day, terrorists targeted innocent citizens, killing many. This was not an isolated attack – it is part of a disturbing trend that has seen violence spike in the past year, particularly in border regions. What does it say about our priorities when our cities are lit up with fireworks, yet rural communities live in fear of both nature's wrath and man-made violence? The celebration rings hollow when the state fails in its most basic duty – to protect lives. Adding to the sense of disconnect was the government's decision to hand out awards in abundance during the Independence Day festivities. Many of these honors went not to the truly deserving, but to those who follow the "masters' voices" – individuals celebrated for loyalty rather than merit. Meanwhile, countless genuine heroes, including those who risk their lives in floods and terror attacks, were ignored. Yet, amidst the usual self-congratulatory atmosphere, there were a few brave voices who refused to accept their awards

in protest of this injustice. Their stance deserves recognition and emulation – a small but powerful reminder that dignity and integrity still exist in this country. Decades ago, American journalist Christina Lamb captured Pakistan's political and social dysfunction in her book *Waiting for Allah*. Written in the 1990s, it painted a portrait of a nation caught between hope and despair, crippled by corruption, mismanagement, and short-sighted leadership. Sadly, her observations remain relevant today.

From disaster response to governance, from counterterrorism to the allocation of national honors, nothing fundamental has changed. We remain stuck in the same cycle of tragedy, outrage, empty promises, and eventual amnesia. Lip service has become our default mode. Every time disaster strikes, we hear the same phrases: "We stand with the victims," "Relief efforts are underway," "An inquiry will be conducted." These words have lost all meaning because they are never followed by sustained action. Practical steps require political will, transparency, and long-term investment – qualities that have been in short supply. Flood defense infrastructure remains inadequate, urban planning ignores climate realities, and emergency services are underfunded. Terrorist networks continue to operate in certain regions because dismantling them would require systemic reforms that challenge entrenched interests. It is the ordinary citizen – the farmer in Swat, the shopkeeper in Skardu, the teacher in Muzaffarabad – who pays the

price for this chronic negligence. They lose homes, livelihoods, and loved ones. They watch as politicians fly in for photo opportunities, then fly out to resume business as usual. They know that the next disaster is not a matter of if, but when. The events of August 14 and 15 should be a wake-up call – not just for the government, but for the entire nation. We cannot continue to treat disasters and terrorism as routine. We cannot allow incompetence and corruption to be normalized. We cannot afford to spend another decade "waiting for Allah" to solve problems that are within our power to address. Real change requires more than speeches. It demands investment in infrastructure, honest governance, and a culture that rewards merit over sycophancy. It requires that we take the concerns of ordinary people seriously, whether they live in Karachi, Swat, or the remotest village in GB. August is supposed to be a month of pride for Pakistan – a time to remember the sacrifices that built this nation. But pride without responsibility is meaningless. As we mourn the more than 200 lives lost in the floods and the victims of terrorism, we must confront the uncomfortable truth: our tragedies are not just acts of fate. They are the result of choices – choices to neglect, to delay, to favor loyalty over competence, to celebrate instead of act. Until we change those choices, August will keep bringing us anniversaries not just of independence, but of grief. And history will keep repeating itself, one flood, one attack, one tragedy at a time.

## Briefs

### Enmity claims 7 lives in Kohat

DNA

KOHAT: Seven people were shot dead over a personal enmity in the Raigi Sheno Khel area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's district Kohat on Saturday night, police said. According to the first information report (FIR) lodged by an injured complainant, Zahid Noor at the City police station: "Seven people from two families were killed in the firing when they were returning from the picnic at Raigi Sheno Khel area of Kohat district." It said that they had gone for the picnic to Tanda dam and upon returning from it, they came under attack from two sides, resulting in the deaths of six people on the spot. The FIR copy said that one of the injured succumbed to the injuries at the KDA hospital. The DPO further added that the deceased went to Tanda Dam, where, on their return – they were attacked. "There were a total of 11 individuals, of whom seven were attacked," Zahidullah added.

### Case dismissed against transgender persons

DNA

LAHORE: A Lahore magistrate on Sunday dismissed the case against transgender persons allegedly organising an "objectionable" private party after police had arrested them earlier. According to the court order the case was dismissed after "no incriminating material is available on record which connects the accused persons with the commission of alleged offences. "Hence, the request of 10 days for physical remand of the accused persons is hereby turned down, and the accused persons present in the court are hereby discharged in this case."



## Need stressed to keep kids away from mobiles

MULTAN: Experts have stressed the need for keeping children away from mobile phone screens as it is playing havoc with their mental growth and causing psychological problems.

They observed that mobile phone addiction among infants and toddlers has become a silent epidemic. Instead of toys or social interaction, many children today are pacified with screens—even while being fed.

Dr. Khizra Sohail, a leading child psychologist told APP here on Sunday that most cases, she receives involve children whose parents give them mobile phones to manage their own busy schedules. “These children develop stubborn and irritable behavior, along with multiple psychological problems,” she said, adding that early exposure to mobile devices leads to negative personality changes.

“I often see cases where even one-year-old children know how to swipe a screen.

This is deeply concerning,” she remarked.

She said that medical research also supported these concerns. According to the Pakistan Pediatric Association, she said nearly 80 percent of children aged 6 to 18 years spend 4 to 6 hours daily in front of screens. The report noted that 30 percent suffer from short-sightedness, while nearly 50 percent complain of blurred vision, headaches, and eye strain. Studies further show that students distracted by text messaging during study hours perform significantly worse in examinations.—APP

## Dengue outbreak claims one life, several critical

ABBOTTABAD: A dengue outbreak in Nawar Shehr Meera, Abbottabad, has taken a serious turn as more than 16 people have been confirmed infected, including five members of a single family. According to local sources, the virus claimed its first casualty when a woman, widow of Abdul Waheed Khan, succumbed to the disease at Ayub Medical Complex on Saturday. She had been under intensive care for several days. Her three sons, who are also infected with dengue, remain hospitalized at the same facility in critical condition.—APP

### Lost and Found

Search for lost file New Metro City Sarai Alamgir/ Khariyan

I have lost a file number 2376881, block Enclave Overseas Prime Zone 02 size 10 marla, situated at New Metro City Sarai Alamgir/Khariyan in the name of Mian Mazhar. This file has been lost somewhere during photocopying in the above mentioned area of Sarai Alamgir city. Whoever finds it, please send it to the following address and give me a chance to thank you.

Regards  
Nasir Mahmood son of Muhammad Inayat resident of Post Office Head Rasool Samapur Mandi

# Ethiopian embassy, Sindh CM office discuss climate coop

Dr. Jemal Beker Abdula said Ethiopia is leading climate agenda not only in Africa but across the world to promote green and sustainable development across the globe

DNA

KARACHI: The Ethiopian Embassy Islamabad hold an Ethio-Pakistan Green Legacy Dialogue in collaboration with the Office of the Chief Minister of Sindh, Pakistan to exchange knowledge and expertise to tackle the climate change, land degradation and deforestation. Dr. Jemal Beker Abdula, Special Envoy and Ambassador Extraordinary of Ethiopia, co-chaired the forum along with Syed Murad Ali Shah, the Chief Minister of Sindh. Dr. Adefires Worku Gizaw, the Chair of Green Legacy Technical Committee, shared insights into Ethiopia's roadmap in promoting afforestation, reforestation, food security and job creation in the country besides soil and water management under the Green Legacy Initiative of Dr. Abiy Ahmed. From Pakistan side, Zubair Ahmed, Secretary of the Environment and Climate Change, gave presentation on the climate change policy and Green Initiatives taken by the Government of Sindh. The forum was held at the Chief Minister of Sindh. Speaking on the occasion, the Ambassador said Ethiopia is leading climate agenda not only in Africa but across the world to promote green and sustainable development across the globe. He highlighted the adverse impacts of climate change which is not only taking a toll on lives and livelihoods but also disrupting the socio-economic development achieved by the developing countries. The Ambassador stressed on



the need on strengthening cooperation between Ethiopia and Pakistan under the Green Legacy Initiative of Prime Minister H.E. Dr. Abiy Ahmed. He invited the Government of Sindh to send its delegation to Ethiopia for their participation in the Africa Climate Summit taking place in Addis Ababa from September 8-10, 2025. The Honorable Chief Minister, on the occasion, appreciated the Ambassador

for taking the initiative of holding the Ethio-Pakistan Green Dialogues to promote bilateral cooperation for exchange of knowledge and expertise for environment conservation and food security. He said the Government of Sindh would send its delegation to Ethiopia for the Climate Summit to further strengthen environment cooperation between the two countries.

## CDA puts comprehensive Monsoon Plan in Place

The Machinery Pool Organization has been tasked to immediately provide machinery to teams for widening and lowering the stream at Chattha Bakhtawar, as this is currently the most viable option to prevent any impediments

DNA

ISLAMABAD: On the directions of the Chief Commissioner Islamabad and Chairman CDA, Muhammad Ali Randhawa, the Additional Deputy Commissioner (General), along with DG Rescue 1122 Islamabad, Director Machinery Pool Organization (MPO), representatives from Solid Waste Management Directorate, Road and Marketing, M&RM Directorate, conducted visits to low-lying and critical areas including Saidpur Village and Chattha Bakhtawar in view of the forecasted monsoon rain spell. During the visit, a comprehensive plan was finalized to ensure the smooth flow of rainwater without any hindrance. Responsibilities of all relevant formations were assigned, and staff presence on a round-the-clock basis was directed. The Machinery Pool Organization (MPO) has been tasked to immediately provide machinery to teams for widening and lowering the stream at Chattha Bakhtawar, as this is currently the most viable option to prevent any impediments. Meanwhile, the Solid Waste Management Directorate has been instructed to urgently clear debris blocking the Saidpur drain by tonight on priority. In addition, public awareness measures were also highlighted, urging citizens not to block natural waterways and to take maximum precautions during the upcoming rainfall. The CDA has assured that all departments will remain on high alert and work jointly to safeguard residents against any possible urban flooding.

## Indonesia celebrates Independence Day

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Islamabad held a ceremony on Sunday morning, 17 August 2025, to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of Indonesia's Independence. The ceremony was led by H.E. Mr. Chandra Warsenanto Sukotjo, Ambassador-designate of the Republic of Indonesia to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The event was attended by the Guests of Honor, Major General (R) Mr. Asrobudi, Advisor of the Indonesia Big Wall Expedition (IBEX) and six mountain climbers who successfully reached the peak of Trango Tower in Gilgit Baltistan, Pakistan, couple days ago. In addition, among the attendees were the Indonesian Embassy officials and Indonesian community in Pakistan, including students, professionals, pilots, and UN/IO staff. Indonesian nationals were dressed up in red and white outfits or traditional Indonesian attires, reflecting the spirit of unity in diversity, nationalism, and patriotism. Following the ceremony, Ambassador Chandra warmly welcomed all Indonesian nationals and Pakistani counterparts. “Your presence here today, even on a Sunday when you would otherwise be enjoying your leisure time, reflects the love and commitment you hold in your hearts for Indonesia. I extend my deepest appreciation to all of you for joining us on this very special occasion of Indonesia's Independence Day,” Ambassador appreciated all participants while further added that may the bond of friendship between Indonesia and Pakistan continue to grow stronger. “Pakistan-Indonesia Dosti Zindabad!” He concluded his remarks. Cultural performances were among major attractions during the celebration, including singing in various languages both local languages in Indonesia and English, traditional dances, playing the traditional instrument of angklung, and even a martial arts performance. The performers were diverse, covering children, students, members of the Embassy's women's Association, and Pakistani nationals who have been in partnership with the Indonesian Embassy in Islamabad. As part of the celebration, in line with special initiative by the Indonesian President, Ambassador Chandra presented Certificates of Appreciation to Indonesian female coordinators across various cities in Pakistan, recognizing their commitment in supporting and assisting Indonesian nationals. — DNA

## Dhee Rani registration begins

LODHAN: Registration for Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's flagship initiative, the Dhee Rani Program 2025-26, has officially begun in Lodhran. Deputy Director of Social Welfare, Nand Laal, informed APP that, like other districts in the province, the registration process has also been launched in Lodhran. He stated that the Chief Minister of Punjab has announced 5,000 mass weddings to be held across the province this year. Eligible individuals can register through the official app at cmp.punjab.gov.pk or call the helpline at 1312 for assistance and guidance. According to the provincial government's directives, efforts will be made to ensure the maximum number of people are registered under the program.—APP

## DGSE to hold Road show, walk in connection with Marka-e-Haq, IDay

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Directorate General of Special Education (DGSE), under the Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training, is set to celebrate Marka-e-Haq and Independence Day with the participation of students with disabilities. To mark the occasion, a Road Show/Walk will be organized today from 12:00 pm to 2:00 pm,

starting from the National Library and Resource Centre, F-7 Markaz (behind Caltex Petrol Pump old Shell Pump) and culminating at Jinnah Super Market, F-7, Islamabad. The event will be graced by Ms. Wajihah Qamar, Minister of State, Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training, as the Chief Guest. Parliamentarians, officials from various ministries, NGOs, INGOs, and people from

different walks of life are also expected to join the walk in solidarity. The purpose of this Road Show/Walk is to celebrate Pakistan's historical victory, pay tribute to the Armed Forces, and highlight the rights and achievements of persons with disabilities. All media outlets (electronic & print) are cordially invited to cover this significant event and support the cause of inclusivity and empowerment for persons with disabilities.

## Full rollout of “Sindh Business One Stop Shop” in April

KARACHI: The Sindh Business One Stop Shop (SBOSS) platform is undergoing a comprehensive enhancement process, with full rollout and integration targeted for completion by April next year. Talking to Wealth Pakistan, Special Assistant to Sindh Chief Minister Qasim Naveed said efforts are underway to resolve technical and operational challenges identified during the earlier implementation phases, Waves 1 and 2, making the system more robust, efficient, and user-friendly for all stakeholders. He said this timeline encompasses the phased onboarding of various government departments, ensuring a smooth transition for each one into the digital ecosystem. Critical legal reforms are also in progress to support and streamline operations within the platform. The project involves a significant legal roadmap, including the proposal of over 250 legal amendments to modernise regulatory systems and fully integrate SBOSS's online application and e-payment functionalities into the legal framework. Breaking new ground in Pakistan's business landscape, the provincial government recently launched SBOSS, an innovative digital platform set to revolutionise business registration and licensing across the province. Powered by advanced integration with national databases and pioneering blockchain technology, SBOSS was launched by Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah. SBOSS offers entrepreneurs and small business owners an intuitive, round-the-clock online gateway to navigate complex regulatory procedures with unprecedented simplicity and transparency. The platform has been developed with financial support from the World Bank under the Competitive and Livable City of Karachi (CLICK) project. For long-term sustainability, the government of Sindh has taken institutional steps, including the cabinet's approval on May 30, 2024, to establish the Sindh Investment Authority, which will oversee and sustain SBOSS operations and reform implementation. The initiative marks a major step towards improving Sindh's — and the country's — rankings on the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index by making the regulatory environment more efficient and transparent. Naveed said to ensure seamless coordination, SBOSS is designed to integrate with the Pakistan Business One Stop Shop (PBOSS), which is currently under development. He said Sindh is leading as the first province to launch such a system. Once PBOSS is live, this integration will allow real-time data sharing and synchronised approvals across federal and provincial levels for a truly unified business facilitation experience. Highlighting the Sindh government's commitment to digitalisation, he said the provincial government, through CLICK, has conducted stakeholder engagement meetings at every stage of SBOSS development.—APP

## Firewood sellers in Buner plead for help after cloudburst

BUNER: Under the open sky, beside a mound of broken timber and mud-soaked memories, 48-year-old Saad Ullah digs through debris with a hoe in same hands once bundled firewood for customers are now desperately clawing through the wreckage of his life. Just two days ago, a sudden cloudburst over the scenic hills of Bishonai, a small village near Pir Baba in Buner district, unleashed a torrent of water and stones, sweeping away everything in its path. More than 200 people perished, thousands have been rendered homeless, and the community's modest economy has been shattered. Among the hardest hit are owners of firewood “taals” which are traditional open storage yards where dry timber is kept for sale during winter months. Looking for help? Saad Ullah said, “this taal was my only source of livelihood for family,” he said, wiping tears with

the back of a mud-caked hand. “I had stored Rs500,000 worth of firewood here — all gone.” That timber, mostly local hardwood from nearby forests, was painstakingly gathered over months for customers ranging from bakeries and tandoors to marriage halls. Saad's wood was known for its quality, selling at Rs700-800 per 50-kilo mound. With natural gas scarce in winters and LPG prices soaring, firewood is a lifeline for many in Buner. Now, there is nothing left not even the bag of savings Saad had set aside to perform Umrah with his wife next month. “I kept it hidden in cupboard in my stone made house. When I returned after the flood, there was no house luggage left,” he said with breaking voice. Dozens of other taal owners in Bishonai and neighboring villages shared a similar fate as their stock washed away in minutes, livelihoods drowned in muddy torrents, thousands families

left shelterless. The destruction was very swift, giving villagers no time to react. “We heard a roaring sound from the mountains, and then it was over us,” recounted Zafar Khan, another wood seller. “All we could do was run for our lives.” Now, with monsoon rains continuing and winter just months away, the community is staring down a bleak future such as jobless, homeless, and overlooked. Environmental experts warned this is not just a freak event but it is the price of unchecked environmental neglect and rampant deforestation mainly due to unemployment and poverty. “Climate change combined with deforestation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has made such flood disasters more frequent and more intense,” said Prof. Dr. Shafiqur Rehman, former Chairman of Environmental Sciences at the University of Peshawar. He linked recent cloudbursts and flash floods

in Malakand and Hazara divisions to the rapid loss of forest cover, especially in private and communal lands besides lack of small dams. Pakistan's total forest area, as per the National Forest Policy 2015, stands at a meager five percent, with nearly 27,000 hectares lost annually. In KP alone, forests have been under pressure due to logging, encroachments, and decades of conflict particularly during the Swat's unrest during 2008-2009. Niazi Ali, former Chief Conservator of Forests in KP, pointed to overpopulation, poverty, and timber smuggling as major drivers of deforestation and warned if not checked more such floods will occur in future. “In 1947, our population was 37 million. Today it's over 223 million and rising. If we don't adapt alternative energy sources, we will lose what little green cover we have left,” he warned.—APP

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

AUGUST

Aug 01/China  
Armed Forces Day

Aug 01/Switzer-land  
National Day

Aug 01/Lebanon  
Armed Forces Day

Aug 01 /Syria  
Armed Forces Day

Aug 4/Bukino Faso  
National Day

Aug 09 /Singapore

Aug 15/DPR Korea  
Independence Day

Aug 15/India  
Independence Day

Aug 15/Poland  
Armed Forces Day

Aug 17 /Indonesia  
Independence Day

Aug 24/Ukraine  
Independence Day

Aug 25/Uruguay  
Independence Day

Aug 30 /Turkey  
Armed Forces Day

Aug 31/Kyrgyz  
Republic  
Independence Day

Aug 31/Malaysia  
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.4451782  
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  
Railway Inquiry.....117  
Railway Exchange9270831-5  
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489  
CAA.....9281092



**Hospitals**

CMH.....5611111  
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# Call for efforts to make Islamabad more clean and green

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, in his speech, said: “In line with the vision of the Prime Minister of Pakistan, we all must play our role in making Islamabad a clean, green, and healthy city

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: Renowned international mountaineer Sajid Sadpara, under the Clean and Green Islamabad Movement, planted saplings along with Chairman Clean and Green Islamabad Movement Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari at G-7 (Sitara Market) and I-8 Markaz during a tree plantation drive. On this occasion, Clean and Green Islamabad Movement also installed dustbins in both commercial centers to ensure better waste management and cleanliness. A large awareness walk was also organized, in which a significant number of citizens, along with the trader community of both commercial centers, actively participated and pledged their full support towards making the cleanliness campaign a success. Prominent participants included: President G-7 Markaz Sitara Market Syed Altaf Hussain Shah, General Secretary Rana Muhammad Akram, President I-8 Markaz Chaudhry Waheed Cheema, General Secretary I-8 Markaz Rana Muhammad Bilal, Chairman I-8 Markaz Yasir Jamil Abbasi, Patron-in-Chief Abrar Hussain Bhatti, along with Khalid Chaudhry, Nisar Mirza, Chaudhry Ashraf Farzand, Ahmad Khan, Raees Abbasi, Hafiz Abid, Turab Ahmed Abbasi, Ijaz Ahmed, Zafran Mir, Raza Ahmed Abbasi, Muhammad Fayaz and others. Addressing the ceremony, world-famous mountaineer Sajid Sadpara said: “Cleanliness and tree plantation are both vital for our survival. Just as climbing the world’s highest peaks gives us energy through clean air and natural beauty, our cities too need a clean and green environment for the sake of future generations. Planting this sapling today symbolizes our shared responsibility to protect the environment.” Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, in his speech, said: “In line with the vision of the Prime Minister of Pakistan, we all must play our role in making Islamabad a clean, green,



and healthy city. The Clean and Green Islamabad Movement has now become a national campaign, bringing together traders, students, citizens, and institutions.” Syed Altaf Hussain Shah stated that the trader community will always stand shoulder to shoulder with the Clean and Green Islamabad Movement in cleanliness and tree plantation drives. “Only our collective efforts can make our city exemplary.” Rana Muhammad Akram remarked: “Cleanliness is half of faith. By adopting it, we can make Islamabad not only beautiful but also

a model city for others.” Chaudhry Waheed Cheema emphasized that citizens must step forward to join this campaign, as no cleanliness or plantation drive can achieve lasting success without public participation. Rana Muhammad Bilal said traders will spread the message within their community that “Cleanliness and a green environment are the guarantees of our children’s future.” Yasir Jamil Abbasi added that this initiative is not only crucial for environmental pro-

tection but also a step towards a healthier lifestyle for the citizens of Islamabad. Abrar Hussain Bhatti noted that the beginning made by the Clean and Green Islamabad Movement is a gift for future generations and is in line with our social and religious values. Other speakers reaffirmed their commitment to making Islamabad clean, green, and beautiful, stressing that institutions, the business community, and the public must continue working together to achieve this vision.

## Local hospital marks IDay

ISLAMABAD: Maroof International Hospital has commemorated Pakistan’s 78th Independence Day under the theme Marka-e-Haq, united in valor, united in cause with patriotic zeal and heartfelt solidarity for the people of Palestine. Addressing the gathering, Ambassador of Palestine to Pakistan, Dr. Zuhair Mohammad Hamadallah Zaid paid tribute to Pakistan’s unwavering support for Palestine. “Pakistan has done a great deal for the Palestinian cause over the years. Your consistent moral, political, and humanitarian support has never gone unnoticed.” He said, “We see Pakistan not just as a friend, but as a brother in our struggle.” He also extended his best wishes to Pakistan, saying, “We pray for your nation’s continued progress and prosperity.” He said, “The people of Pakistan have shown extraordinary resilience in difficult times. Let us pledge today to contribute endlessly to the development of our beloved countries.” Maroof International Hospital’s Chairman, Ch. Naseer Ahmed, announced a joint initiative with the Palestinian Embassy to organize free medical camps and a fundraising campaign in support of the Palestinian people. “While we celebrate our own freedom, we cannot ignore the suffering of our Palestinian brothers and sisters.”—APP

## Police net 380 criminals in two-weeks

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police over the past two weeks arrested 380 suspects, including 213 proclaimed offenders wanted in heinous crimes, recovering more than 37 kilograms of narcotics and over 110 illegal weapons during targeted operations. An official told APP on Sunday that police teams registered cases against the arrested suspects, which included 108 involved in illegal possession of arms. He said police seized 18 kilograms of heroin, 19 kilograms of Ice, two kilograms of hashish, and 108 liquor bottles from drug traffickers. He said in separate actions against illegal arms, police recovered 95 pistols of different bores, 15 guns along with ammunition, and 13 daggers. The official said that 213 proclaimed offenders involved in murder, robbery and other heinous crimes were also apprehended during the ongoing campaign. He said under the special directions of DIG Muhammad Jowad Tariq, multiple targeted operations were conducted against drug peddlers, illegal arms holders.—APP

## Pakistan’s data daughters coding new legacy in global tech

ISLAMABAD: In a modest government school classroom in Pakistan, a young Shafiqah Iqbal sat quietly, clutching a notebook as she dreamt of a future far beyond her small town. Forbidden by family to pursue higher education, she applied to university in secret, fueled by a fierce determination to break barriers. Today, Shafiqah is a Big Data Engineer at Google Poland, and a top-rated seller at Upwork, a shining example of a new generation of Pakistani women rewriting the rules of global tech and data science. Data science has long been stereotyped as the domain of the ‘tech bro’ – men in hoodies, coding through the night. But a new generation of women is rewriting that narrative. In Pakistan, this shift is especially striking. A growing wave of female students is entering data science programs, driven by ambition, resilience, and curiosity. Their talent is being recognized globally, with Pakistani women securing roles at tech giants like Google and Meta. Shafiqah’s journey is a symbol of a wider shift in Pakistan’s tech ecosystem. Once discouraged from pursuing higher studies, Shafiqah applied to university in secret, secured a scholarship to Punjab University, and carved a path through freelancing and startup work that eventually led her to international tech roles. When asked about her motivation, she shared her mantra simply but powerfully: “If you don’t see a role model, become one.” Her story reflects a growing wave of Pakistani women excelling in data science—a field once seen as a male stronghold. As cultural barriers fade, women are claiming space and redefining leadership in STEM. Traditionally steered toward teaching or medicine, more women are now choosing data science. Thanks to university programs and outreach, female enrollment has risen nearly 40% since 2018, says a COMSATS survey. Globally, women data scientists grew from 15% in 2018 to 24% today, a trend clearly visible on Pakistani campuses. Dr. Nusrat Shaheen, Senior Faculty in Data Science at COMSATS, speaking to this scribe, noted the change firsthand: “Five years ago, I could count the number of girls in my class on one hand. Now, nearly half are women—and many of them are project leaders.” When questioned about university efforts to support this shift, she explained how institutions like LUMS, FAST, and COMSATS are fostering inclusivity through coding bootcamps, AI clubs, and female-led mentorship programs. She said these initiatives are breaking stereotypes early, inspiring schoolgirls to see data science as a space where they truly belong. Zunaira Iqbal, a machine learning specialist at LUMS, shared with the news agency how community and peer support transformed her experience: “In my first semester, there were only three girls in a class of 40. Now, we’ve built a community. We share resources, mentor juniors, and make sure no one feels out of place.”—DNA

## KP CM orders 24/7 rescue ops in floods

DERA ISMAIL KHAN, AUG 16 (DNA): Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur Saturday cut short his visit to his hometown, Dera Ismail Khan, and departed for the flood-affected areas of the province. According to the Chief Minister’s spokesperson, Faraz Ahmed Mughal, Gandapur will meet flood victims, listen to their grievances, and review the challenges faced by the affected families. The spokesperson said a special team of the Chief Minister had already reached the flood-hit areas to assess the needs and difficulties of the people, while ongoing relief operations were being closely monitored. He added that in light of the emergency situation, the Chief Minister had directed the use of all available resources to protect lives and extend maximum relief. The Chief Minister is in constant contact with divisional and district administrations as well as relevant provincial departments. Rescue agencies have been tasked to work round-the-clock to evacuate stranded residents, trace missing persons, and provide emergency relief. The spokesperson further said Gandapur was personally monitoring the rains and flood situation across the province. The provincial government, he added, has reiterated its commitment to extend all-out support and assistance to the flood victims.—DNA

## Online home baking empowers women

ISLAMABAD: In recent years, a new trend has emerged in Pakistan, where women are leveraging the power of online baking to earn a living, pursue their passion, and connect with like-minded individuals. The trend is not only empowering women financially but also providing them with a platform to showcase their creativity and skills. From secret family recipes to Instagram sensations, online home baking has given women a platform to share their love of baking with the world. With every batch of bread, cake, and pastry, they are not only satisfying their own creative cravings but also building a community and a business that brings them financial freedom and fulfillment. A home baker Schrish, who started her

online baking business two years ago stated that “I was always passionate about baking, but after having kids, I had to take a break from my job. Online baking has given me the opportunity to work from home and earn a decent income. It’s also allowed me to be my own boss and pursue my passion”. She added that many women in Pakistan are turning to online baking as a way to supplement their family’s income, pursue their passion, and achieve financial independence. She said that with the rise of social media, online marketplaces, and food delivery apps, it’s easier than ever for women to showcase their baking skills and connect with potential customers. “As a woman, it’s not always easy to balance work and family responsibilities. On-

line baking has given me the flexibility to work from home and manage my own schedule. It’s been a game-changer for my business and my family,” she stated. A happy customer Shaista said “I love buying baked goods online because I can choose from a wide variety of options and get them delivered right to my doorstep”. “The quality is always top-notch, and the presentation is beautiful. I feel like I’m supporting women entrepreneurs, which is a great bonus,” she added. She said that she always prefer ordering cakes online for kids’ birthdays saying that everyone in family loves online baking as it’s so convenient and it saves the hassle of going out to purchase a cake, and the cakes are always delicious.—APP

## CDA to intensify crackdown on illegal housing societies

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has decided to step up its campaign against illegal housing societies and unauthorized constructions in Islamabad, warning that strict action will be taken against violators. The decision was made during a high-level meeting chaired by CDA Chairman and Chief Commissioner Muhammad Ali Randhawa. Chairman Randhawa made it clear that the Authority would show “no leniency towards violators” and that operations to remove encroachments and demolish illegal structures would continue without interruption. “The protection of Islamabad’s planned development is a top priority,” he said, emphasizing the need to safeguard public land from unregulated construction. The mushroom growth of unauthorized housing societies has long been a challenge in the federal capital, often resulting in disputes over land ownership, poor infrastructure, and environmental degradation. The CDA has previously launched multiple operations against such schemes but is now moving to intensify monitoring and enforcement. While the crackdown remained a central focus, the meeting also reviewed other development priorities. Plans to expand green zones and convert the CDA nursery into a “Gardenia Hub” were discussed as part of wider beautification efforts.—DNA

## IIUI honours memorizers of Holy Qur’an

ISLAMABAD: The Da’wah Academy of the International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI), through its Department of Qur’an Memorization (Tahfiz al-Qur’an), held a dignified ceremony titled “Honoring the Memorizers of the Holy Qur’an” at the iconic Faisal Mosque. The event celebrated the achievements of huffaz—those who have memorized the Holy Qur’an—alongside their esteemed teachers. According to the press release on Sunday, the ceremony was graced by Prof. Dr. Ahmed Saad Alahmad, President of IIUI, as the chief guest, with Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ilyas, Director General of the Da’wah Academy, presiding over the session. Dr. Ilyas warmly welcomed the President and lauded the significant role played by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in constructing Faisal Mosque and supporting IIUI’s growth. He emphasized Faisal Mosque’s role as a beacon of Islamic moderation and moral reform, attracting thousands of visitors daily, particularly on Fridays. In his address, Prof. Dr. Ahmed Saad Alahmad congratulated the students, their parents, and teachers on this milestone. He highlighted the spiritual virtues of memorizing the Qur’an, underscoring that true benefit comes through sincere devotion, adherence to the Sunnah and deep reflection on its meanings. “The memorization of the Holy Qur’an is not just an achievement but a lifelong commitment to embodying its teachings and spreading its message of peace and balance,” he said, adding, “We honor these young huffaz today for their dedication and encourage them to be torchbearers of Islamic knowledge and virtue.”—APP

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Att. President Bhatti honored dinner for FA, German envoys

Portugal Embassy, serves Dutch Royal Crown Tournament in Islamabad

Turkey Day at Markez



## Briefs

## Pakistan promotes cultural, literary ties

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Consul General in Guangzhou, China, Sardar Muhammad, attended the 2025 Southern China Book Fair to promote cultural ties and literary exchange, Gwadar Pro reported quoting a statement from the Consulate General. The fair, which features over 1,500 publishers from around the world, was a platform for the diplomat to meet with Chinese publishing leaders and discuss enhanced cooperation through literature and creative works. During the event, Sardar Muhammad participated in the launch of Low-Carbon Living: Green Cuisine at Your Fingertips, a bilingual book by documentary producer Lingling Li. The Consul General highlighted the book's inclusion of Pakistan's signature dish, Biryani, noting that its vegetarian adaptations embrace sustainable living while preserving authentic flavours. Drawing a parallel between Pakistani and Chinese traditions, he compared the layered preparation of Biryani to the Chinese rice dumpling, Zongzi.—APP

## CDA's anti-encroachment drive in full swing

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In line with the directions of Chairman CDA and Chief Commissioner Islamabad Muhammad Ali Randhwa, the Capital Development Authority (CDA) carried out a large-scale anti-encroachment operation at GT Road Tarnol under the supervision of Deputy Director General (Enforcement) and Director DMA, Dr. Anam Fatima, with the support of the Islamabad Administration. The operation focused on the stretch from Total Petrol Pump to opposite Zarkon Plaza. During the operation, a total of 40 illegal structures were demolished and removed, including 17 directional and sign boards, 2 shades, 5 block walls, 9 shops, and 7 washrooms. As part of legal action, 09 individuals were arrested, while 08 shops were sealed to prevent further violations. CDA Enforcement teams also took action against temporary setups and machinery. Two security cabins were shifted to the Enforcement Store, while 37 were damaged at the site. Additionally, 27 containers were damaged, and one dismantled lifter machine was shifted to storage. The cleared stretch covered approximately 2 kilometers, with two truckloads of dismantled material, including sign boards, shifted to the Enforcement Store.

## NPC suspends two members over harassment charges

ISLAMABAD: In the light of recommendations of anti harassment committee report, National Press Club's (NPC) governance body suspended the basic membership of its two members (former husband and wife) over harassment allegations. The decision was taken during the governance body meeting of NPC held under the chairmanship of President Azhar Jatoi, said a press release on Sunday. After detail review and discussion on the committee report, the body unanimously decided to suspend the basic membership of both Nasir Khattak and Salmi Malik in accordance with club's constitution. Both were also barred from entering NPC premises. The meeting also emphasized that all female members of the club are honorable and highly respected and no member will be allowed to adopt any kind of inappropriate behavior towards any female member or make accusations against them. The meeting approved the establishment of a committee headed by former President NPC, Shakeel Anjum, to look into the matter.—APP

## TMYP revolutionizes laptop access with interest-free loan policy

Earlier, laptops were distributed on a merit basis to students, often limiting access to those who excelled academically. However, the new policy aims to democratize access to technology, recognizing that talent and potential are not confined to academic alone

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a major initiative on Sunday, the Prime Minister's Youth Program has announced a paradigm shift in its laptop distribution policy, making these essential devices accessible to all on an interest-free loan basis. This bold move is set to empower a wider segment of the youth, bridging the digital divide and fostering a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship. Earlier, laptops were distributed on a merit basis to students, often limiting access to those who excelled academically. However, the new policy aims to democratize access to technology, recognizing that

talent and potential are not confined to academic alone.

According to chairman of PMYP Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, by providing laptops on an interest-free loan basis, the program seeks to level the playing field, enabling young people from diverse backgrounds to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in the digital age.

The Prime Minister's Youth Program has been designed to harness the potential of Pakistan's youth, equipping them with the tools and resources needed to succeed in an increasingly competitive world. By making laptops more accessible, the program aims to stimulate creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship, ultimately

contributing to the country's economic growth and development.

This policy shift is expected to have a significant impact on the lives of young Pakistanis, particularly those from underprivileged backgrounds who may not have had access to such opportunities. By providing interest-free loans, the program ensures that financial constraints will no longer be a barrier to acquiring the technology needed to succeed.

The move has been widely welcomed, with many hailing it as a visionary step towards creating a digitally empowered generation. As Pakistan strives to join the ranks of the developed world, initiatives like the Prime Minister's Youth Program are crucial in unlocking the potential of its most valuable

resource, its youth.

By providing laptops on an interest-free loan basis, the government is not only bridging the digital divide but also investing in the future of the country.

This forward-thinking approach is expected to yield long-term benefits, as the youth of today become the leaders and innovators of tomorrow.

The Prime Minister's Youth Program is a testament to the government's commitment to empowering the next generation of Pakistanis. As the program continues to evolve and expand, it is likely to have a lasting impact on the country's socio-economic landscape, fostering a culture of innovation, entrepreneurship, and digital literacy. 395

## ANF seizes 32kg drugs in nationwide crackdown

RAWALPINDI: The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) carried out six major operations in different cities, arresting eight drug suppliers and recovered more than 32 kilograms of drugs worth over Rs3.2 million from their possession.

According to an ANF spokesman, the biggest recovery was made near Chenab Toll Plaza, Gujrat, where 8.4 kg of drugs was seized from a vehicle and the accused was arrested. In another operation at the same location, 6 kg of drugs was recovered from a vehicle, and two drug suppliers were taken into custody. In Lahore, the ANF team recovered 6 kg of drugs and 1 kg of ice from a vehicle near a petrol pump on Shahpur Multan Road following the arrest of a drug smuggler. Similarly, 6 kg of drugs was confiscated from a rickshaw near Chenab Toll Plaza in Gujrat, leading to another arrest.—DNA

## Railway minister orders urgent inquiry

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi has taken stern notice of the Awam Express train derailment near Lodhran Railway Station, demanding a comprehensive report within 7 days and ordering immediate provision of the highest standard of medical care for the injured without any delay.

Through the media news channel, he conveyed that he has strictly directed the concerned department and Divisional Superintendent Railways to immediately proceed to the accident site and accelerate all relief operations without delay.

He has issued a stern warning to all railway officials, emphasizing that any negligence or delay in handling the aftermath of the derailment will not be tolerated and will result in severe disciplinary action.

The Minister demanded that the investigation be conducted with utmost transparency and urgency, insisting that those found responsible for lapses be held fully accountable under the law.—DNA

## Twin court defeats expose SECP's regulatory failures

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has suffered two legal setbacks as the Islamabad High Court declared its actions against an insurance company unlawful, exposing flaws in the regulator's enforcement and procedural oversight. Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani set aside SECP's order barring Crescent Star Insurance Limited (CSIL) from issuing new guarantees or rolling over existing ones, imposed over alleged lapses in reinsurance. CSIL explained that its operations rely on facultative reinsurance, a case-by-case arrangement distinct from treaty-based insurance, which does not trigger the same reporting obligations. The court ruled SECP acted prematurely, bypassing procedural requirements, and should have allowed CSIL to submit a corrective plan before taking enforcement action. This judgment echoes a 2021 ruling by Justice Babar Sattar, which nullified SECP orders requiring CSIL to halt underwriting over solvency concerns. CSIL's counsel, Adam Malik, criticized SECP for abruptly halting business, calling the orders legally indefensible and procedurally flawed.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Afghanistan to Pakistan Ahmed Shakaib presenting bouquet to Senator Talah Mahmood on the occasion of National Day of Afghanistan.—DNA

## ICCI calls for accelerated digital transformation

Public-private collaboration vital for expanding digital economy: Nasir

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The leadership of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), including President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, Senior Vice President Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, and Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry, has emphasized the urgent need to accelerate digital transformation to strengthen the e-commerce sector and enhance the country's competitiveness in the global marketplace. They noted that digital commerce has become a major driver of economic growth worldwide, but Pakistan's share in the global e-commerce economy remains far below its potential. They urged the government to adopt policies that support digital infrastructure, improve internet penetration, ensure reliable payment gateways, and promote financial inclusion so that more entrepreneurs, particularly SMEs, can benefit from digital platforms.

The ICCI leadership stressed that the youth of Pakistan, which represents the majority of the population, can play a key role in shaping the future of e-commerce if provided with proper training and facilitation. They highlighted that expanding digital literacy programs, improving logistics systems, and ensuring regulatory ease for online businesses would not only create millions of job opportunities but also boost exports by connecting local producers with global buyers. President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi added that a strong collaboration between the government, private sector, and technology companies is critical to unlock Pakistan's digital economy. "If we invest in innovation and digital entrepreneurship today, we can transform Pakistan into a hub of regional e-commerce in the coming years," he remarked. The ICCI leadership reaffirmed their commitment to continue working with policymakers and stakeholders to ensure that Pakistan keeps pace with the digital revolution and harnesses its full potential for sustainable economic growth.

## Chinese garment firm to set up special economic zone in Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chinese garment manufacturer Challenge Fashion Pvt. Ltd. will establish a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Pakistan with a projected investment of \$100 million over the next five years, according to a statement from Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's office. The investment is expected to generate \$400 million in exports, an official briefing stated. The prime minister inaugurated

the SEZ after a meeting with a delegation led by the company's chairman, Huwang Weiguo, Gwadar Pro reported.

During the meeting, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said, "We appreciate Challenge Fashion Group's confidence in the Pakistani market. We welcome Challenge Group's establishment of a Special Economic Zone in Pakistan."

According to Shehbaz, the increase in economic relations between the two countries is a source of satisfaction and the Government of Pakistan

is keen to take China-Pakistan friendship to new heights.

"China and Pakistan's friendship holds a unique place in the world and both countries have stood by each other in every difficulty," said the Prime Minister who added that the SEZ will help in technology transfer, skill development, and sustainable industrial growth. The Prime Minister instructed that all possible facilities be provided to Challenge Group with regard to the SEZ and added, "We are determined to promote the

industrial component of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and Pakistan wishes to benefit from China's progress and expertise in the textile sector"

Huwang Weiguo, the Chairman of Challenge Fashion Group thanked the Prime Minister for the warm hospitality in Pakistan. "Since 2014, Challenge Fashion Group has invested 17 million US dollars in Pakistan," Huwang Weiguo said, adding, "Challenge Fashion Group is establishing a modern textile industry in Pakistan".

## Chinese, Pakistani firms partner for 1GWh energy storage solutions

ISLAMABAD: Chinese energy storage company HiTHIUM has formed a partnership with Imperial Electric Co. (IEC Pakistan) to distribute 1GWh of residential and commercial & industrial (C&I) energy storage products throughout Pakistan. Gwadar Pro reported quoting a HiTHIUM's statement. An agreement to this effect was signed at the China International Energy Storage Expo (EESA EXPO) in Shanghai. In addition to product distribution, the companies will "jointly develop customized energy storage systems to address Pakistan's specific energy challenges, ensuring optimal performance under local conditions." HiTHIUM also plans to establish a local service center to provide technical expertise and support.—DNA



## Trump-Putin meeting: no breakthrough on Ukraine

THE much-anticipated meeting between U.S. President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska concluded without any tangible breakthrough, particularly on the pressing issue of Ukraine. Despite Trump's repeated efforts to extract assurances from Putin for a ceasefire, the Russian leader offered no such commitment, making clear that Moscow will not agree to peace on U.S. terms. The meeting, held against the backdrop of mounting international expectations, was seen by many as Trump's attempt to position himself as a peacemaker in global affairs. Trump has often claimed that he could end the Ukraine war swiftly if given the opportunity, and he reiterated during the talks that he seeks peace in Ukraine "at all costs." Analysts believe Trump's insistence is also tied to his ambitions for recognition on the world stage, including a potential bid for the Nobel Peace Prize. However, Putin, known for his calculated and strategic approach, gave little ground. Addressing the media after the meeting, the Russian president stated that while Russia is open to peace, it "will not come at U.S. terms." This stance highlights Moscow's long-standing position that any resolution must acknowledge Russia's security concerns and territorial claims—demands that Kyiv and its Western allies have so far rejected. For Trump, the Alaska summit was as much about optics as substance. By hosting the talks in a location symbolizing proximity between Russia and the United States, Trump sought to project an image of statesmanship and leadership in bridging divides. Yet the lack of concrete progress underscored the immense complexity of the conflict. Critics, however, argue that Trump's credibility as a global peacemaker remains deeply tarnished by his stance on Gaza during his presidency. Thousands of Palestinians lost their lives in Israeli offensives that enjoyed Washington's backing under Trump's administration. Observers note that even if Trump were to succeed in brokering peace in Ukraine, the scars of Gaza will remain attached to his political legacy, casting a shadow over any aspirations for international accolades such as the Nobel Peace Prize. Putin is no novice to high-stakes diplomacy. Having dealt with multiple U.S. administrations, the Russian leader is fully aware of Trump's designs and domestic ambitions. By withholding assurances, Putin not only preserved Moscow's strategic leverage but also avoided granting Trump an easy political victory. The Alaska meeting ended with both sides agreeing to continue dialogue but offering no roadmap for a ceasefire. For war-weary Ukrainians, the outcome was another disappointment in the long search for peace. For Trump, the meeting reinforced his image as willing to negotiate but underscored the limits of personal diplomacy in resolving one of the most entrenched conflicts in modern history. As the guns continue to roar in Ukraine and diplomatic efforts falter, the world watches whether Trump's persistence will eventually yield results—or whether the Alaska meeting will be remembered as another photo-op with little substance.

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## The transformative potential of Uzbekistan-Pakistan rail links

THE recent commitment by Pakistan and Uzbekistan to enhance connectivity through rail links via Afghanistan marks a significant step toward regional economic integration. Such infrastructure projects have the potential to unlock vast trade opportunities, spur economic growth, and foster deeper people-to-people ties between Central and South Asia. With both nations already taking concrete steps—such as initiating direct flights—the proposed rail corridor could be a game-changer, transforming not just bilateral relations but also the broader regional economic landscape. Central Asia, rich in natural resources and energy, has long sought efficient trade routes to access global markets. Pakistan, with its strategic location and Gwadar Port, offers a viable gateway. A rail link connecting Uzbekistan to Pakistan through Afghanistan would drastically reduce transportation costs and time, making regional trade more competitive. Uzbekistan exports cotton, textiles, and minerals, while Pakistan can supply agricultural goods, pharmaceuticals, and manufactured products. Enhanced connectivity would allow both nations to diversify their trade portfolios and integrate into larger supply chains, benefiting industries on both sides. Moreover, this rail link would complement the existing China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), extending its reach into Central Asia. By linking Tashkent to Karachi via Peshawar, the corridor could become a vital artery for Eurasian trade, attracting investment and boosting economic activity across the region. Beyond commerce, improved rail connectivity would facilitate cultural and educational exchanges. Central Asia and Pakistan share deep historical and civilizational ties, from the Silk Road to the spread of Islamic scholarship. Easier travel would encourage tourism, academic collaboration, and cultural interactions, fostering mutual understanding. Pilgrims, students, and entrepreneurs would benefit from seamless movement, helping to build lasting relationships beyond government-level engagements. The biggest obstacle to this vision remains Afghanistan's stability. Security concerns and political uncertainties have long hindered transnational infrastructure projects. However, with the Taliban expressing support for regional connectivity, there is cautious optimism. Both Pakistan and Uzbekistan must engage with Afghan authorities to ensure the safe and efficient operation of the rail link. Additionally, international backing—particularly from China and Russia, which have vested interests in Eurasian connectivity—could provide the necessary impetus. The recent introduction of direct flights between Tashkent and Islamabad demonstrates both nations' seriousness in deepening ties. The next logical step is to translate this commitment into tangible rail infrastructure. Multilateral platforms like the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) should be leveraged to garner broader support.

# Trump-Putin Alaska Talks: A Step Toward Peace or a Diplomatic Mirage?

Qamar Bashir



Putin, for his part, called the meeting a “reference point” for restoring pragmatic U.S.-Russia relations and insisted that the “root causes” of the conflict must be addressed for any long-term settlement. This language, familiar to anyone following the war, underscores Moscow's unwillingness to agree to a ceasefire without substantial concessions. As the leaders spoke, the war raged on: air raid alerts blared across eastern Ukraine, and Russian governors in Rostov and Bryansk reported Ukrainian drone attacks

THE world watched closely as two of the most powerful leaders, U.S. President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin, met in Anchorage, Alaska, in a summit that carried the potential to alter the trajectory of one of the deadliest conflicts in Europe since World War II. Flying in from Moscow, Putin was received with a red-carpet welcome at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, where U.S. military aircraft flew overhead in a symbolic display of American strength. The meeting, lasting nearly three hours, was billed by both leaders as “productive,” though the absence of concrete commitments or immediate breakthroughs has left the future of peace in Ukraine uncertain. From the outset, the talks were historic. Not since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 had a U.S. president sat down face-to-face with Putin. For Trump, the stakes were personal and political. He has repeatedly claimed credit for halting or preventing six major wars during his political career—citing his involvement in easing tensions between India and Pakistan, preventing escalation between Thailand and Cambodia, and defusing what could have been a catastrophic war between Israel and Iran. His record also includes brokering a ceasefire between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which earned him endorsements for the Nobel Peace Prize from leaders in both countries. Trump has made it clear: if he can secure even a significant step toward ending the Russia-Ukraine war, he believes he would be deserving of the Nobel Peace Prize. Yet, despite the symbolism, the Alaska summit produced no agreement to resolve or pause Moscow's war in Ukraine. Trump himself admitted, “There's no deal until there's a deal,” while adding that “many, many points” had been agreed upon, with “a couple of big ones” still unresolved. The “Pursuing Peace” backdrop behind the two leaders sent an optimistic message, but the details remained elusive. The Ukrainian leadership, notably absent from the meeting, has made it clear they will not concede territory or accept a settlement that legitimizes Russia's control over nearly a fifth of their land. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has also called for a U.S.-backed security guarantee, making any unilateral U.S.-Russia arrangement politically unviable without Kyiv's buy-in. This is where Trump's approach diverged sharply from European and Ukrainian expectations. By engaging directly with Putin without the presence or consent of Ukraine or European allies, Trump assumed a mediating role that risked alienating key

stakeholders. In his own words, he was “not here to negotiate for Ukraine” but to “get them at a table.” However, replacing one major party in a conflict with an external power—even one as influential as the United States—has rarely produced lasting peace without eventual multilateral engagement. Putin, for his part, called the meeting a “reference point” for restoring pragmatic U.S.-Russia relations and insisted that the “root causes” of the conflict must be addressed for any long-term settlement. This language, familiar to anyone following the war, underscores Moscow's unwillingness to agree to a ceasefire without substantial concessions. As the leaders spoke, the war raged on: air raid alerts blared across eastern Ukraine, and Russian governors in Rostov and Bryansk reported Ukrainian drone attacks. The optics of diplomacy were starkly undercut by the reality of ongoing violence. For Europe, the meeting was an unsettling reminder that its security could be negotiated over without its direct involvement. European leaders, aligned with Zelenskyy in their opposition to any premature freeze of the conflict, were quick to express skepticism. Czech Foreign Minister Jan Lipavsky welcomed Trump's efforts but doubted Putin's sincerity, noting that Russian forces had continued attacking Ukraine even as the summit took place. The fear in European capitals is that Trump might seek a “quick fix” deal that sacrifices Ukraine's territorial integrity for the sake of ending hostilities on paper. Still, there is a pragmatic argument to be made for not dismissing the Alaska talks outright. If any understanding between Trump and Putin could lead to a verifiable ceasefire, guarantee Ukraine's security, and offer Europe a stable security framework, it would be worth exploring. This would require Kyiv and European governments to set aside political pride and assess the proposals based on merit rather than the process by which they were reached. Given the deep divisions between Trump and Europe on other issues—including Gaza, where Europe has taken a markedly different stance from Washington—the temptation to reject any Trump-brokered deal is strong. Yet peace, if achievable, should transcend personal and political grievances. Trump's diplomatic résumé is as polarizing as it is unusual. While some credit him with preventing conflicts, others argue that his domestic policies—on immigration, healthcare, and U.S.-Canada relations—undermine his credibility as a global peacemaker. His handling of the Gaza conflict, where critics accuse him of enabling Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Net-

anyahu's military campaign, has drawn condemnation from much of the international community. In Gaza, thousands have been killed, with civilians—including children and the elderly—bearing the brunt of the violence. The region has been turned into what many describe as an “open prison” and a “death trap.” If Trump were to use the same leverage he claims to have over Netanyahu to halt the Gaza war, his Nobel Peace Prize prospects would be significantly enhanced. Without that, his candidacy will remain a point of fierce debate. Nevertheless, the Alaska summit shows that Trump is willing to insert himself into high-stakes global conflicts, even at the risk of bypassing traditional diplomatic channels. The reality, however, is that the Alaska meeting has so far delivered little tangible progress. No ceasefire, no formal commitments, and no agreed-upon next steps toward a trilateral summit involving Zelenskyy. Ukraine's opposition figures, such as lawmaker Oleksiy Honcharenko, have already characterized the outcome as a win for Putin, arguing that the talks have simply bought Moscow more time. Without concrete deliverables, the meeting risks being remembered more for its optics than its outcomes. That said, the possibility remains for Europe and Ukraine to engage later, should any framework emerge from Trump-Putin discussions that could realistically lead to peace. In such a scenario, setting aside ego and geopolitical point-scoring in favor of pragmatic diplomacy could save countless lives. The stakes are monumental—not only for Ukraine and Europe but for the credibility of international conflict resolution in an era when wars seem increasingly resistant to traditional diplomacy. In the end, the Alaska summit may be less about the immediate cessation of hostilities and more about testing the waters for a new phase in the U.S.-Russia relationship. Whether this phase leads to a genuine peace process or simply becomes another chapter in the long list of failed mediation attempts will depend on whether all relevant parties—Ukraine, Europe, the U.S., and Russia—can find common ground. For now, the war grinds on, and the window for diplomacy remains precariously narrow.

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

## Shoulder to shoulder in every calamity

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



Army Chief Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir has issued special instructions for the rehabilitation of flood victims in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He emphasized that the army deployed in the region will provide full support to those impacted, with additional troops sent to reinforce relief operations

THERE are many ups and downs in the lives of nations, and often, the harshest trials come from nature itself. In these moments, resilience, courage, and unity define the strength of a people. Pakistan, throughout its history, has faced numerous natural calamities that have tested its patience and perseverance. Each time, however, the people of this land, alongside their armed forces, have stood steadfast in the face of adversity. Whether in war or disaster, the Pakistan Army has never hesitated to sacrifice for the nation and has always remained on the front lines of relief and rescue. This time, the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has been ravaged by devastating floods, leading to immense loss of life and property. Villages have been swept away, communication links destroyed, and countless families left stranded. Yet, as has always been the case, the Pakistan Army has rushed to the side of the distressed, standing shoulder to shoulder with the affected people. Following the traditions of service and sacrifice, the federal government, provincial governments, and Pakistanis abroad have also mobilized resources to support those suffering in this time of crisis. Army Chief Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir has issued special instructions for the rehabilitation of flood victims in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He emphasized that the army deployed in the region will provide full support to those impacted, with additional troops sent to reinforce relief operations. In a gesture of solidarity, the entire Pakistan Army has donated one day's salary towards rehabilitation efforts. Furthermore, the army has allocated over 600 tons of its own ration stock to provide immediate sustenance to the flood-hit population.

The Chief has also directed the Corps of Engineers to expedite the repair of damaged bridges and establish temporary structures where necessary to restore connectivity. Specialized rescue units, including the Army's Sniffing Dog Unit and the Urban Search and Rescue Team, have been deployed to locate missing persons and assist in evacuation. Helicopters from the Army Aviation Corps are actively engaged in transporting supplies and rescuing stranded families. In every sphere, the Pakistan Army has once again shown that it remains a guardian not only of the country's borders but also of its people in their darkest hours. Natural disasters, though painful, remind us of the fragility of life and the importance of solidarity. The Holy Qur'an says: “And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient—those who, when disaster strikes them, say, ‘Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return.’” (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:155–156). These verses offer solace, reminding believers that patience and steadfastness in trials bring divine reward. The Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) also said: “The believers, in their mutual kindness, compassion, and sympathy, are just like one body. When one limb suffers, the whole body responds with wakefulness and fever.” (Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim). Pakistan's collective response to such calamities is a testament to this very spirit of unity and compassion. History bears witness that Pakistan has endured calamities of even greater scale. In 8 October 2005, the earthquake that struck Kashmir and northern Pakistan claimed over 80,000 lives and left millions homeless. The nation united in grief and resilience, with

the armed forces and volunteers from every corner of Pakistan rushing to aid survivors. Again, in the floods of 2010, described by the United Nations as one of the worst humanitarian crises of modern times, nearly one-fifth of the country was submerged. Around 20 million people were affected, homes were destroyed, and farmlands devastated, yet the resolve of Pakistan's people and their armed forces turned despair into determination. In 2014, the floods in Punjab and Kashmir once again tested the nation, sweeping away infrastructure and livelihoods. Each time, Pakistan endured, rebuilt, and moved forward. The present calamity in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is thus part of a long and painful history, but also of a legacy of resilience. Every disaster has shown that the strength of Pakistan lies not in the absence of trials but in the courage with which they are faced. The sacrifices of the armed forces, who risk their lives even in peacetime for the sake of their people, deserve eternal recognition. Likewise, the compassion of overseas Pakistanis and ordinary citizens who contribute whatever they can illustrates the indomitable spirit of this nation. As the floodwaters recede, the challenge of rehabilitation and reconstruction will demand patience, resources, and sustained effort. But with faith in Allah Almighty, the unity of the people, and the tireless service of our defenders, Pakistan will once again rise from the ruins. Just as the sun emerges after the darkest storms, so too will hope return to the valleys of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Pakistan Army, as declared by its Chief, will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with the brave people of the province in every hour of difficulty. And as history has shown, no disaster, however grave, can break the will of a nation bound together by faith, sacrifice, and resilience.



## Briefs

## European leaders to...

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The flurry of diplomacy comes just days after a failed summit in Anchorage, Alaska, where Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin met but failed to clinch an agreement. While Trump described the encounter as "progress," Putin publicly stressed that it was "still too early" for a breakthrough. Trump has made clear he is not interested in a temporary ceasefire, which he argues could collapse like previous efforts. Instead, he says the goal must be a permanent peace agreement that ends hostilities once and for all. For Zelensky, the White House gathering represents an opportunity to shore up Western unity and ensure Ukraine's voice is not drowned out in direct US-Russia negotiations. For Europe, it is a chance to demonstrate both solidarity with Kyiv and influence over the trajectory of the talks.

## Relief goods dispatched..

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Sardar Yousaf will oversee operations in Mansehra and PM's Special Assistant Mubarak Zeb will supervise aid distribution in Bajaur. The prime minister was personally overseeing NDMA's relief operations in all flood-affected districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, PM Office Media Wing, on Sunday, said in a press release. Under the PM's Relief Package, more truckloads with relief supplies were being dispatched to the affected districts. The relief goods included food rations, tents, and medicines. These items were being handed over to the district administrations.

## British Secretary...

FROM PAGE 01

He expressed UK's solidarity with Pakistan in this difficult time and also wished the DPM/FM productive engagements during his visit to London, Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press release. The DPM/FM expressed gratitude for UK's solidarity and its readiness to support relief and recovery efforts. He looked forward to continued engagement with the UK leadership.

## NDMA warns of...

FROM PAGE 01

instability and heavier rain-fall across multiple regions. He attributed the heightened severity to climate change, which continues to intensify weather disruptions in vulnerable regions. Pakistan is witnessing severe repercussions, with widespread destruction reported in Buner, Bajaur and Battagram areas increasingly exposed to climate-driven hazards. "The monsoon season is expected to persist until September 10," he said.

## PM chairs meeting...

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directed all provincial chief secretaries to extend full cooperation to the federal government in implementing the Raast payment system at the district government level. He emphasized that expanding the reach of Raast would be a major step toward ensuring transparency, efficiency, and convenience in financial transactions. The participants were given a detailed briefing on the progress of initiatives related to the cashless economy.

## Federal Reserve...

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Commandant Federal Reserve Police Riaz Nazir Gara is personally leading the force's efforts to provide maximum assistance to the people in distress. According to officials, Federal Reserve Police personnel have rescued several victims trapped by floodwaters and safely relocated them to secure areas. Alongside rescue efforts, medical teams of the Federal Reserve Police are also providing essential healthcare services to the affected population.

## Independence Day Hockey Cup

## Rising Stars White triumph over rising Stars Green



SAIFULLAH ANSAR

RAWALPINDI: The Rising Stars Hockey Club organized an Independence Day Hockey match at the Shehnaz Sheikh Hockey Stadium Rawalpindi, marking Pakistan's 78th Independence Day with a spirited display of sportsmanship, and international friendship. The much-anticipated exhibition match was contested between Rising Stars White and Rising Stars Green, with Rising Stars White emerging victorious by 3-1. The event carried a special charm as it featured diplomats, young players, and budding female athletes on the same field. His Excellency Neil Hawkins, High Commis-

sioner of Australia to Pakistan, donned the Rising Stars Green jersey, while His Excellency Kamal Ahmed, High Commissioner of Brunei Darussalam, represented Rising Stars White. Their participation not only energized the crowd but also highlighted the growing role of sports diplomacy in strengthening people-to-people ties. The match began with fast-paced action from both sides, with Rising Stars Green pressing hard in the opening minutes. However, Rising Stars White quickly found their rhythm and took the lead midway through the first half. Despite a strong fightback from the Green side, including a penalty corner conversion, the White side proved too strong, scoring two more goals to seal the 3-1 victory.

A special feature of the Independence Day Cup was the participation of female players from the Rising Stars Girls Hockey Academy, who were given the opportunity to showcase their talent alongside senior players. Their involvement drew wide appreciation from the spectators, who applauded the club's efforts in encouraging women's participation in hockey. Following the match, both high commissioners and Deputy Head of Mission of the Romanian Embassy Eduard Preda, along with players of the two teams, gathered to cut a cake, symbolically marking the Independence Day celebrations. In their remarks, Neil Hawkins and Kamal Ahmed lauded the Rising Stars Hockey Club for organizing the



event with such enthusiasm and inclusivity. They praised the management for creating a platform where youth, diplomats, and female players could come together in the spirit of sportsmanship. "This was more than just a match; it was an occasion to celebrate Pakistan's independence, promote hockey, and build

bridges of friendship," said Kamal Ahmed. Neil Hawkins echoed similar sentiments, emphasizing that such initiatives reflect the true spirit of unity and celebration. The Independence Day Hockey match concluded with cheers, photographs, and renewed commitment to promoting hockey at the grassroots level.

## Chengdu: A city where history marries modernity

CHENGDU: The World Games 2025 have concluded, the cheers have faded and the medals hang with pride, but in Chengdu memories linger like the fragrant steam rising from a cup of longjing tea. In this vertical city, visitors arrive and never wish to leave. Here, history isn't confined to textbooks; it breathes through narrow alleyways, ancient towns and skyscrapers that stretch into the clouds. With over 1,500 public parks, exploring a new one each day would take four years. The city's culinary wealth is just as staggering. Trying a new dish daily would require nearly a year. And at the heart of the city lies Tianfu Avenue, the world's longest central axis, stretching an astonishing 150 kilometres. Among Chengdu's many treasures, Kuanzhai Alley, Jinli Street, Luodai Ancient, the Chengdu Museum, and the Panda Centre, each offers a unique dialogue between past and future. Step into Kuanzhai Alley (wide and narrow alley) and you're transported to a Qing Dynasty dreamscape. Grey-brick courtyards, adorned with ornate wooden carvings, now house artisan shops, boutique cafes and Sichuan opera theaters. By day, the alleys hum with tourists sipping jasmine tea; by night, red lanterns cast a warm glow over cobblestones, as if the past whispers to the present. Just a stone's throw away, Jinli Street erupts with energy. Once a Three Kingdoms-era market, today it's a riot of sizzling skewers, sugar-blown dragon candies and the clatter of mahjong tiles. Its wooden architecture, etched with murals, defiantly faces neon-lit shopping plazas proof that Chengdu's soul remains unbroken by modernity. Venture farther to Luodai Ancient Town, a 1,700-year-old water town where canals mirror teahouses and ginkgo trees shade chess-playing elders. - **Agencies**

## PMYP-Qalandars Trials Unearth Twin Cities' Talent

## OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP) Talent Hunt cricket trials, powered by Lahore Qalandars, concluded successfully in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, attracting thousands of aspiring young cricketers from the twin cities. The two-day trials drew an overwhelming response, with boys and girls turning up in large numbers to showcase their skills and passion for the game. After extensive assessments by qualified coaches and Lahore Qalandars' staff, one boys' and one girls' team were selected from each city. Lahore Qalandars CEO Atif Rana praised the enthusiasm and commitment of the youth, calling the trials "a remarkable success" and expressing delight at the discovery of fresh cricketing talent.

## Defending champ Sinner subdues Atmane to reach Cincinnati ATP final

CINCINNATI: World number one Jannik Sinner ruthlessly subdued 136th-ranked Terence Atmane 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 on Saturday to reach the final of the ATP-WTA Cincinnati Open. Italy's Sinner, celebrating his 24th birthday, ended French qualifier Atmane's dream run and will now try to become the first man since Roger Federer in 2014-15 to win back-to-back titles in Cincinnati. In Monday's final he'll face either world number two Carlos Alcaraz or third-ranked Alexander Zverev, who faced off later Saturday. Sinner, tuning up for the US Open in his first tournament since winning Wimbledon, hasn't dropped a set en route to the final. "It was a very, very tough challenge every time you play a new opponent," Sinner said. "In the later stages of the tournament, the pressure is on, they deserve to be there." Atmane gave birthday boy Sinner a Pokemon card shortly before they went on court, but he was in a less giving mood once they were underway. The 23-year-old Frenchman, who beat world number four Taylor Fritz and ninth-ranked Holger Rune to reach the semis, looked right at home in the biggest match of his career, using his powerful lefty forehand to good effect. But Sinner surren-

dered just three points in his first six service games as they went to the tiebreaker with neither man facing a break point. Atmane double faulted on the first point of the decider and Sinner was away, powering to a 5-2 lead and pocketing the set at his second opportunity. "My experience helped in the first set," he said. "I'm very happy to go through to another final. "My goal has always been the US Open. But we have put in the work here, in the gym and in practice. "I just hope to be ready for New York." Sinner showed a first sign of vulnerability as he needed five game points to hold serve in the opening game of the second set. But that was the closest loss Atmane got at his serve, and Sinner broke the Frenchman for a 3-1 lead and again to seal the match. Atmane, who is projected to crack the top 70 in the world rankings, became Sinner's 22nd straight French victim since May 2021, when he lost to Arthur Rinderknech in Lyon. But Sinner was among the many he impressed in Cincy. "I knew that I had to be very careful, and my mindset was in a good spot," Sinner said. "He was serving incredibly well in the first set. He has huge, huge potential, and I think we saw that in the tournament." - **Agencies**

## Australian envoy expresses...

FROM PAGE 01

The recent floods have caused widespread devastation, damaging homes, infrastructure, and livelihoods, while rescue and relief operations continue in the affected areas. Meanwhile, the Government of Japan has also offered condolences to Pakistan over the loss of lives in floods. On August 16, regarding the damages caused by the flood in the northern part of Pakistan, Mr. ISHIBA Shigeru, Prime Minister of Japan, has expressed his sincere condolences to Mr. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Prime Minister, Islamic Republic of Pakistan over the loss of precious lives. In his message of condolences PM Ishiba said: "I am deeply saddened to learn that many precious lives were lost in the flood that occurred in the northern part of Pakistan. On behalf of the Government of Japan, I pray for the souls of the victims and extend my deepest condolences to the bereaved families.

Babar, Rizwan snubbed as PCB announces lineup for Asia Cup  
Salman retained as skipper; Hasan and Sahibzada also included in team

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Sunday announced a 17-member Green Shirts' squad for the upcoming UAE tri-series and Asia Cup 2025. All-rounder Salman Ali Agha has been retained as captain of the 17-member squad. Senior players Fakhar Zaman, Shaheen Shah Afridi, and Harris Rauf are part of the lineup, while youngsters Saim Ayub, Khushdil Shah, and Husain Talat have also been included. The squad further features Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Wasim Jr, and Mohammad Harris, along with Abrar Ahmed, Faheem Ashraf, Hasan Ali, and Hasan Nawaz. Sahibzada Farhan, Salman Mirza, and Sufyan Moqim. The tri-series, featuring Pakistan, Afghanistan, and hosts UAE, will be played in Sharjah from August 29



to September 7. Following that, the Asia Cup 2025 is scheduled to take place in Abu Dhabi and Dubai from September 9 to 28. "This is the same group that is playing, hopefully these players who are playing will do well in the future too," PCB's Director High Performance Aqib Javed said during the press conference. "There is continuity in the players from the three series. Our focus is on winning at the moment and continuity for that, the team is playing well in T20I," Javed said. On Salman Mirza's inclusion in the team, the former cricketer credited his performance in Bangladesh. "The player who performs well in Bangladesh, he should play," Javed remarked. "Sahibzada Farhan has made a comeback in the team, Aqib Javed Saim has also improved his performance. - **Agencies**



## Briefs

**NWC implements 22 projects in Jeddah Governorate**

JEDDAH: The National Water Company (NWC) has started implementing 22 capital projects in Jeddah Governorate at a cost of over SAR1.8 billion. These projects include the construction of pipelines and networks totaling approximately 984 kilometers in length.

The projects are part of NWC's strategic plans to reinforce the infrastructure of the water and environmental services sectors, expand service coverage rates, and improve service quality in line with the urban renaissance witnessed by the governorate.

According to NWC, these ongoing projects will increase operational efficiency in the water and sanitation sectors and expand services to unserved districts, aligning with and accelerating the rapid development witnessed in Jeddah, helping to achieve environmental and water sustainability targets and improving the quality of life, all of which are key goals of Saudi Vision 2030.

NWC stated that the projects launched include main and feeder water lines, water transmission lines, environmental service lines and networks, and surface water level drawdown networks. They also include the construction of a tanker filling station in the northern reservoir.—APP

**Under the sun's fury****A bank's customer's wait, a guard's ordeal without shade**

ISLAMABAD: The midday sun burned over Ghouseia Chowk, Farooq-e-Azam Road. A small crowd stood outside a private bank's ATM, among them, Mudassar, an ordinary customer, wiping sweat from his face. His turn to withdraw cash was still far away. There was no shelter, no shade, only the harsh sunlight. "This is the only ATM in the area," he said. "We are forced to stand here in the heat every time. We have no choice." From Chandni Chowk to Commercial Market in Rawalpindi, long rows of branded outlets line the roadside and almost every security guard posted there tells the same story. At one such outlet, a guard said bitterly: "If we complain or demand better facilities, the company will simply replace us with someone else." Not far away, another uniformed guard stood on a narrow two-foot cemented path outside a commercial outlet. His shoes were worn out, and his uniform was heavy in the heat. For hours, he had stood under the blazing sun, protecting property worth millions. Yet for his own life and dignity, there was no protection.—APP

**Netanyahu has become a 'problem', says Danish PM**

COPENHAGEN: Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said that Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu has become a "problem", adding she would try to put pressure on Israel over the Gaza war as her country currently holds the EU presidency. "Netanyahu is now a problem in himself," Frederiksen said in an interview with the Jyllands-Posten daily, adding that the Israeli government was going "too far." The centre right leader slammed the "absolutely appalling and catastrophic" humanitarian situation in Gaza and new settlement project in the occupied West Bank. "We are one of the countries that wants to increase pressure on Israel, but we have not yet obtained the support of EU members," she said. Frederiksen added that she wanted to consider "political pressure, sanctions, whether against settlers, ministers, or even Israel as a whole," referring to trade or research sanctions.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a review meeting on Cashless economy.

# Iraq starts work on Daesh mass grave contain thousands

In addition to Daesh-era mass graves, Iraqi authorities continue to unearth such sites dating to the rule of Saddam Hussein, who was toppled in a US-led invasion in 2003

**DNA**

BAGHDAD: Iraqi authorities have begun excavating the site of a mass grave believed to contain thousands of victims of the Daesh group near Mosul city, the project's director said on Sunday. The first phase, which was launched on August 10, includes surface-level excavation at the Khasfa site, director Ahmed Asadi said. An AFP correspondent

visiting the site in northern Iraq on Sunday said the team unearthed human skulls buried in the sand. Khasfa is located near Mosul, where Daesh had established the capital of their self-declared "caliphate" before being defeated in Iraq in late 2017. Asadi said that there were no precise figures for the numbers of victims buried there — one of dozens of mass graves Daesh left behind in Iraq — but a UN report from 2018 said Khasfa was likely

the country's largest. Official estimates put the number of bodies buried at the site at least 4,000, with the possibility of thousands more. The project director said the victims buried there include "soldiers executed by Daesh," members of the Yazidi minority and residents of Mosul. Exhuming the bodies from Khasfa is particularly difficult, Asadi said, as underground sulfur water makes the earth very porous. The water may have also eroded

the human remains, complicating DNA identification of victims, he added. Asadi said further studies will be required before his team can dig deeper and exhume bodies at the site — a sinkhole about 150-meter (nearly 500-foot) deep and 110-meter wide. Iraqi authorities said it was the site of "one of the worst massacres" committed by Daesh militants, executing 280 in a single day in 2016, many of them interior ministry employees. In a lightning advance that began

in 2014, Daesh had seized large swathes of Iraq and neighboring Syria, enforcing a strict interpretation of Islamic law and committing widespread abuses. The United Nations estimates the militants left behind more than 200 mass graves which might contain as many as 12,000 bodies. In addition to Daesh-era mass graves, Iraqi authorities continue to unearth such sites dating to the rule of Saddam Hussein, who was toppled in a US-led invasion in 2003.

## 250 flee as Turkish rescuers battle wildfire in Gallipoli

ISTANBUL: More than 250 people were evacuated overnight as a wildfire raged on the Gallipoli peninsula flanking the Dardanelles Strait, where Turkish firefighters were battling Sunday to quench the blaze, officials said. The fire began on Saturday in the northwestern province of Canakkale, and spread quickly due to high winds in the hills near the town of Gelibolu, on the shores of the busy shipping strait. "As a precaution, 251 residents from five villages were relocated to safe areas," Canakkale governor Omer Toraman wrote on X. Footage showed the hillsides illuminated by bright flames while huge clouds of smoke poured into the night air. Toraman said the province, a popular destination for tourists visiting the ancient ruins of Troy, as well as the Gallipoli battleground where thousands of soldiers died in World War I, had suffered "extremely severe drought" over the past year. While the weather has been fairly normal for the time of year, much of northwestern Turkey has suffered strong winds in recent days, although they eased off on Sunday. Firefighters worked through the night, with 12 planes and 18 helicopters rejoining the efforts at first light in an operation involving 900 people, the forestry directorate said on X. The authority in charge of the war memorials said on X that access to historical sites near the town of Eceabat had been closed "due to the ongoing forest fire." On Monday, another fire on the other side of the strait forced 2,000 people to flee, with around 80 treated for smoke inhalation. Several days earlier, another fire forced the evacuation of 120 people and the suspension of shipping through the Dardanelles Strait, which links the Mediterranean with the Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea. According to the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS) website, there have been 192 wildfires in Turkey this year, which have ravaged more than 110,373 hectares (273,000 acres) of land. Experts say human-driven climate change is causing more frequent and more intense wildfires and other natural disasters, and have warned Turkey to take measures to tackle the problem.—APP

## PTA ensures connectivity in flood-affected areas

ISLAMABAD: In this hour of national need, the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), in collaboration with Cellular Mobile Operators (CMOs), stands with the people affected by the devastating floods. As part of the relief measures, CMOs are offering free on-net voice calls (same network) to subscribers in flood-affected areas, said a press release issued here Sunday. This initiative ensures that customers, including those with zero balance, can remain connected with their families and emergency services during these challenging times. More than 72 percent of the affected telecom sites have already been restored. PTA, in close coordination with CMOs, is making all-out efforts to restore the remaining sites at the earliest possible time. The PTA highly appreciates the timely efforts of CMOs in extending support to telecom consumers and reaffirms its commitment to ensuring uninterrupted connectivity. The Authority will continue to closely monitor telecom services in the affected areas and provide timely updates.—APP

## Libyans vote in local elections

TRIPOLI: Tens of thousands of Libyans voted in local elections on Saturday in areas controlled by the Tripoli government but opposition from a rival administration in the east prevented the polls going ahead elsewhere. The elections were seen as a test of democracy in a nation still plagued by division and instability after years of unrest following the NATO-backed uprising that toppled longtime leader Moamer Kadhafi in 2011. The UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) praised organisers for the conduct of Saturday's elections but criticised the eastern administration, backed by military strongman Khalifa Haftar, for its "violation" of the rights of voters in areas under its control. Polling took place in around 50 municipalities, including the capital. "Voting today in Tripoli is crucial for me because it makes me feel useful," said Sami el-Tajuri, a 62-year-old architect, adding that his three children are voting for the first time. "It's frustrating to see that I can have my say in who will represent me but so many other Libyans, especially in the east, cannot." Since Kadhafi's overthrow, Libya has been split between the UN-recognised government in Tripoli, led by Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah, and its eastern rival, backed by Haftar. Elections were initially scheduled in 63 municipalities — 41 in the west, 13 in the east and nine in the south. But the High National Election Commission (HNEC) suspended elections in 11 municipalities, mostly in Haftar-controlled areas, due to "irregularities", including unexplained halts in voter card distribution. The UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) commended the HNEC for its "steadfast commitment to ensure credible electoral operations amidst significant operational and security challenges.—APP

## FPCCI for fast-track approval of imported cotton seed

LAHORE: Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) President Atif Ikrar Sheikh Saturday called for the approval system for imported cotton seed to be placed on a fast track. He made this demand in the fourth meeting of FPCCI's Task Force on Agriculture held here at FPCCI Regional Office. The meeting was attended by FPCCI United Business Group (UBG) Patron-in-Chief SM Tanveer, FPCCI Vice President, Zaki Aijaz, Task Force Chairman Sham Lal Manglani, former president of Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Shehzad Ali Malik, of FPCCI Policy Advisory Board Chairman Mian Zahid Hussain, Kasur Chamber's President Kashif Khokhar as well as Ijaz Tufail, Akbar Khan, Dr Ghazanfar Ali Khan, Dr Aslam Yousaf and Zulfiqar Ali. During the meeting, all members unanimously demanded that the approval process for imported cotton seed be expedited. It was resolved that FPCCI would raise this matter with the prime minister, the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), and National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC) to ensure swift approvals.—DNA

## Mistrust and fear

# The complex story behind strained Syria-Lebanon relations

BEIRUT: A lot has happened in just a year on both sides of the Lebanon-Syria border. A lightning offensive by Islamist insurgents in Syria toppled longtime autocrat Bashar Assad and brought a new government in place in Damascus. In Lebanon, a bruising war with Israel dealt a serious blow to Hezbollah — the Iran-backed and Assad-allied Shiite Lebanese militant group that had until recently been a powerful force in the Middle East — and a US-negotiated deal has brought a fragile ceasefire. Still, even after the fall of the 54-year Assad family rule, relations between Beirut and Damascus remain tense — as they have been for decades past, with Syria long failing to treat its smaller neighbor as a sovereign nation. Recent skirmishes along the border have killed and wounded several people, both fighters and civilians, including a four-year-old Lebanese girl. Beirut and Damascus have somewhat coordinated on border security, but attempts to reset political relations have been slow. Despite visits to Syria by two heads of Lebanon's government, no Syrian official has visited Lebanon. Here is what's behind the complicated relations. A coldness that goes way back Many Syrians have resented Hezbollah for wading into Syria's civil war in defense of Assad's government. Assad's fall sent them home, but many Lebanese now fear cross-border attacks by Syria's Islamic militants. There are new restrictions on Lebanese entering Syria, and Lebanon has maintained tough restrictions on Syrians entering Lebanon. The Lebanese also fear that Damascus

could try to bring Lebanon under a new Syrian tutelage. Syrians have long seen Lebanon as a staging ground for anti-Syria activities, including hosting opposition figures before Hafez Assad — Bashar Assad's father — ascended to power in a bloodless 1970 coup. In 1976, Assad senior sent his troops to Lebanon, allegedly to bring peace as Lebanon was hurtling into a civil war that lasted until 1990. Once that ended, Syrian forces — much like a colonial power — remained in Lebanon for another 15 years. A signature of the Assad family rule, Syria's dreaded security agents disappeared and tortured dissidents to keep the country under their control. They did the same in Lebanon. "Syrians feel that Lebanon is the main gateway for conspiracies against them," says Lebanese political analyst Ali Hamadeh. It took until 2008 for the two countries to agree to open diplomatic missions, marking Syria's first official recognition of Lebanon as an independent state since it gained independence from France in 1943. The move came after the 2005 truck-bombing assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri that many blamed on Damascus. Two months later, Syria pulled its troops out of Lebanon under international pressure, ending 29 years of near-complete domination of its neighbor. When Syria's own civil war erupted in 2011, hundreds of thousands of Syrians fled across the border, making crisis-hit Lebanon the host of the highest per capita population of refugees in the world. Once in Lebanon, the refugees complained about discrimination, including curfews for Syrian citizens in some

areas. Hezbollah, meanwhile, rushed thousands of its fighters into Syria in 2013 to shore up Assad, worried that its supply lines from Iran could dry up. And as much as the Lebanese are divided over their country's internal politics, Syria's war divided them further into those supporting Assad's government and those opposing it. Distrust and deadlock A key obstacle to warming relations has been the fate of about 2,000 Syrians in Lebanese prisons, including some 800 held over attacks and shootings, many without trial. Damascus is asking Beirut to hand them over to continue their prison terms in Syria, but Lebanese judicial officials say Beirut won't release any attackers and that each must be studied and resolved separately. In July, family members of the detainees rallied along a border crossing, demanding their relatives be freed. The protest came amid reports that Syrian troops could deploy foreign fighters in Lebanon, which Damascus officials denied. Another obstacle is Lebanon's demand that Syrian refugees go back home now that Assad is gone. About 716,000 Syrian refugees are registered with the UN refugee agency, while hundreds of thousands more are unregistered in Lebanon, which has a population of about 5 million. Syria is also demanding the return of billions of dollars worth of deposits of Syrians trapped in Lebanese banks since Lebanon's historic financial meltdown in 2019. The worst post-Assad border skirmishes came in mid-March, when Syrian authorities said Hezbollah members crossed the border and kidnapped and killed three Syrian soldiers.—APP

## Big industry grows by 4.14 % in June 2025

ISLAMABAD: The output of the Large Scale Manufacturing Industries (LSMI) witnessed an increase of 4.14 per cent during the month of June 2025 compared to the same month of last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

On month-on-month basis, the LSMI's production in June 2025, decreased by 3.67 per cent when compared with that of May 2025.

Overall the LSMI output showed a decline of 0.74 per cent during July-June 2025 when compared with the same period of last year, according to the PBS data.

The provisional quantum induces of Large Scale Manufacturing Industries (LSMI) for June 2025, with the base year 2015-16, have been developed based on the latest data supplied by the source agencies.

The main contributors towards overall growth of -0.74% are Tobacco (0.10), Textile (0.41) Garments (0.88), Petroleum Products (0.37), Pharmaceuticals (0.16), Automobiles (0.85), Other transport Equipment (0.17), Food (-0.32), Chemicals (-0.28) Non Metallic Mineral Products (-0.51), Cement (-0.26), Iron & Steel Products (-0.40), Electrical Equipment (-0.34), Machinery and Equipment (-0.18) and Furniture (-1.59).

The production in July-June 2024-25 as compared to July-June 2023-24 has increased in Tobacco, Textile, wearing apparel, Coke & Petroleum Products, Automobiles and Other Transport Equipment while it Decreased in Food, Chemical Products, Non Metallic Mineral Products, Iron & Steel Products, Electrical Equipment, Machinery and Equipment, and Furniture.

## Australian scientists target frost losses threatening wheat industry

CANBERRA: Australian scientists are leading efforts to protect grain growers from frost damage, costing the wheat industry over 360 million Australian dollars (about 235 million U.S. dollars) a year.

Field trials are being combined with laboratory and controlled-environment studies to develop genetic solutions to frost, according to a statement released Wednesday by Australia's Charles Sturt University (CSU).

Crop scientists are studying novel wheat germplasm in fields and frost-simulation chambers to uncover genetic links to frost damage, which has risen by 30 percent in southern Australia since 2000, with climate models predicting both frequency and severity will intensify, it said.

"This presents a challenge to breeders to improve crop tolerance to stress and for industry to integrate new genetic potential into farming systems to continually adapt to climate change, thus increasing productivity," said CSU Senior Lecturer in Crop Science Felicity Harris.—APP

## Bahri denies allegations of transporting goods to Israel

RIYADH: The National Shipping Company of Saudi Arabia (Bahri) has strongly refuted media and social media reports alleging that it transported shipments destined for Israel, calling the claims "completely false and baseless. Bahri, in a statement on Friday, reaffirmed its full commitment to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's longstanding policies on the Palestinian cause and to strict adherence to all local and international laws governing maritime transport. "The company does not, and has never, transported any goods or shipments to Israel in any form," Bahri stated, adding that all operations undergo strict oversight and rigorous auditing to ensure compliance with regulations. The company warned it reserves the right to pursue legal action against those spreading "malicious allegations" intended to harm its reputation or undermine its policies. Bahri also urged media outlets to verify information through credible sources before publishing, stressing the importance of accuracy in reporting.—APP



## Briefs

Journalist  
Khawar  
Hussain  
found dead

DNA

SANGHAR: Khawar Hussain, a young journalist associated with a private news channel, was found dead in his car on Saturday with a gunshot wound to his head, the police said. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Sanghar, Abid Baloch, told reporters that, as per preliminary reports, the journalist's body was discovered in a vehicle parked outside a restaurant on Hyderabad Road. He added that Hussain, originally from Sanghar and based in Karachi, had shot himself, though he did not share what this inference was based on. Baloch later, however, said there was no conclusive evidence that the journalist had taken his own life. He added it was too early to say if it was a case of suicide and noted that the exact cause of death would only be known after the post-mortem report. The SSP had initially described the incident as a suicide.

Sindh  
earmarks  
land for first  
B2B green  
power project

DNA

KARACHI: The Sindh government has allotted 300 acres of land in Jhimpir to Moro Power Company (MPC) for establishing a 100-megawatt hybrid wind and solar project, the first business-to-business (B2B) electricity venture under the province's own regulator. Officials said the project, to be executed under the Sindh Electric Power Regulatory Authority (SEPRRA), will enable MPC to supply power directly to industries in Nooriabad through the Sindh Transmission and Despatch Company (STDC). The initiative is aimed at providing industries with reliable and cheaper renewable energy, reducing costs and strengthening the provincial industrial base. Sindh is the only province in Pakistan to have its power regulator, giving it authority to set tariffs and oversee generation, transmission and distribution independently of the federal government. The Jhimpir project is therefore viewed as a pioneering step towards decentralised power generation in the country.

Pakistan  
reaches critical  
environmental  
tipping point

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Experts have warned that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the rest of Pakistan have reached a critical environmental tipping point due to 18% decline in the country's forest cover – exposing the environment, economy, and national security to serious threats. Deforestation, the destruction of rangelands, forest fires, and climate change-related threats are directly contributing to devastating floods, landslides, and cloudbursts. Since 1992, forest area has decreased by 18%, while rangelands are producing only 20-30% of their potential biomass, with KP having the largest share in this decline. The catastrophic floods of 1992, 2010, and 2025 prove that the destruction of forests and rangelands has turned the watersheds of the upper regions into "flood factories". Environmental experts say forests in Pakistan are not just trees but the country's first line of defence for the environment, economy, and national security. They absorb rainwater to prevent flash floods, recharge groundwater, protect agricultural land from erosion, and sustain soil fertility for farming. They balance the climate by reducing temperatures, storing carbon, and regulating rainfall. The forests also provide fuel, fodder, fruits, medicines, and tourism opportunities while protecting biodiversity.



**ISLAMABAD:** The Malaysian High Commission in Islamabad organized a lively Sports Gala, bringing together Malaysian diplomats, their families, and community members for a day of fun, fitness, and camaraderie. High Commissioner Azhar bin Mazlan actively participated in various sports events, underscoring the spirit of togetherness and friendship that marked the occasion. – DNA

Gaza Relocation Plan  
“new wave of genocide”

The group's statement came after Israeli officials hinted at the deployment of tents and temporary shelter facilities in southern Gaza to house residents displaced from the north and central parts of the Strip. Hamas described the plan as a “blatant deception” designed to mask what it called Israel's long-term goal of uprooting Palestinians from their homeland

## CENTRELINE REPORT

CAIRO: Hamas on Sunday strongly denounced Israel's reported relocation plan for Palestinians in Gaza, warning that the move constitutes a “new wave of genocide and displacement” for hundreds of thousands of residents trapped in the besieged territory. The group's statement came after Israeli officials hinted at the deployment of tents and temporary shelter facilities in southern Gaza to house residents displaced from the north and central parts of the Strip. Hamas described the plan as a “blatant deception” designed to mask what it called Israel's long-term goal of uprooting Palestinians from their homeland. According to Hamas, the establishment of tent camps under the pretext of humanitarian relief is part of a broader strategy to weaken Palestinian resistance and gradually enforce demographic changes in Gaza.

“This is not aid; this is ethnic cleansing under another name,” the statement read. The group urged the international community and humanitarian organizations to reject the initiative, warning that it would only deepen the suffering of Gaza's already devastated population. The Gaza Strip has been under an Israeli blockade since 2007, following Hamas's takeover of the territory. In recent months, the enclave has witnessed renewed hostilities, leading to widespread destruction of infrastructure and displacement of tens of thousands of civilians. The United Nations and aid agencies have repeatedly cautioned against the worsening humanitarian crisis, citing acute shortages of food, medicine, and shelter. Israel argues that its actions are aimed at dismantling Hamas's military infrastructure and ensuring its own security. However, critics say the relentless bombardments, restrictions on humanitarian access, and mass displacements amount to

collective punishment of Gaza's two million residents, half of whom are children. Hamas has compared the relocation plan to earlier waves of Palestinian displacement, particularly the Nakba of 1948, when more than 700,000 Palestinians fled or were expelled from their homes during the creation of the state of Israel. Similar patterns of forced displacement, Hamas argues, have repeated during various conflicts in 1967 and in subsequent Israeli military operations in Gaza. “This plan is an extension of the same policy that began in 1948 – uprooting Palestinians from their land, fragmenting their society, and denying them the right of return,” the group's spokesperson said. So far, Israel's relocation initiative has not been formally endorsed by international bodies. However, humanitarian organizations have expressed concern about the prospect of mass displacement. The UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) has

previously warned that Gaza is already struggling to accommodate hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons in overcrowded shelters and schools. Diplomats in Cairo, Amman, and Ankara have also voiced fears that further displacement could destabilize neighboring countries, particularly Egypt, which shares a border with Gaza at Rafah. Cairo has consistently opposed any Israeli move that could force Palestinians into Egyptian territory, viewing it as a potential trigger for regional instability. Hamas called on Arab states, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and the broader international community to pressure Israel into halting what it described as “war crimes in broad daylight.” The group also appealed to the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate the relocation plan as part of its ongoing probe into alleged violations of international law in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Syrian  
president  
accuses  
Israel of  
meddling

DNA

DAMASCUS: Syrian President Ahmed Al-Sharaa has said the battle to unify his country after years of civil war “should not be with blood,” rejecting any partition and accusing Israel of meddling in the south. His remarks, released by state TV on Sunday, came as hundreds demonstrated in south Syria's Sweida province, denouncing sectarian violence last month and calling for the right to self-determination for the Druze-majority province. “We still have another battle ahead of us to unify Syria, and it should not be with blood and military force... it should be through some kind of understanding because Syria is tired of war,” Sharaa said during a dialogue session involving notables from the northwest province of Idlib and other senior officials. I do not see Syria as at risk of division.

US cancels India trade talks  
scheduled for August: report

Fall deadline of September–October for finalising the first tranche of the bilateral trade agreement now appears uncertain

## NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: A planned visit by US trade negotiators to New Delhi from August 25–29 has been cancelled, delaying talks on a proposed bilateral trade agreement, India's business and financial news network NDTV Profit reported Saturday, citing people familiar with the matter. The Indian media, citing sources, reported that the visit for a round of negotiations on the proposed bilateral trade agreement would most likely be rescheduled, adding that both sides were in contact, but a new timetable for talks was yet to be finalised. This development came after US President Donald Trump imposed 25% tariffs on India in July and threatened to “substantially” increase them on Indian imports over the country's purchases of Russian oil. The upcoming round of talks was much anticipated, given that it was scheduled around August 27, which is when the imposition of the additional 25% secondary sanctions on In-

dia is to take place, the report added. The September–October deadline for finalising the first tranche of the bilateral trade agreement between India and the United States now appears uncertain. On Thursday, senior government officials said India remained “fully engaged” with Washington on the proposed trade deal, with talks continuing across multiple levels, from formal negotiating teams to ministerial, diplomatic channels, and industry-level interactions. Describing the US as a “very important trade partner”, the officials said clarity on the next round of talks – scheduled for August 25 in New Delhi – would emerge closer to the date, while reaffirming the agreed fall timeline. India said two days ago that it hoped relations with the United States would move forward based on mutual respect and shared interests, seeking to temper worries that ties were headed downhill in the aftermath of high tariffs imposed by Washington. New Delhi has accused the US of double standards in singling it out for Russian oil imports and called the tariffs unfair, unjustified and unreasonable.

Water extremes drive  
displacement in Afghanistan

AFGHANISTAN: Next to small bundles of belongings, Maruf waited for a car to take him and his family away from their village in northern Afghanistan, where drought-ridden land had yielded nothing for years. “When you have children and are responsible for their needs, then tell me, what are you still doing in this ruin?” said the 50-year-old. Many of the mud homes around him are already empty, he said, his neighbours having abandoned the village, fleeing “thirst, hunger and a life with no future”. Successive wars displaced Afghans over 40 years, but peace has not brought total reprieve, as climate change-fuelled shocks drive people from their homes and strain livelihoods. Since the war ended between the now-ruling Taliban and US-led forces in 2021, floods, droughts and other climate change-driven environmental hazards have become the main cause of displacement in the country, according to the UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM). In early 2025, nearly five million people across the country were impacted and nearly 400,000 people were displaced, the IOM said in July, citing its Climate Vulnerability Assessment. The majority of Afghans live in mud homes and depend heavily on agriculture and livestock, making them

particularly exposed to environmental changes. The water cycle has been sharply impacted, with Afghanistan again in the grip of drought for the fourth time in five years and flash floods devastating land, homes and livelihoods. “Crop failure, dry pastures and vanishing water sources are pushing rural communities to the edge,” the UN Food and Agriculture Organization said in July. “It's getting harder for families to grow food, earn income or stay where they are.” Experts and Taliban officials have repeatedly warned of escalating climate risks as temperatures rise, extreme weather events intensify and precipitation patterns shift. The country's limited infrastructure, endemic poverty and international isolation leave Afghans with few resources to adapt and recover – while already facing one of the world's worst humanitarian crises worsened by severe aid cuts. Abdul Jalil Rasooli's village in the drought-hit north has watched their way of life wither with their crops. Drought already drove many from his village to Pakistan and Iran a decade ago. Now they've returned, forced back over the border along with more than four million others from the two neighbouring countries since late 2023 – but to work odd jobs, not the land. – Agencies



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