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Pakistan values its partnership with the SCO, says Dar

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First lady Aseefa receives envoy of Indonesia

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Kundi assures facilities for tribal areas

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Anniversary of founding of PLA

Pakistan, China reaffirm to further solidify relations

Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Babar Sidhu, says that Pakistan greatly values its relations with China, describing them as "time-tested and enduring

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Babar Sidhu, has said that Pakistan greatly values its relations with China, describing them as "time-tested and enduring." He made these remarks while speaking as chief guest at a ceremony marking the 99th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA).

The event was hosted by China's Ambassador to Pakistan, Jiang Zaidong, along with Defence Attaché Major General Wang Zhong. Senior officials, diplomats, and defence representatives attended the gathering, underscoring the depth of bilateral ties between the two nations.

In his address, the Air Chief congratulated the Chinese leadership and armed forces on the PLA's anniversary, noting that Pakistan and China share a unique bond rooted in mutual trust, respect, and strategic cooperation. He emphasized that the relationship has stood the test of time and continues to grow stronger across defence, economic, and cultural spheres. Air Chief Marshal Sidhu highlighted that Pakistan-China cooperation is a cornerstone of regional peace and stability. He reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to further strengthening defence collaboration and expressed confidence that the partnership will continue to flourish in the years ahead.

Major General Wang Zhong thanked the Air Chief for his participation and reiterated China's appreciation for Pakistan's steadfast friendship. They noted that the PLA anniversary is not only a celebration of China's military achievements but also a reflection of the enduring partnership between the two countries. Defence Attaché Major General Wang Zhong also underscored the endur-

ing strength of China-Pakistan relations. He described the bond between the two nations as "time-tested," highlighting decades of mutual trust, cooperation, and shared aspirations. Major General Wang expressed confidence that this partnership would continue to flourish in the years ahead, adapting to new challenges while remaining firmly rooted in the principles of friendship and mutual respect. His remarks reflected the deep strategic and cultural ties that have consistently defined the relationship between Beijing and Islamabad.

Following the speeches, the distinguished chief guests, accompanied by the Chinese Ambassador and the Defence Attaché, participated in a ceremonial cake-cutting. This symbolic gesture marked not only the celebration of the occasion but also the unity and goodwill between the two countries. The atmosphere was further enriched by the serving of traditional Chinese cuisines alongside Pakistani delicacies, offering guests a taste of both cultures and reinforcing the spirit of harmony that the event sought to embody. The fusion of flavors mirrored the blending of traditions and values that characterize the China-Pakistan partnership.

The ceremony concluded on a solemn yet optimistic note, with both sides reaffirming their shared vision to deepen cooperation across multiple domains, including defence, trade, and cultural exchange. Emphasis was placed on the commitment to uphold regional stability and contribute to global peace, reflecting the broader significance of their alliance beyond bilateral ties. As the evening drew to a close, participants recognized the event as yet another milestone in the historic relationship between Pakistan and China—one that continues to evolve while remaining steadfast in its foundation of trust, solidarity, and mutual progress.



ISLAMABAD: Secretary General of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) calls on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Both sides discussed matters of mutual interest. -DNA

Fuel prices may be fixed on daily basis

Under proposed system, Ogra would be solely responsible for determining fuel prices

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: The government is considering a proposal to revise petroleum product prices on a daily basis, significantly reducing its role in the fuel pricing process. Under the proposed system, the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) would be solely responsible for determining the prices of motor spirit (MS), high-speed diesel (HSD), light diesel oil (LDO), and kerosene oil (KO) every night, with the revised prices taking effect at 12am. Currently, petroleum prices are revised on a weekly basis.

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PTI to hold nationwide rallies on August 5

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) parliamentary party has decided to hold nationwide rallies on August 5, party chief Barrister Gohar Ali Khan announced on Wednesday. "Our meeting had one agenda, but the entire national situation came under discussion," he said during a press conference after the meeting.

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Tom Fletcher meets PM

UN praises Pak endeavors for regional peace

Prime Minister Meets UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif received United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Tom Fletcher, at the Prime Minister House. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Adviser to the Prime Minister Dr. Syed Tauqir Shah, Chairman National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik, and other senior officials were present during the meeting. The Prime Minister appreciated the invaluable humanitarian work being undertaken by the United Nations Office for the

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PM directs NDMA to boost coordination

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) to further improve coordination with the provincial governments and Provincial Disaster Management Authorities (PDMAs) during the monsoon rains. The prime minister issued the directives in a

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Iran says focused on defence, has no plans for negotiations

DNA

TEHRAN: Regional tensions escalated sharply on Wednesday as Iran claimed that recent US airstrikes had killed more than 30 civilians, amid a widening cycle of retaliatory attacks across the Middle East. The Iranian Revolutionary Guards said the strikes occurred near the Strait of Hormuz, a critical global energy chokepoint, further heightening concerns over maritime security and regional stability. Iran has said that

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Briefs

LHC issues Notice to NCCIA on Fazal case

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: A sessions court on Wednesday issued a notice to the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) on a petition seeking the registration of a case against Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rahman for allegedly making a controversial statement about security personnel. Fazl made the statement during a recent party rally in Punjab's Kasur, where he spoke about the security situation and terrorism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. In this context, he referred to the frequent mention of soldiers' martyrdom, adding that security personnel were drawing salaries to fight for the country.

India's largest nuclear power plant exposed

NEW DELHI: Ransomware group World Leaks has posted on the dark web a huge cache of files related to India's largest nuclear plant, including purported blueprints of parts of its facilities and supplier details — information it labelled as coming from Reliance Group. The Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant, located in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, is the largest of India's seven nuclear plants and central to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ambitious plans to expand the country's atomic energy capacity. Indian businessman Anil Ambani's Reliance Group, one of the plant's contractors, told Reuters in a statement that there had been a "partial breach" of its data on a server hosted by third-party Indian data centre service provider Yotta, and that the government has been informed about the incident. - Agencies

Unrest in Balochistan

Three more terrorists killed as death toll in Op Shaban rises to 88

Security sources said the operation involves both aerial and ground actions targeting militants, adding that security forces had successfully struck militant hideouts

DNA

ISLAMABAD: 126 militants eliminated in various operations conducted across Balochistan since July 5, say security sources. Security forces killed three more India-backed terrorists in Balochistan, with the number of militants killed during Operation Shaban reaching 88, security sources said on Wednesday.

The operation — conducted jointly by the Pakistan Army, Frontier Corps, and Balochistan police — was launched in the aftermath of the deadly attack on the Mangi Dam police station in Ziarat. Security sources said the operation involves both aerial and ground actions targeting militants, adding that security forces had successfully struck militant hideouts. According to sources, a total of 126 militants had been killed in Opera-

tion Shaban and other intelligence-based operations carried out across the province since July 5. They added that Operation Shaban would continue across Balochistan until the "last terrorist" had been eliminated. A day earlier, the security sources confirmed that six terrorists were gunned down in the province.

A large cache of weapons and ammunition was also recovered from the killed militants, including submachine guns, rocket launchers, mobile phones and other equipment, they added. At least 42 people, including security personnel and civilians, were martyred in three terrorist attacks in Balochistan earlier this month. ISPR Director General Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry had said last week that India-backed terrorists attacked the Mangi checkpoint but police personnel fought bravely,

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Bilawal Bhutto says AJK situation alarming; needs immediate action

AJK has been seized by protests and deadly clashes between law enforcers and protesters from the recently proscribed Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) ahead of the polls

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: PPP Chairperson Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said on Wednesday that the situation in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) since last month was "very concerning", and the longer it persisted, the more harm would be caused to the Kashmir cause and Pakistan's reputation. Bilawal expressed these views while addressing his party's office bearers and ticket holders in AJK, where he arrived on Tuesday for an unscheduled visit ahead of July 27 elections in the region. AJK has been seized by protests and deadly clashes between law enforcers and protesters from the recently proscribed Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) ahead of the polls. The matter at the centre of the tensions is JAAC's demand for the abolition of 12 seats in the region's Legislative As-



sembly that are reserved for refugees from Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir who settled in mainland Pakistan after 1947. Addressing his party's workers against this backdrop, Bilawal said, "If someone uses inappropriate language against Kashmiris, we will be heartbroken." He added, "And if someone speaks up against our army, we can't tolerate that as well." He emphasised that Pakistan's armed forces, which had defeated India during Marka-i-Haq last year, were their "red line". Turning his attention to the present situation in AJK, he said it was surely "very concerning". "The longer it persists, the more harm will be caused to the Kashmir cause and Pakistan's reputation and position," he added. At this point, he also highlighted the global situation, saying "big changes are taking place and conspiracies are under way globally". And in this situation, the role of Pakistan and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir was "significant", he said. He continued, "Pakistan's role, our field marshal's role is before you in this situation;

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JOINING HANDS FOR JOURNALISM
Daily Islamabad POST / DNA News Agency & DUNYO News Agency Sign Historic MOU

H.E. Ambassador Alisher Tukhtaev, Ambassador of Uzbekistan (L) and Mr. Ansar Mahmood Bhatti, Chief Editor Daily Islamabad POST / DNA News Agency (R) exchange MOU documents marking a landmark media partnership between Pakistan and Uzbekistan.

Daily Islamabad POST/Diplomatic News Agency (DNA) and Uzbekistan's Official News Agency DUNYO have joined hands in a historic Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen bilateral media ties and promote diplomatic journalism between Pakistan and Uzbekistan.

Islamabad, Pakistan | www.dailyislamabadpost.com | DNA News Agency

Call for promoting Sufi values to strengthen tolerance

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani on Wednesday emphasized the importance of Pakistan's rich Sufi heritage in promoting tolerance, dialogue and social harmony, stating that the teachings of Sufi saints continue to offer valuable guidance in addressing contemporary challenges of polarization and intolerance. Addressing the inauguration of the art exhibition "Sufism & Culture" by artists Roomi and Aiman at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA), Islamabad, the Chairman Senate congratulated PNCA for organizing the exhibition and appreciated the artists for highlighting a theme deeply rooted in Pakistan's spiritual and cultural traditions. He noted that Pakistan possessed one of the richest Sufi traditions in the Muslim world, which has profoundly influenced the country's poetry, music, architecture, languages and folklore. He observed that the enduring message of Sufism promoted respect, compassion and coexistence, values that were increasingly needed in today's world. Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani said that the teachings of Sufi saints remind humanity that respect was stronger than hatred, dialogue more enduring than confrontation, and coexistence more rewarding than exclusion. He stressed that these timeless principles could help build more peaceful, inclusive and resilient societies. The Chairman Senate also commended the artistic contributions of Roomi and Aiman, saying that their work reflected how Pakistan's cultural heritage continued to inspire contemporary expression and connect younger generations with enduring spiritual values.—APP

Punjab opens interest-free pink salt financing scheme

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz on Wednesday launched the Chief Minister Pink Salt Value Addition Financing Scheme, aimed at promoting industry, employment and exports through value addition of the province's pink salt reserves. The CM also digitally inaugurated the scheme and announced the establishment of a 110-acre Pink Salt Mineral Processing Zone near Quaidabad. During a detailed briefing at the launch ceremony, she was informed that more than 200 processing units would be established in the zone, attracting an investment of Rs150 million and creating 10,000 direct employment opportunities. The briefing said a Business Facilitation Centre and a Model Retail Outlet would also be established to facilitate investors. Under the financing scheme, new investors will be eligible for interest-free loans of up to Rs50 million for salt processing, grinding, refining, cleaning and packaging. Loans ranging from Rs5 million to Rs50 million will also be available for the purchase of machinery, equipment and export-standard technology, with repayment in easy instalments over five years. Officials informed the chief minister that value addition and increased exports of pink salt could generate \$300 million in annual foreign exchange earnings.—APP

Pakistan, ADB sign agreement for Islamabad Airport outsourcing

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Privatisation Commission of Pakistan and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed the Transaction Advisory Services Agreement (TASA) under which ADB will serve as the Financial Advisor for the outsourcing of Islamabad International Airport. The Agreement was signed by Ms. Emma Fan, Country Director, Asian Development Bank, Pakistan Resident Mission, and Mr. Shahid Dayo, Director General, Privatisation Commission, on behalf of their respective organizations. The signing ceremony was witnessed by Adviser to the Prime Minister on Privatisation and Chairman

Privatisation Commission, Mr. Muhammad Ali; Secretary, Privatisation Commission, Mr. Usman Akhter Bajwa; Secretary, Privatisation Division, Mr. Hamid Shamini;

Mr. Syed Hussain Haider, Deputy Country Director, Asian Development Bank, Pakistan Resident Mission; and senior officials of the Privatisation Commission and

the Asian Development Bank. Under the Agreement, ADB will provide comprehensive transaction advisory services, including technical, financial, legal, environmental, and com-

mercial expertise to support the structuring and implementation of the transaction in accordance with international best practices. The advisory services will facilitate a transparent, competitive, and market-driven process aimed at attracting leading international airport operators and investors. The signing of the Agreement marks an important milestone in the implementation of the Government's privatisation programme and reflects its commitment to enhancing the efficiency, service quality, and long-term sustainability of Islamabad International Airport through private sector participation while ensuring transparency, competitiveness, and value for the people of Pakistan.



First Lady receives ambassador of Indonesia

The First Lady observed that Pakistan and Indonesia enjoy longstanding and friendly relations founded on mutual respect, shared values, and close cooperation



DNA

KARACHI: Ms. Asifa Bhutto Zardari, Honorable First Lady of Pakistan, received the Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia to Pakistan, His Excellency Mr. Chandra Warsenanto Sukotjo, who called on her at Bilawal House, Karachi, today. The Ambassador was accompanied by his spouse. Welcoming the Ambassador and his spouse to Karachi, the First Lady congratulated him on the successful organisation of the Pakistan-Indonesia Investment Forum in Karachi and appreciated his efforts to further strengthen bilateral economic engagement. The First Lady observed that Pakistan and Indonesia enjoy longstanding and friendly relations founded on mutual respect, shared values, and close cooperation. She said that the two countries have consistently supported each other and worked together to promote peace, development, and prosperity in the region and beyond. Recalling the historical bonds between the two nations, the First Lady said that Indonesia's founding President, Dr. Ir. Sukarno, shared a close personal friendship with her grandfather, Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. She noted that both leaders were united by their commitment to the

dignity of newly independent nations, Asian solidarity, and a more equitable international order. Their friendship, she remarked, imparted added warmth and depth to Pakistan-Indonesia relations and continues to inspire efforts to further strengthen the partnership between the two countries. During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views on expanding cooperation in trade and investment, agriculture, education, healthcare, technology transfer, vaccine development, women entrepreneurship, tourism, cultural exchanges, and people-to-people contacts. The First Lady underscored the importance of enhancing agricultural cooperation, noting that Indonesia remains an important destination for Pakistan's rice exports, particularly premium rice produced in Sindh. She welcomed the ongoing efforts of both governments to revive the Government-to-Government rice cooperation framework, expressing confidence that it would further strengthen agricultural collaboration and create new opportunities for farmers and exporters. She also highlighted the significance of continued cooperation in palm oil and other agricultural commodities for the mutual benefit of both countries. Highlighting opportunities for future collaboration, the First Lady said that agriculture, food security, women-led



entrepreneurship, education, and stronger people-to-people exchanges offer considerable potential for further broadening bilateral cooperation. She also expressed interest in benefiting from Indonesia's successful experience in family planning and population management, as well as expanding cooperation in healthcare, including technology transfer, vaccine development, and Pakistan's ongoing efforts towards the eradication of polio. The Ambassador briefed the First Lady on his recent visit to various parts of Sindh and shared his positive impressions of the province's agricultural, economic, and investment potential. He reaffirmed Indonesia's commitment to further strengthening bilateral cooperation, particularly in trade, agriculture, palm oil, rice, investment, healthcare, and cultural exchanges. The Ambassador also presented the First Lady with a commemorative publication containing infographics and historical timelines depicting the evolution of Pakistan-Indonesia relations. The First Lady asked the Ambassador to convey her warm greetings and best wishes to the Government and the people of Indonesia. She expressed confidence that the friendship between Pakistan and Indonesia would continue to flourish and that the two countries would further expand cooperation across diverse fields for the mutual benefit of their peoples.

RCCI calls for stronger industry-academia collaboration

RAWALPINDI: President of the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), Usman Shaukat, participated in a high-level interactive session at New York University (NYU) alongside Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal, and Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States, Rizwan Saeed Sheikh. The event brought together students, distinguished academics, professionals, and members of the Pakistani diaspora for an engaging dialogue on Pakistan's development vision, higher education, innovation, and the vital role of youth in driving sustainable economic growth. Participants exchanged ideas on strengthening academic ex-

cellence, fostering research collaboration, and expanding international partnerships that can contribute to Pakistan's future. A major highlight of the visit was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives and the Pakistan Medical & Dental Association of NYU. The agreement aims to facilitate student exchange opportunities, promote academic collaboration, and encourage knowledge sharing between Pakistan and New York University, creating new avenues for educational and professional development. Speaking on the occasion, RCCI President Usman Shaukat emphasized that strong

academia-industry linkages and international collaborations are essential for building a knowledge-based economy. He noted that Pakistan's youth possess immense talent and potential, and partnerships with globally renowned institutions such as NYU will help equip future generations with the skills, exposure, and innovation needed to compete in the global marketplace. The session concluded with a shared commitment to strengthening Pakistan's international academic partnerships, promoting innovation, and creating meaningful opportunities for students and young professionals, reflecting a collective vision for a progressive, connected, and globally competitive Pakistan.—APP

Kundi assures action on Waziristan's security, welfare issues

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Wednesday stressed the need for collective efforts to eliminate militancy from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, saying peace was essential for the development and prosperity of the province. Talking to a delegation of the South Waziristan Lower Ahmadzai Wazir Jirga at the Governor House, led by Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Waziristan General Secretary Imran Mukhlis, the Governor said the resurgence of militancy should be taken seriously and tackled with unity and determination. The delegation included Jamal Nasir, Nasrullah, Mir Ghulam and Chairman Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Farzand Wazir. Governor Kundi said the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) were promised three percent share under the National Finance Commission (NFC) Award, amounting to around Rs100 billion annually, and stressed that the commitment should be fulfilled. He strongly condemned the imposition of taxes in the erstwhile FATA and PATA, saying the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) chairman should personally visit these areas to assess the ground realities before enforcing any taxation measures. The Governor criticized the provincial government's performance on law and order, alleging that it had failed to address the deteriorating security situation. He said he had asked the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to jointly resolve the tax issues relating to the merged districts. He said despite producing electricity, oil and natural gas, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa continued to face energy shortages, adding that the province should receive its due rights under the Constitution. He also underscored the importance of protecting the 18th Constitutional Amendment and utilizing provincial powers for the welfare of the people. Governor Kundi had expressed concern over the reported wheat shortage in the province and reiterated the need to collectively struggle for the constitutional and economic rights of the province. He assured the delegation that issues relating to district administration, the Gomal Zam Road and NADRA facilities would be taken up with the relevant authorities and resolved on priority. Speaking on the occasion, members of the jirga highlighted worsening law and order, lack of security for schools and health facilities, rising incidents of extortion and the destruction of trade and fruit businesses in South Waziristan Lower. They urged the government to reopen the Angoor Ada border crossing, which has remained closed since 2023, saying it would revive trade and economic activity in Tank, Dera Ismail Khan and South Waziristan. The delegation also demanded the establishment of a women's hospital, tax relief for local residents, provision of free electricity, increase in teachers' posts, construction of the Gomal Zam Road up to Angoor Ada, promotion of tourism in Waziristan, development of a picnic point at Gomal Zam and establishment of BISP and NADRA registration centres in every tehsil. The jirga members also called to address the problems being faced by journalists associated with the Wana Press Club.—DNA

Kamal for collective action to address population challenge

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Health Services Syed Mustafa Kamal on Wednesday stressed the need for collective efforts to tackle Pakistan's growing population challenge. Addressing a seminar held to mark World Population Day, the minister said around 26 million children in Pakistan were out of school, while 43 percent of the country's population comprised children. He said the rapidly increasing population was placing an enormous burden on hospitals, educational institutions and public infrastructure, affecting the delivery of quality services. He urged religious scholars, teachers and all segments of society to help create awareness about responsible family

planning. The minister said nearly 11,000 women die every year in Pakistan due to pregnancy or childbirth-related complications, adding that although pregnancy was not a disease, timely medical care and proper maternal health services could significantly reduce maternal deaths. He said more than 400,000 children under the age of five die annually from preventable causes, emphasizing that improving access to healthcare, medicines and timely treatment was essential to saving lives. Mustafa Kamal said birth spacing, maternal and child health and family planning were not only health issues but were also directly linked to national security, economic stability and sustainable de-

velopment. He warned that failure to address the challenge could adversely affect Pakistan's development and cited examples of Iran and Bangladesh where effective policies had helped manage population growth. The minister clarified that the population issue was a national economic challenge rather than an issue targeting any particular group or ideology. He suggested that incentives should be considered for families adopting healthy birth spacing practices. He noted that contraceptives had previously been subject to an 18 percent tax, making them expensive and less accessible. According to the minister, around 30 percent of families wished to space births.—APP



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National Days and Armed Forces Days

JULY

July 01/Japan Self Defence Day

July 01/Singapore Armed Forces Day

July 01 / Canada National Day

July 01/Somalia Independence Day

July 04/USA Independence Day

July 05/Algeria Independence Day

July 09/Argentina Independence Day

July 09/Mongolia Revolution Day

July 14/France National Day

July 15/Brunei Sultan's Birthday

July 21/Belgium National Day

July 20/TRNC Independence Day

July 23/Egypt National Day

July 26/Cuba National Day

July 26/Liberia National Day

July 30/Morocco National Day

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Motorway Police.....	9270601-20
Women Police Stations Islamabad.....	9222596
Rawalpindi.....	9270601-20

Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....

PIA Flight Info.....

PIA Cargo.....

Railway Inquiry.....

Railway Exchange.....

WASA Rawalpindi.....

CAA.....

Hospitals

CMH.....

MH.....

Cantt Hospital.....

DHQ.....

RGH.....

Holy Family.....

PIMS.....

Polyclinic.....

Shifa International.....

Departments

CDA.....

CD.....

Met Office.....

RDA.....

TMA.....

Cantonment Board.....

Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....

Potohar Town.....

Rawal Town.....

Water Tank

Islamabad.....

TIKA setup Memorial Forest in commemoration of July 15 Martyrs

CDA Chairman Lt. Sohail Ashraf emphasized the importance of tree-planting activities in further enhancing Islamabad’s reputation as one of the region’s greenest capitals

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (T KA) commemorated the martyrs of July 15 Democracy and National Unity Day through a tree-planting ceremony held at Ankara Park in Islamabad, Pakistan. As part of the project, a total of 500 saplings were planted, with approximately 100 saplings planted together with participants during the event. The ceremony was organized in cooperation with Pakistan's Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination and the Capital Development Authority (CDA). Around 200 participants attended the event, including the Minister of State for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Dr. Shehza Mansab Ali Khan; the Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to Pakistan, Dr. İrfan Neziroğlu; CDA Chairman Lt. Sohail Ashraf; as well as representatives of public institutions, universities, civil society organizations, humanitarian organizations, students, and members of the Turkish community in Pakistan. The programme commenced with the recitation of the Holy Qur'an in memory of the July 15 martyrs. In his opening remarks, Ambassador Dr. İrfan Neziroğlu recalled that exactly ten years ago, the Fetullah Terrorist Organization (FETÖ) attempted to overthrow Türkiye's democratically elected government by targeting the institutions representing the nation's will, including the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye and the Presidency. He underlined that Pakistan was the first country to designate FETÖ as a terrorist organization and expressed Türkiye's appreciation for Pakistan's steadfast support in the fight against the organization. Emphasizing that the relationship between the two countries goes beyond friendship, Ambassador Neziroğlu described the bond between Türkiye and Pakistan as one of true brotherhood. In her remarks, Minister of State Dr. Shehza Mansab Ali Khan highlighted the significance of planting trees on the occasion of the July 15 Democracy and National Unity Day, noting that contributing to nature represents a meaningful legacy for future generations. She also thanked T KA for taking this valuable initiative.



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr. Shehza Mansab Ali Khan Kharal, Turkish ambassador to Pakistan Dr. İrfan Neziroğlu, Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Sohail Ashraf, watering to a plant during planting 500 saplings at Ankara Park to commemorate our martyrs and leave a lasting legacy in their memory, in Islamabad.

CDA Chairman Lt. Sohail Ashraf emphasized the importance of tree-planting activities in further enhancing Islamabad’s reputation as one of the region’s greenest capitals. He also expressed his willingness to strengthen cooperation with Türkiye and T KA in the fields of environmen-

tal protection and urban development. Following the speeches, participants planted saplings together and posed for a commemorative group photograph. The programme concluded with the serving of traditional Turkish döner and ayrân. T KA Islamabad Coordinator Salih Tuna stated

that the memorial forest established at Ankara Park under the project would serve not only as a lasting tribute to the martyrs of July 15, but also as a tangible symbol of the strong brotherhood between Türkiye and Pakistan and their shared commitment to environmental sustainability.

43 engines, coaches to join Railway fleet so far

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Railways, Muhammad Hanif Abbasi announced on Wednesday that 70 power plants, 43 new American “GU-40” locomotives, and newly refurbished passenger coaches would be inducted into the railway fleet over the next six months. He stated that meeting these core operational needs would significantly improve passenger and freight operations, modernize travel facilities, and substantially boost department revenues. In an interview with APP, the federal minister acknowledged that the maintenance of locomotives and power plants had been neglected over the past nine to ten years. However, he emphasized that the current administration has successfully overcome these challenges. According to the minister, the 43 American engines would be integrated into the system by September 30, while seven new power

plants are being added monthly. This steady induction was set to resolve the shortage of coaches and restore rail operations to full capacity within the next six months. Highlighting measures to ensure equality, Abbasi announced the historic eradication of the “VIP culture” within Pakistan Railways. Ban has been imposed on the utilization of luxury salons and VIP guest houses by top officials, including those designated for the Minister, Chairman, Chief Executive, and Inspector General (IG) of Railways. These premium salons and rest house rooms have now been opened to the general public, who could access them at reasonable rental rates. Discussing the department’s financial performance, the federal minister credited exceptional teamwork for steering the organization’s revenue to a record Rs 115 billion against a target of Rs

188 billion, despite limited resources and aging infrastructure. Notably, the freight sector recorded a 27 percent growth despite a shortage of engines and wagons. Revenue from the freight sector has doubled from Rs 8,000 million to Rs 16,000 million, with plans to increase it further in the coming year. Announcing a zero-tolerance policy against encroachments, the minister asserted that railway land worth billions of rupees across the country is being reclaimed in phases. He made it clear that no further encroachments would be tolerated, adding that all retrieved residential, commercial, and agricultural lands would be leased out by Pakistan Railways through open public auctions. In this regard, Peshawar Division officials have been summoned next week to finalize commercial plans for reclaimed lands in their region.—APP

AIOU vows to promoting Iqbal’s thought, philosophy

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to promoting the thought and philosophy of Allama Muhammad Iqbal through sustained academic, research and intellectual initiatives. The commitment was reiterated during a distinguished scholarly session organized to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of the Poet of the East, Allama Muhammad Iqbal. The event featured eminent poet, writer and scholar Iftekhar Arif

as the keynote speaker and was presided over by Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood. In his presidential address, Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood said that Allama Muhammad Iqbal’s message continues to serve as a beacon of intellectual, moral, and spiritual guidance for the younger generation. He emphasized that in keeping with its name and mission, AIOU considers the promotion of Iqbal’s thought a national, academic and cultural responsibility.

He noted that the University has been consistently organizing scholarly and research activities to advance Iqbal’s philosophy and reaffirmed AIOU’s resolve to strengthen the nation’s intellectual heritage through academic dialogue and research. Speaking on “The Intellectual Legacy of Allama Iqbal” Iftekhar Arif said that Allama Iqbal portrayed the tragedy of Karbala as an enduring symbol of truth, justice, freedom, dignity and resistance against oppression.—APP

UN praises NDMA disaster preparedness

ISLAMABAD : A high level United Nations delegation led by Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Tom Fletcher visited the National Emergencies Operation Center (NEOC) at the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Headquarters in Islamabad on Wednesday, where it was briefed on Pakistan’s disaster management capabilities, early warning systems and emergency preparedness measures aimed at mitigating natural disasters and emerging risks during 2026. The delegation was received by Chairman NDMA Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik, who highlighted the importance of strengthening international cooperation and sharing experiences among countries to enhance disaster resilience and response mechanisms. NDMA provided a comprehensive briefing on the operational capabilities of the National Emergencies Operation Center, including its multi hazard early warning systems, risk assessment mechanisms and the effective utilization of national resources for timely emergency response and disaster mitigation. The delegation was also apprised of the natural hazards and disaster risks faced by Pakistan and other countries during 2026, along with the measures being undertaken to improve preparedness, response and coordination at the national level. Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik underscored the significance of collaborative efforts among nations in addressing the growing challenges posed by climate related disasters and emergencies. He reaffirmed Pakistan’s commitment to strengthening partnerships aimed at protecting vulnerable communities and enhancing regional and global disaster preparedness. The United Nations delegation lauded Pakistan’s National Emergencies Operation Center and appreciated the country’s adoption of modern disaster management systems and proactive preparedness measures. The delegation also reaffirmed its commitment to enhancing cooperation with Pakistan to strengthen disaster risk reduction efforts and improve practical measures for effective emergency response and humanitarian assistance.—APP

Tribute paid to Pak Army martyrs in seminar

ISLAMABAD: Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) Standing Committee on Inter-Faith and Inter-Sect Relations here Wednesday organised a seminar titled “Pakistan’s Diplomatic Success and Its Socio-Economic Impact.” The seminar was chaired by LCCI President Faheem-ur-Rehman Saigol. Participants paid rich tribute to martyrs of Pakistan Army for their sacrifices in the defense of the country. The seminar was attended by LCCI Executive Committee Member Nadeem Ansari, Convener of the Standing Committee Hafiz Asim Makhdoom, Bhagat Lal Khokhar, Father Basharat Siraj, Qari Khalid Mehmood, Sagheer Abbas, Dr. Mustafa Kamal, Enam Ibrahim, Naeem Hanif, Asmat Ullah Niazi, Muhammad Rafiq and other representatives from different communities and walks of life. Speaking on the occasion, LCCI President Faheem ur Rehman Saigol said that Pakistan has achieved remarkable diplomatic successes in recent years, enhancing the country’s image at the international level and creating new opportunities for trade and economic growth. He said that the sacrifices of Pakistan Army martyrs are a source of pride for the nation.—APP

Senate panel calls protection of media workers; NCCIA accountability

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of Senate Standing Committee on Information and Broadcasting was held today at Islamabad with Senator Sarmad Ali in the chair. The meeting was attended by Senators Syed Waqar Mehdi, Jan Muhammad and Abdul Shakoor Khan. Senator Pervaiz Rashid participated in the committee meeting proceedings via zoom link. The Committee reviewed matters relating to media policy, welfare of media workers, functioning of public sector media organizations, and issues concerning the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA). The Committee expressed concern over discrepancies in the data previously presented by the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) regarding crime media accounts. Members noted that NCCIA had subsequently disowned the figures shared by their officials during an earlier meeting of sub committee. The standing Committee directed NCCIA to clarify whether the figures presented by them were authentic or not. Senator Sarmad Ali directed NCCIA to submit verified and updated figures. The Information Minister informed the Committee

that the Government had revised the government advertisement policy in 2024 and had introduced comprehensive guidelines and procedures for transparent distribution of government advertising. He stated that electronic media receives the largest share of government advertising, followed by print media and digital media. He informed the Committee that a third-party verification mechanism has been introduced for the purpose of authentication of digital advertising. He clarified that only a limited portion of government advertisements was being placed on social media platforms. Highlighting the Government’s commitment to media workers, the Minister stated that efforts are consistently being made to ensure timely payment of salaries and dues to media workers and to link this with government advertising. He proposed that a compensation package be introduced for the families of deceased media employees. Senator Sarmad Ali stated that it was the responsibility of media organisations to provide compensation to the families of their workers in case of their death while on duty. Senator Syed Waqar Mehdi supported the proposal for a financial package for the families of deceased media workers and suggested that the Commit-

tee should recommend a fixed compensation amount. The Committee expressed serious concern over the growing trend of downsizing in the media industry and recommended that government advertisements be withheld and advertising rates be revised for media organizations who fail to pay salaries to their employees on time. It further recommended that all media organizations be directed to register with the Employees’ Old-Age Benefits Institution (EOBI) and that life insurance coverage be made mandatory for media workers. The Minister sought proposals from the concerned Department regarding the life insurance scheme and assured the Committee that the Government would also consider contributing to such a fund. The Committee observed that the print media must be supported to ensure its sustainability. The Chair observed that the government needs to support mainstream media in order to effectively counter fake news and disinformation on social media. Senator Jan Muhammad highlighted the issues faced by regional newspapers especially from Balochistan and stressed their importance in projecting the national narrative. The Committee directed the Ministry to formulate a comprehensive policy for the promotion and protection of regional newspapers.

Discussing the recently released film titled Buleh Shah a Senator Pervaiz Rasheed observed that Buleh Shah is a revered Sufi saint whose poetry and teachings are respected across generations. He expressed concern that the film had associated the name of the spiritual personality with violent content. As the Minister stated that he was not in a position to respond, the Committee decided to summon all members of the Central Board of Film Censors, along with the producer of the film, at its next meeting to explain the approval process and also directed the Ministry to share minutes of the censor board meeting in which it was approved. The Committee was informed that Pakistan Television (PTV) has, for the first time, become financially self-sufficient. The Minister stated that PTV currently prefers to hire contractual employees according to operational requirements in order to protect the corporation from the burden of pensions. He further informed the Committee that PTV is the only television broadcaster in Pakistan holding the rights to broadcast the FIFA World Cup, 2026. He maintained that recently PTV News had recruited anchors on merit and they are contributing positively towards ratings and viewership.

Briefs

ANF seizes
383.6 kg
narcotics

RAWALPINDI: The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) conducted seven operations across the country and arrested eight suspects, seizing 383.6 kilograms (kgs) of narcotics worth more than Rs 30.5 million, an ANF spokesman said on Wednesday. In an international drug interdiction operation at Bacha Khan International Airport, officials recovered 9.2 kg of methamphetamine (ice) soaked into an Ihram packed in the luggage of a passenger travelling to Jeddah. In an inter-provincial operation near the Karachi-Hyderabad Toll Plaza, ANF recovered 294 kg of hashish, a 30-bore pistol, one magazine and six rounds of ammunition from a vehicle. In another operation near Tarkai Toll Plaza in Jhelum, ANF seized 7.2 kg of hashish from a vehicle and arrested the suspect. During domestic operations, ANF recovered 30 kg of hashish from a motorcyclist near a hotel in Quetta. In Dina, officials recovered 13.2 kg of hashish during a raid on a house and arrested the suspect. In Karachi, ANF seized 12 kg of hashish from the possession of two suspects near Sohrab Goth. In a separate operation at a courier office in Karachi, officials recovered 18 kg of hashish concealed in two fibre boxes. The spokesman said cases had been registered against the arrested suspects under the Control of Narcotic Substances Act, 1997, and further investigations were underway.—APP

IGP directs
CPU to
enhance
vigilance

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi briefed officers of the Capital Patrol Unit (CPU), directing them to maintain high standards of discipline, professionalism and public service while performing their duties. An official told APP on Wednesday that the IGP issued detailed instructions regarding duty discipline, courteous public dealing, prompt response, effective patrolling and close monitoring of suspicious activities. Rizvi emphasized that the Capital Patrol Unit must remain fully alert to ensure timely assistance to citizens and strengthen preventive policing across the federal capital. IGP Rizvi also reviewed the overall law and order situation and directed officers to further improve the patrolling system to enhance public safety. He instructed personnel to ensure effective enforcement of the law, protect the lives and property of citizens and maintain the highest standards of performance during duty.—APP

Equipping
youth with
digital skills
top priority

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja on Wednesday said equipping Pakistani youth with world-class digital skills is the government's top priority. In her message on World Youth Skills Day, she said women's active participation in the digital economy is essential to transforming Pakistan's future. "We are providing women with excellent work-from-home opportunities in the IT sector and freelancing," she said. The minister said it is the Prime Minister's vision that every young person should have access to quality education and excel in modern skills. She said Pakistani youth have immense potential to compete globally in the field of information technology. Through training in advanced technologies and artificial intelligence (AI), she said, young people are being prepared for the future. Shaza Fatima said the government is providing a conducive environment and full support for startups and women entrepreneurs. "Our goal is to make Pakistan an emerging global hub for information technology and the digital economy," the federal minister said.—APP

Pakistan needs faster, more
predictable climate finance

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Climate change has become a defining threat to Pakistan's economic stability, food and water security, public health, and long-term development, Minister of State for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr. Shezra Mansab Ali Khan said, calling for enhanced climate finance, technology transfer, stronger institutions, and international partnerships to accelerate climate action. Delivering the keynote address at a High-Level Policy Dialogue titled "Climate Finance and International Cooperation for Strengthening Climate Resilience in Pakistan," was organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) in Islamabad, she noted that despite contributing less than one percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, Pakistan remains among the countries most vulnerable to climate change, and stressed that international climate finance must be made more accessible, predictable, and responsive to support vulnerable countries. In his opening remarks, Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, President of IRS, underscored

the strategic importance of climate finance and international cooperation in strengthening Pakistan's climate resilience. He said climate finance is not merely about mobilizing resources but about enabling resilient development, strengthening institutions, accelerating innovation, and expanding opportunities for sustainable economic growth. He expressed hope that the dialogue would generate practical recommendations and contribute to strengthening Pakistan's engagement with the evolving global climate finance architecture. Dr. Samuel Rizk, Resident Representative of UNDP Pakistan, said strengthening governance, institutional capacity, and policy coherence is fundamental to building climate resilience. He observed that effective climate finance is measured not only by the volume of resources mobilized but by its accessibility, quality, and ability to deliver tangible benefits to vulnerable communities, calling for stronger institutional coordination, greater investment in resilience-building, and integrated approaches to help Pakistan anticipate, withstand, and recover from climate impacts. Climate change expert Mr. Ali Tauqeer

Sheikh said Pakistan's principal challenge is not the availability of climate finance but the absence of a coherent governance framework to coordinate and mobilize financial resources. He called for institutional reforms to establish a single coordinating authority for climate finance, greater transparency and accountability through ring-fencing and independent auditing of climate-related funds, and improved access to international climate finance. He also highlighted the importance of innovative financing instruments, including blended finance, risk-sharing mechanisms, and contingent financing, to leverage greater public and private investment in climate resilience. Mr. Hamza Haroon, Regional Director for West and South Asia at the Climate Vulnerable Forum-V20 (CVF-V20), highlighted inequities in the global climate finance architecture and the challenges faced by climate-vulnerable countries in accessing affordable finance. He called for scaled-up concessional finance, greater mobilization of private investment, and stronger country-led climate financing mechanisms. Referring to Pakistan's Climate Prosperity Plan, he said it holds potential to attract in-

vestment in climate-resilient development and stressed the importance of establishing a national country platform to improve coordination, project implementation, and access to international climate finance. Mr. Amir Khan Goraya, Chief Executive Officer of the National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF), underscored the importance of shifting from disaster response to risk-informed investment. He said greater investment in resilient infrastructure, preparedness, and locally driven adaptation measures is essential to building long-term resilience to climate change, and called for integrating climate risk considerations into national development planning and investment decisions to safeguard development gains. He further stressed that strengthening institutional capacities and fostering collaboration among government, development partners, and local communities are critical to building a climate-resilient Pakistan. The dialogue was attended by senior government officials, representatives of international organisations, development partners, climate experts, policymakers, academics, and members of the diplomatic community.

Pak to host
Pak-China
health
business
summit

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Health Services Mustafa Kamal on Wednesday announced that Pakistan will host a major international health business event featuring around 160 Chinese companies and a business-to-business (B2B) conference. Addressing a press conference, the minister said that nearly 500 Pakistani and Chinese firms will attend the event to promote investment, technology transfer and collaboration in the health sector. He said the upcoming Pakistan-China health business summit would focus on six key sectors, including biotechnology, vaccines, clinical trials, herbal medicine and other health-related industries. He said Pakistan currently imports nearly 90 percent of the raw materials required for its pharmaceutical industry. He expressed confidence that the event would help promote local manufacturing, attract investment, facilitate technology transfer and encourage joint ventures between Pakistani and Chinese companies. He said Pakistani and Chinese firms had been in contact for the past month, with several business meetings already held ahead of the conference. During the event, a number of agreements and Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) are expected to be signed to further strengthen bilateral cooperation in the health sector.—APP

Judicial
reforms
significantly
reduce case
backlog

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan (SCP) on Wednesday said its Judicial Reform Action Plan, launched in November 2024, had produced significant results by reducing the backlog of cases and speeding up the disposal of matters relating to personal liberty, family disputes, taxation and rent litigation. The reforms, based on targeted case management, data-driven monitoring, technology-enabled initiatives and priority hearing of the oldest pending cases, have substantially improved the age profile of cases before the court, said a news release. The most notable progress had been made in criminal matters involving personal liberty. Death appeal cases being heard have advanced from those instituted in 2015 to cases of 2026 after the disposal of 608 appeals, leaving only 22 pending cases of 2026.—APP

Population,
climate biggest
challenges:
Aurangzeb

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, on Wednesday, warned that Pakistan's future potential could be severely undermined unless the country addresses rapid population growth and climate change, describing both as existential challenges that require sustained policy reforms, institutional coordination and long-term financing. Addressing the World Population Day 2026 commemorative conference, Aurangzeb said the government's efforts had evolved from the National Population Stabilisation Plan to the National Population Council, bringing together civil and military leadership, provincial governments and the federation to ensure effective implementation. "We have known the 'what' and the 'why' for the longest time. The real question has always been the 'how' and the 'who'," he said, adding that the council would help deliver results through clear targets, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and regular performance reviews. "You can only deliver what you can

measure," Aurangzeb said, assuring the Health Ministry of the Finance Ministry's continued support. He said governments often prepare budgets with short-term priorities in mind, but population growth and climate change demand long-term planning. "If we do not address these two existential issues, then by the time Pakistan completes 100 years in 2047, we are not going to achieve our true potential," he warned. Highlighting recent measures, Aurangzeb said the government had removed the sales tax on contraceptives in the federal budget, calling it an important tactical intervention that would improve affordability and produce positive results even in the short term. He, however, stressed that structural reforms were equally important, particularly the National Finance Commission (NFC) Award formula, where population currently accounts for about 82 percent of resource distribution among provinces. Calling the existing formula "not sustainable," he said the population weight in future NFC discussions would have to be reviewed. On financing, Aurangzeb said budgetary resources alone would not be sufficient. He revealed that the World Bank's 10-year Country Partnership Framework, signed last year, includes population as one of its three pillars, with a focus on reducing learning poverty—particularly girls out of school—and tackling child stunting. He said around \$600 million to \$700 million annually would be available under the framework to finance population-related interventions. The minister also lauded the nationwide birth-spacing (Waqfa) awareness campaign, describing it as "absolutely brilliant," and highlighted the media's role in changing public attitudes. Referring to a recent visit to Karachi, he said he had visited a girls' school supported by Shehzad Roy's Zindagi Trust, underscoring the importance of girls' education.—DNA

Call for ME recovery mission to shift Pakistan
from labour export to contract export

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) has called for the immediate launch of a Middle East Recovery Mission to help Pakistan move beyond exporting workers and begin exporting contracts, services, goods and firm-level expertise. In its latest Policy Viewpoint, "Capturing the Middle East Recovery: From Labour Export to Contract Export," authored by Dr Nasir Iqbal, Professor of Economics and Registrar, PIDE, the Institute argues that Pakistan's relationship with the Gulf remains economically important but structurally weak. While the country benefits from remittances, energy supplies, deposits and diplomatic goodwill, it captures only a limited share of the commercial value generated through construction, logistics, engineering, healthcare, information technology and regional reconstruction. We send workers; others get projects. We provide manpower; others provide systems." The report estimates that the Gulf's project and reconstruction landscape represents a market exceeding US\$1.5 trillion this decade, including Saudi Vision 2030 projects and reconstruction requirements in Syria, Gaza and Lebanon. Pakistan, however, continues to earn mainly through workers' wages rather than through project mar-

gins, specialist subcontracts, supply chains and professional services. Despite strong labour and remittance flows, Pakistan exported only US\$3.79 billion worth of goods to GCC countries in FY2025, compared with imports of approximately US\$17.9 billion. The study also notes that more than 762,000 Pakistani workers went abroad in 2025, but around 61 per cent were classified as unskilled, limiting their wages, bargaining power and long-term economic contribution. According to Dr Nasir Iqbal, Pakistan's challenge is not the absence of comparative advantage but the country's inability to convert its workers, firms, products and strategic relationships into organised, certified and bankable commercial offerings. The proposed Mission would operate through five permanent desks within the Special Investment Facilitation Council, using institutions that already exist rather than creating another authority or administrative structure. These desks would focus on labour and skills certification, exports and supply chains, investment and contracts, defence-industrial cooperation and migrant protection. Under the proposed model, Pakistani workers would be certified, registered, insured and linked with formal banking channels before deployment.—APP

China, Pak institutions to advance
agricultural standards

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) and the Chengdu Institute of Standardization has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to strengthen cooperation in agricultural standardization, food quality, research, and talent development, China Economic Net reported on Wednesday. The agreement, aiming to help improve the competitiveness of Pakistani agricultural products in international markets, outlines cooperation in personnel exchanges, joint research, academic collaboration, and capacity building, reflecting growing China-Pakistan cooperation in agricultural modernization. Under the MoU, the two institutions will promote visits by experts, jointly organize training programs on standardization and quality management, host academic forums and confer-

ences, and encourage participation in each other's major international events. The partnership also includes joint research in key areas such as standards, metrology, inspection, testing, certification, accreditation, and market access. Both sides will support collaborative research projects and establish a long-term mechanism for scientific cooperation. To facilitate knowledge sharing, the partners will build a shared database of information and research resources, exchange expert networks, and expand the dissemination of research outcomes through their respective academic platforms. The agreement further covers faculty development, student and staff exchange programs, collaborative curriculum development, academic publications, and jointly organized seminars, workshops, and international conferences. Dr. Waseem Akram, Professor at the University of Agriculture Faisalabad, described standardization as the foundation of

agricultural quality improvement. "The first and most important thing is quality," he said. "Once standards are established, there should be no compromise on products that fall below them. China has already developed a clear roadmap for standardization, and we hope to establish a similar system in Pakistan." He noted that Pakistan's rapidly expanding food industry requires stronger quality assurance systems supported by internationally recognized laboratories. "Our food sector is growing very fast. ISO-certified laboratories, together with research collaboration with the Chengdu Institute of Standardization, can help us establish provincial-level biotechnology, food science, and technology laboratories," he said. According to Dr. Akram, cooperation between the two institutions will also contribute to training young researchers and improving Pakistan's understanding of modern quality management systems.

KP governor
criticizes JUI-F
chief's remarks

ISLAMABAD: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi on Wednesday termed JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman's reported remarks regarding the country's martyrs as "regrettable," saying the sacrifices of Pakistan's security forces were the foundation of the nation's peace and stability. In a statement, the governor said Pakistan's mosques, Imambargahs and religious seminaries remained secure because of the sacrifices rendered by the armed forces, Frontier Corps and police personnel. He described the martyrs as the pride of the nation and said their sacrifices had ensured the country's security and sovereignty. Kundi said Pakistan was engaged in a war against terrorism, particularly against Fitna al-Khawarij, and stressed that political leaders should avoid making statements that could undermine the morale of security forces during such a critical time. He said the country had achieved independence through immense sacrifices and continued to stand strong because of the bravery and dedication of its martyrs. Referring to Pakistan's military preparedness, he added that the nation's strength and resilience were a result of the sacrifices of its armed forces. The governor alleged that Maulana Fazlur Rehman's narrative would only please forces hostile to Pakistan and reiterated that the entire nation stood shoulder to shoulder with the security forces and the families of martyrs.—DNA

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Lebanon's greatest strength

HANI HAZAIMEH

LEBANON stands at a pivotal moment in its modern history. The indirect talks with Israel are not simply another diplomatic exercise or an attempt to contain tensions along the southern border. They represent an opportunity to spare the country another devastating conflict and to begin shifting the national conversation from war and confrontation to recovery and reconstruction. Whether these negotiations ultimately lead to a long-term arrangement or merely reduce the likelihood of another military escalation, one fact remains undeniable: no agreement will serve Lebanon unless it is firmly rooted in the country's national interest and is supported by a united Lebanese front. For far too long, Lebanon has paid the price for regional conflicts that have repeatedly left its people bearing the heaviest burden. Entire villages have been reduced to rubble, thousands of families have been displaced and vital infrastructure has been destroyed time and again. At the same time, the country has endured one of the worst economic crises in its history, with its currency collapsing, its institutions weakening and its brightest young minds leaving in search of opportunities abroad. After years of hardship, the overwhelming majority of Lebanese, regardless of their political affiliation, share one common aspiration: to live in a country that enjoys stability, security and the chance to rebuild. Another war would not solve Lebanon's problems, it would deepen them. This is why the current negotiations deserve to be viewed through the lens of national interest rather than political ideology. The objective should not be to determine who can claim political victory but rather how Lebanon can emerge stronger, more secure and better positioned to focus on rebuilding its economy and restoring confidence in its institutions. If diplomacy can reduce the threat of war, encourage investment, allow displaced communities to return to their homes and enable the government to concentrate on economic recovery instead of crisis management, then every Lebanese citizen stands to benefit. Stability is not a concession to any party – it is an investment in Lebanon's future. However, diplomacy alone is not enough. Successful negotiations require a country that speaks with one voice. Lebanon has often approached critical national issues while burdened by internal divisions, competing political agendas and conflicting messages to the outside world. Such fragmentation weakens the country's negotiating position before discussions even begin. A divided nation inevitably finds its leverage diminished, while a united nation negotiates with confidence and credibility. At this critical juncture, Lebanon's greatest source of strength is not military capability or political rhetoric,

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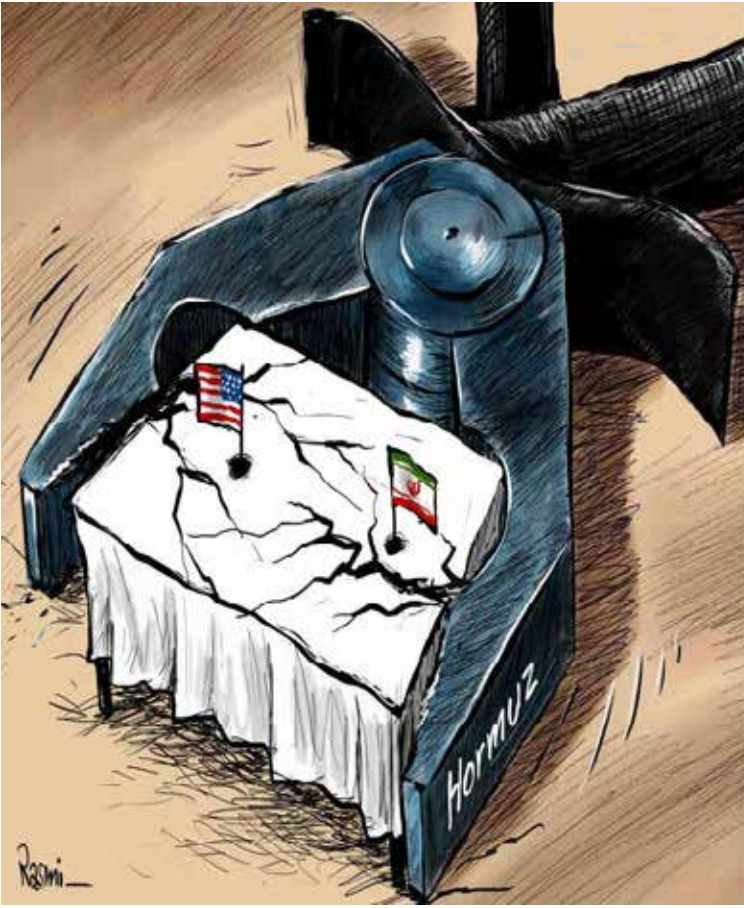
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it is the ability of its people and institutions to unite behind a single national objective. Yet national unity cannot simply be demanded from the public. It must be earned by those entrusted with leading the negotiations. Lebanese citizens have every right to seek reassurance about the direction of these talks. Decades of conflict have understandably left many people cautious, even skeptical, about any engagement with Israel. Those concerns should neither be dismissed nor portrayed as obstacles to diplomacy. On the contrary, they reflect a genuine desire to ensure that Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity and national dignity remain fully protected. Building public confidence therefore becomes one of the government's most important responsibilities. This requires transparency, honest communication and an unwavering commitment to the national interest. The government must clearly explain the objectives of the negotiations and assure the Lebanese people that no agreement will involve concessions affecting the country's sovereign rights, security or territorial integrity. The public deserves to know that every proposal will be evaluated according to one standard alone: whether it serves Lebanon's long-term interests. Such assurances are not merely political necessities – they are essential for creating the trust upon which national unity depends. When citizens believe that their leaders are negotiating from a position of principle rather than pressure, they are far more likely to stand behind the state. Lebanon's political diversity should not become an obstacle to that unity. The country has always been home to different political movements, religious communities and competing visions of its future. These differences are part of Lebanon's democratic fabric and will continue to shape its political life. Yet there are moments in every nation's history when partisan loyalties must give way to the larger national interest. This is one of those moments. Whether one supports Hezbollah, opposes it or belongs to any other political current, every Lebanese has a shared stake in preserving the country's security, protecting its sovereignty and creating the conditions that allow future generations to live in peace and prosperity. A divided nation inevitably finds its leverage diminished, while a united nation negotiates with confidence and credibility. Supporting the government's negotiating efforts should therefore not be interpreted as abandoning deeply held political principles or forgetting the painful chapters of Lebanon's history. Rather, it should be understood as an affirmation that the Lebanese state must remain the ultimate guardian of the nation's interests. At the same time, support for the negotiations should never mean granting the government a blank check. Citizens have every right – and indeed the duty – to demand accountability, transparency and regular communication throughout the process. Genuine national unity is built not on blind trust but on confidence that those entrusted with representing the country will neither compromise its sovereignty nor sacrifice its dignity under external pressure. Lebanon has endured enough conflict, enough political paralysis and enough missed opportunities. It deserves a future in which its people are no longer consumed by the fear of another war but are instead focused on rebuilding their economy, educating their children, attracting investment and restoring the country's historic role as a center of culture, commerce and dialogue in the region.

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China-Russia Cooperation as a vital constant amid century-defining changes sweeping across the world

Jiang Zaidong & Albert Khorev



Built upon the principles of equality, mutual respect, good faith, and win-win cooperation, it has stood the test of time. What began as a commitment to strengthen neighbourly relations has evolved into a comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for the new era, setting a prime example of a new type of major-country relationship, and serving as a vital constant amid century-defining changes sweeping across the world. This year is rich in symbolic dates. We also commemorate the 30th anniversary

JULY 16 marks the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Good-Neighbourliness and Friendly Cooperation between China and Russia – a landmark document that laid a solid foundation for the comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for the new era between our two countries. The Treaty formalised the historical tradition of good-neighbourliness and friendship between China and Russia, consolidated the existing ties in conformity with the interests of our peoples, and opened a new chapter in bilateral relations. Built upon the principles of equality, mutual respect, good faith, and win-win cooperation, it has stood the test of time. What began as a commitment to strengthen neighbourly relations has evolved into a comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for the new era, setting a prime example of a new type of major-country relationship, and serving as a vital constant amid century-defining changes sweeping across the world. This year is rich in symbolic dates. We also commemorate the 30th anniversary of the 1996 Joint Declaration proclaiming the development of “relations of equal and trusting partnership aimed at strategic cooperation in the 21st century.” These foundational documents reflected our peoples’ conscious choice and continue to define the trajectory of bilateral relations. Political mutual trust remains the hallmark of China-Russia relations. It is enshrined as the fundamental principle of the 2001 Treaty and continues to guide our cooperation across all domains. Head-of-state guidance is the greatest advantage of and fundamental guarantee for the high-level development of China-Russia relations. Regular reciprocal visits by the heads of state are complemented by frequent meetings between the two governments, close coordination between foreign ministries, and a broad variety of specialised mechanisms. On May 19-20 this year, during President Vladimir Putin’s state visit to China, he and President Xi Jinping held substantive talks covering the full spectrum of cooperation and addressing major global issues. International security and economic ties were in the spotlight of the discussions that culminated in signing a substantial package of 40 agreements – from transport, trade, customs, and industry to nuclear energy, innovation, culture, sport, youth policy and education. The two countries expressed their intention to align national development goals even more closely. A particularly important milestone was the adoption of the joint statement on further strengthening comprehensive strategic coordination and deepening good-neighborliness and friendly cooperation. Last year, commemorative activities in Beijing and Moscow marking the 80th anniversary of victory in World War II once again demonstrated our shared commitment to preserving historical truth and memory and reminded the community of nations of the immense value of peace and

sovereignty. Building on this common historical legacy, our strategic partnership plays an important stabilising role on the global stage. It is based on shared interests and similar approaches to key international and regional issues rather than on bloc confrontation. Synchronized Chinese and Russian approaches are especially relevant at a time when the global system is undergoing a profound transformation. China and Russia consistently advocate for a harmonious process of shaping an equal and orderly multipolar world and international relations of a new type, including a more just and rational system of global governance. It is heartening to note that Pakistan ascribes to a similar view. At the UN, China, Russia and Pakistan can often be seen jointly upholding the principles of international law, fairness and sovereign equality of states. As members of the United Nations Security Council, our three countries share principled approaches to the most pressing issues on its agenda. China and Russia often work in tandem at other multilateral fora, including the BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, G20 and APEC. Established on the foundation of the spirit of trust and good-neighbourliness embodied in the 2001 Treaty, the SCO has evolved into one of the most influential multilateral organisations across Eurasia. China and Russia consistently work together within the SCO to bolster regional security, combat terrorism, separatism and extremism, deepen economic and humanitarian cooperation, and promote dialogue among diverse civilisations and political systems. In an era of growing geopolitical fragmentation, the SCO represents a model of equal partnership free from bloc mentality. China and Russia act in concert to uphold solidarity and equal cooperation across our shared Eurasian continent, promote peaceful conflict resolution, and strengthen mechanisms of regional stability. The two countries will step up coordination on Afghan affairs at both the bilateral level and under multilateral frameworks, and support Afghanistan in achieving long-term stability and security at an early date. The two sides attach great importance to and endorse the positive and constructive role played by regional platforms in advancing a political settlement of the Afghan issue, including the Moscow Format Consultations on Afghanistan, the Foreign Ministers’ Meeting of Afghanistan’s Neighbouring Countries, the China-Russia-Pakistan-Iran Quadrilateral Mechanism, and the SCO, and stand ready to assist Pakistan and Afghanistan to resolve their current differences as soon as possible through political and diplomatic means. China and Russia are actively advancing the alignment of the Belt and Road Initiative with the development of the Eurasian Economic Union, while promoting its parallel and coordinated development with the Greater Eurasian Partnership. The two countries support the development of transport, trade and energy corri-

dors establishing strong linkages across the Eurasian space, including between South Asia and its neighboring sub-regions. With its strategic location, Pakistan has the potential to become an essential node in the Eurasian connectivity network. Hence, it is natural that both China and Russia attach particular importance to this aspect of their relations with Pakistan. Bilaterally, the China-Russia partnership possesses a strong economic dimension that directly contributes to the prosperity of our peoples. Mutual trade has exceeded \$200 billion for three consecutive years and continues to grow steadily, with settlements conducted almost entirely in Chinese yuan and Russian rubles. Energy cooperation has taken on a truly strategic character and serves as one of the key drivers of our practical ties. At the same time, both countries are actively developing new growth factors in innovation, industry, and cutting-edge technologies. The strength of China-Russia relations lies not only in interstate cooperation, but also in the strong cultural and humanitarian bonds between our peoples. The successful China-Russia Years of Culture (2024–2025) brought our societies even closer together. More than 400 events, including exhibitions, concerts, and theatre companies’ tours, further enhanced our nations’ affinity. In May 2026, the 10th China-Russia Summer Youth Games were held in Kaliningrad, with over 300 athletes competing in 12 sports nurtured the already robust people-to-people contacts. 2026–2027 were declared the China-Russia Years of Education by Presidents Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin. The initiative is bound to accelerate dynamic development in this vital area. Today, there are more than 72,000 Chinese students in Russia, while over 28,000 Russians are pursuing their studies in China. New ambitious projects are underway, including joint research platforms, university campuses and innovation centres. By combining scientific, technological and intellectual potential, our countries are investing in the future, as research capabilities are instrumental to long-term strategic development. Over the past quarter century, China and Russia have come a long way and are now looking confidently to the future. Guided by the principles enshrined in the Treaty of Good-Neighbourliness and Friendly Cooperation, we stand ready to deepen political trust, expand mutually beneficial cooperation, strengthen coordination on international affairs, and promote common development for the benefit of our peoples and the wider international community. Our two countries’ regional and global initiatives are intended to create shared prosperity for all, and Pakistan will undoubtedly continue to play an important role in relevant projects.

—Jiang Zaidong is the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China and Albert Khorev is the Ambassador of the Russian Federation.

Between the seriousness of sport and the absurdity of politics

Eyad Abu Shakra

Even without delving into the history of the ancient civilizations that gave rise to the philosophy of sport as we know it today, including the Olympic Games in ancient Greece, there has always been ample evidence of the close relationship between politics and sport. National flags and anthems are among the clearest examples, despite the hypocrisy often displayed by sports officials whenever the subject is raised. Many of us have read about the 1936 Berlin Olympic

It is a paradox of the highest order that politics is now far more evident on playing fields and running tracks than in the world of politics itself. Any form of competition inevitably creates winners, losers and competing loyalties, which in many cases can give way to conspiracy and violence. Even without delving into the history of the ancient civilizations that gave rise to the philosophy of sport as we know it today, including the Olympic Games in ancient Greece, there has always been ample evidence of the close relationship between politics and sport. National flags and anthems are among the clearest examples, despite the hypocrisy often displayed by sports officials whenever the subject is raised. Many of us have read about the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games, held during the rise of Nazism. The Games were opened by Adolf Hitler, who hoped they would present the world with an exceptional image of Germany's greatness and the superiority of the Aryan race. Indeed, some of the young participants and visitors were impressed by the organization, facilities and overall spectacle, prompting them to replicate similar models in their own countries, even though the results on the track and the field did not entirely fulfill Hitler's ambitions. Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, during the closing years of the Cold War, the US, under President Jimmy Carter, led a campaign to boycott the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games. The campaign achieved partial success. Many countries joined the boycott, while others refused to and some left the decision to their national Olympic committees and individual athletes. That American “victory,” however, did not go unanswered. Four years later, in the summer of 1984, Moscow led a retaliatory boycott of the Los Angeles Olympic Games. Thirteen Soviet allies joined it in refusing to participate. After these two episodes, the idealistic calls to separate politics from sport lost much of their credibility. One should also remember the decades-long Arab boycott of Israel, the Afro-Asian and later international boycott of apartheid South Africa, and the international isolation of Taiwan following America's recogni-

tion of the People's Republic of China. Turning to football, whose intensity is once again reaching fever pitch, perhaps the best-known example is the “Disgrace of Gijón” during the 1982 FIFA World Cup. On that occasion, West Germany and Austria conspired against Algeria by staging what became known as the “match of shame” during the group stage, allowing both teams to advance while eliminating Algeria. In response to this unethical episode, FIFA adopted the rule that requires the final matches of each group to be played simultaneously, preventing similar manipulation in future tournaments. Earlier still, in Central America, accumulated tensions between neighboring El Salvador and Honduras erupted into war in 1969 during their qualifying matches for the 1970 FIFA World Cup, before international mediation brought the conflict to an end a few days later. The current FIFA World Cup in North America has been marked by sharp political divisions. From the outset, it was evident that political relations between US President Donald Trump and the leaderships of Mexico and Canada, the two countries co-hosting the tournament with the US, lacked harmony. Washington's hard-line stance on immigration has also translated into tighter entry restrictions affecting visitors and even, in some cases, refereeing crews and the relatives of players from certain countries. The slogans displayed in the stadiums testify to an atmosphere that is far removed from openness and goodwill. More troubling still are persistent complaints of poor officiating and apparent bias against particular national teams, along with allegations of official pressure from various quarters to influence results by clearing the way for favored teams while making life harder for others. The denial of entry into the US of a Somali international referee was only the beginning. That incident was overshadowed after the White House reportedly asked FIFA to suspend the automatic ban preventing American player Folarin Balogun from playing in the last-16 against Belgium following the red card he received in the previous

match. It was not long before reports circulated alleging clear favoritism toward Argentina, reinforced by controversial refereeing during its match against Egypt. These reports eventually gave rise to claims that even tournament algorithms had been designed to ease Argentina's path by steering it away from stronger opponents. Against this backdrop, it was hardly surprising that polarization intensified, at times spilling into open hostility, after FIFA – whose President Gianni Infantino last year presented Trump with the “FIFA Peace Prize” – agreed to rescind Balogun's suspension. The current FIFA World Cup in North America has been marked by sharp political divisions. Meanwhile, as political flags, slogans and rivalries continue to dominate stadiums across North America, genuine politics elsewhere is itself turning into little more than a game. From Western Europe to the recent NATO Summit hosted by Türkiye, from tensions in the Strait of Hormuz and the tragedies of the Eastern Mediterranean to Israel's growing influence over American political decision-making, both political analysis and political practice are steadily losing their seriousness. The UK, often described as the cradle of Western democracy, is about to welcome its seventh prime minister in just 10 years. Meanwhile, the secretary-general of NATO stood silently smiling as Trump openly criticized fellow alliance member Spain in his presence. Today, allies, no less than adversaries, find themselves confused and unsettled by policies that often appear to contradict their own stated objectives. The line separating truth from incitement is becoming increasingly blurred, while political maneuvering and calculated evasions continue to multiply, fueling genuine fears of unintended slides toward catastrophe. In short, the future ceases to appear clear when nearly everyone is aboard an aircraft flown by autopilot, buffeted by the fierce winds of competing interests.

—Eyad Abu Shakra is managing editor of Asharq Al-Awsat, where this article was originally published. X: @eyad1949

Briefs

Bilawal Bhutto says AJK situation alarming...

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Pakistan is playing its role as Israel conspires against Iran; Pakistan has responded to India's attacks; [...] Pakistan and its armed forces are responding to terrorists sent by India via Afghanistan to carry out attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan; entire Pakistan is ready to respond to Modi as he weaponises water." He recalled that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was in Israel shortly before the US and Israel launched the ongoing war on Iran. Mentioning this, he stressed the need to realise that some powers were looking for opportunities to work against Pakistan, which was leading the efforts to foil their conspiracy of plunging the world into a war. "All of us should think; Politicians in Pakistan and Kashmir, political workers, the common man and the people who are protesting should realise that we should choose our words carefully in these circumstances. "We should do politics, but in a manner so that an adversary of Pakistan does not get to take advantage of our internal situation," he said. He said that we all were trying to resolve the issue of AJK "politically". "On the one hand, the state is not ready to surrender, and it is justified, in this aspect, that no one can blackmail the state, and on the other hand, different demands and issues appear; even today, we will try to find a middle way," the PPP chairman said.

Three more terrorists killed as...

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killing 15 militants in the initial engagement. Nine police personnel had embraced martyrdom in the initial fighting, while militants also took police personnel hostage before security forces reached the area. Pakistan has witnessed a surge in terrorist activities, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, since the Afghan Taliban came to power in 2021. In response, Pakistan launched Operation Ghazab li-Haq, targeting terrorist hideouts across the border, killing scores of Afghan Taliban operatives and injuring hundreds more. Despite several rounds of talks, both countries have been unable to reach an agreement, largely due to the Afghan Taliban regime's reluctance to act against terrorist outfits operating from Afghan soil.

Iran says focused on defence...

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US military facilities in Bahrain, Kuwait, and Jordan had been targeted in retaliatory operations. The Guards claimed these strikes were a direct response to what they called "recent American aggression," though no independent confirmation of damage or casualties was immediately available. Bahrain's military, however, reported that it had intercepted multiple aerial barrages launched from Iran, describing the attack as a "serious escalation." Bahraini authorities said their air-defense systems successfully neutralized the incoming projectiles, preventing damage to military installations and civilian areas. The government condemned the attack and reaffirmed its commitment to regional security cooperation. Meanwhile, US Central Command confirmed that American forces had carried out additional strikes in southeastern Iran, killing seven Iranian soldiers. The Pentagon described the operation as a "precision defensive action" aimed at neutralizing threats to US personnel stationed across the region. Washington reiterated that it does not seek conflict but will respond decisively to attacks on its forces. The violence was not confined to the Gulf. Along the Lebanon-Israel border, Israeli forces demolished several homes in southern Lebanon and opened fire on residents during what the Israeli military described as an operation targeting militant infrastructure.

‘Immense disappointment’: Kylian Mbappe rues end of World Cup dream*French captain blames "tactical and technical blunders" for his side's 2-0 semi-final defeat*

KYLIAN Mbappe rued the end of France's World Cup dream on Tuesday, blaming tactical and technical blunders for his side's 2-0 semi-final defeat to France. Mbappe had emerged as one of the stars of the tournament during France's run to the last four, rattling in eight goals at the tip of a free-scoring attack that delighted fans worldwide. But the 27-year-old French captain's dreams of a third straight World Cup final appearance ended abruptly as Spain outplayed Les Bleus at the AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas. Mbappe told French broadcaster M6 that the loss had been a "huge disappointment" for the French squad. "I don't think we played the match we wanted to play – whether tactically, technically, or in terms of our overall performance level," Mbappe said. "And when you don't do what you're supposed to do in a World Cup semi-final, you don't win," the Real Madrid star added. "Our goal was to press them high up the pitch to prevent them from settling into that slow, controlled rhythm – because when it comes to controlling the game, they are better than us. We failed to do that." Mbappe pinpointed the crux of the problem



in midfield, where France's duo of Adrien Rabiot and Aurelien Tchouameni rapidly found themselves over-run by Spain's triumvirate of Rodri, Dani Olmo and Fabian Ruiz. "We kept finding ourselves outnumbered 3-on-2 in midfield," Mbappe said. "And against Spain, that's a real problem... When you put it all together, the result is a defeat. It's a huge disappointment." Mbappe said France's crestfallen squad were determined to bounce back after digesting the lessons of the loss. "It was a dream for us to reach the final, to give our country the chance to keep dreaming and to make history," he said. "Now, it is something we have to face with our heads held high. I believe that when you win, you win with your head held high; so when you lose, you have to lose with your head held high, too. "But right now, there is immense disappointment. I find it hard to put into words just how disappointed the squad and I are. "Yet even if it might seem a bit robotic at times, we have to pick ourselves up, go on vacation, and move on to the next chapter. Because football waits for no one. We have to start over, put this failure behind us, and learn from it." – APP

India ease to six-wicket win over England in first ODI*The collapse continued when Will Jacks was caught one-handed by a diving KL Rahul but Liam Dawson and Joe Root, dropped on seven by Shivam Dube, dug the home side out of a hole with a 121-run partnership*

BIRMINGHAM: India bounced back strongly from a 4-0 Twenty20 series whitewash to beat England by six wickets in the first one-day international at Edgbaston on Tuesday. Captain Shubman Gill top scored with 80, before retiring hurt with his side needing 110 runs from 24.2 overs, and Axar Patel hit 57 as they reached their target of 259 comfortably on a balmy evening. Washington Sundar (52) wrapped up the match with a flourish, hitting a six that also brought up the 100 partnership with Patel, for a final score of 262-4 off 45.2 overs. Patel had earlier taken four wickets in a man-of-the-match performance by the left-arm spinner. "The way the T20 series went, I think this is the perfect start for us," he said. Top-order batters Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli had both gone cheaply, the first caught by England captain Harry Brook for 11 and the latter dismissed lbw for five to Jofra Archer, but rising

hopes of a home victory were soon dispelled as the runs piled up. Gill said he had suffered cramp but was already feeling better: "I wanted to finish the job for the team but I had to come out. Very glad with the result," he added. England had started the day by winning the toss and opting to bat but lost both openers and Brook in the space of six balls to slump to 64-3 after a 61-run opening stand. Jacob Bethell was first out, caught by a diving Washington Sundar off Gurnoor Brar, and fellow-opener Ben Duckett (43) followed two balls later when he was caught by Jasprit Bumrah on the boundary. Brook was caught for one by Rohit at slip off Bumrah's first delivery of his second spell, with Jos Buttler coming to the crease in his 200th ODI. Buttler went for five, caught by Brar off Prasidh Krishna, and England were reeling after Sam Curran was out for a duck at 80-5. The collapse continued when Will

Jacks was caught one-handed by a diving KL Rahul but Liam Dawson and Joe Root, dropped on seven by Shivam Dube, dug the home side out of a hole with a 121-run partnership. Dawson departed for 68 off 83 balls, his highest score in international cricket, while Root battled on to 76 not out. Nottinghamshire seamer Josh Tongue, making his ODI debut, was bowled middle stump by Patel with 13 balls remaining to close out England's innings. "I think we lost five for 20 in that middle period, which is always going to put us on the back foot," said Brook. "We would have definitely liked to have played slightly better in that period of the game." The match was England's first since Brendon McCullum was sacked as head coach of the test team, with the series useful preparation for next year's World Cup in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia. Two more ODIs follow, in Cardiff on Thursday and at Lord's on Sunday. – APP

Dubai Basketball appoint head coach Xavi Pascual from Barcelona

DUBAI: Dubai Basketball have appointed one of Europe's most accomplished coaches, Xavi Pascual, to head the team on a three-year contract through to 2029. Pascual joins the club after leading FC Barcelona to the 2025-26 Liga ACB Finals, bringing more than two decades of experience at the highest level of European basketball. His appointment follows Dubai Basketball's ABA League championship and historic debut EuroLeague season, reinforcing the team's ambition to establish itself among Europe's best. Pascual has led some of the continent's best clubs, including FC Barcelona, Panathinaikos Athens and Zenit Saint Petersburg. His achievements include the EuroLeague title, seven domestic league championships and one of the highest winning percentages in EuroLeague history. Pascual said in a recent release: "Joining Dubai Basketball is a challenge that really motivates me. This is a club with huge ambition and a clear vision for the future. "I'm excited to start working with the players, help the team continue its growth, and build a winning culture. We know the expectations are high, and we will do everything we can to fight for titles." Pascual began his head-coaching career at FC Barcelona in 2008, where he spent eight-and-a-half seasons and became one of the most successful coaches in the club's history. He led Barcelona to the 2009-10 EuroLeague title, four Spanish League championships and numerous domestic honors. He later coached Panathinaikos Athens before taking charge of Zenit Saint Petersburg in 2020. During five seasons in Russia, he guided Zenit to its first-ever EuroLeague Playoff appearance, further strengthening his reputation in Europe. – APP

Chinese, Pakistani universities ink MoU to boost marine science cooperation*The signing ceremony took place in Dalian, where an LUAWMS delegation led by Vice Chancellor Abdul Malik met Liu Wenhe, vice president of Dalian Ocean University, and other university officials*

BEIJING: China's Dalian Ocean University (DLOU) and Pakistan's Lasbela University of Agriculture, Water and Marine Sciences (LUAWMS) signed a memorandum of understanding to strengthen cooperation in marine science and education, China Economic Net reported. The signing ceremony took place in Dalian, where an LUAWMS delegation led by Vice Chancellor Abdul Malik met Liu Wenhe, vice president of Dalian Ocean University, and other university officials. According to a statement issued by DLOU, the two universities plan to focus their cooperation on the sharing and application of marine big data, research into changes in the marine environment and modern aquaculture. The partnership will also include joint training programmes for faculty members and students, collaborative research projects and the proposed establishment of a Belt and Road marine laboratory. – APP

McIlroy seeks end to British Open drought as out-of-sorts Scheffler defends title

SOUTHPORT: Rory McIlroy has his sights set on a first British Open win since 2014 as world number one Scottie Scheffler tries to get his game back on track to defend the Claret Jug at Royal Birkdale. McIlroy ended a long wait for his fifth major by winning the Masters last year to complete the grand slam of golf's majors and backed up that victory by securing another green jacket in April. Yet, his drought at his home major in front of an adoring crowd of fans goes on since his only British Open win at Royal Liverpool. McIlroy has limited his appearances on the PGA Tour to prioritize the majors this year, playing just three non-major events since the Masters in April. The Northern Irishman looked good in a seventh-placed finish at last week's Scottish Open, which could have been even better but for a fog-disrupted third round. "Obviously there was some good in there today, but there was some bad as well. So, I'm going to need to work a little bit over the next couple days to be ready for Thursday," said McIlroy. "At least I know what I'm doing. It's a matter of trying to sort of rectify it." **Home favorite Fleetwood:** Scheffler, by contrast, hit a new low in a frustrating season for the world number one at the Renaissance Club. After a four-year run of 78 successive made cuts, the American failed to make the cut at the Scottish Open. Any doubts over Scheffler's ability to master the seaside links conditions appeared to be put to

bed in his dominant display to win at Royal Portrush 12 months ago. "Getting some extra rest going into a major championship is never the worst thing, but I really hate missing cuts, too," said the American. Matt Fitzpatrick finished in a tie for third at the Scottish Open to maintain his supreme consistency on tour that has seen the Englishman rise to third in the world rankings. But Fitzpatrick has struggled to produce his best at the majors since winning the 2022 US Open. He appears best placed to end the 34-year wait for an English winner of the Open, but Tommy Fleetwood is the local hero on his hometown course. Fleetwood is still seeking his first major but got the monkey off his back of failing to win on the PGA Tour in a brilliant end to last season that saw him scoop the \$10 million prize for winning the Tour Championship. Aaron Rai is another of the English contenders after his shock win at the US PGA Championship. Despite a boom period for European golf, the last three winners of the British Open have been American. Behind Scheffler, world number three Cameron Young and US Open champion Wyndham Clark lead the American charge, while Jordan Spieth was the victor the last time the Open was held at Birkdale in 2017 and remains adamant his major winning days are not over. – APP

Fuel prices may be fixed on daily...

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Before that, they were adjusted fortnightly and, earlier, on a monthly basis. "The proposed mechanism would eliminate the existing practice of circulating summaries for approval and end the roles of Petroleum Division, Finance Division, and prime minister in the final price determination process." The PM had earlier constituted a committee to review a new petroleum pricing mechanism. The committee has held four meetings, the latest on July 13, chaired by Petroleum Minister Ali Perwaiz Malik. The meeting was attended by Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema, Minister of State for Finance Bilal Azhar Kayani, Ogra Chairman Masroor Khan Nabeel Awan, representatives from KPMG, members of the committee, officials from Finance Division, PSO, Ministry of Law and Justice, Petroleum Division and other senior officials. KPMG, which was engaged by the Petroleum Division to evaluate future pricing options, presented four possible mechanisms – monthly, fortnightly, weekly, and daily pricing – along with the advantages and disadvantages of each. According to sources, the committee members have so far shown a preference for the daily pricing mechanism. The proposed model is expected to be a hybrid system rather than complete deregulation.

PTI to hold nationwide rallies on...

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Barrister Gohar said that the parliamentary party had resolved to organise rallies across the country on August 5, the day PTI founder and former prime minister Imran Khan was arrested in 2023 after a court sentenced him to three years in prison for selling state gifts. According to the PTI chief, the parliamentary party condemned the continued imprisonment of Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi. "Every PTI member of the assembly believes the [PTI] founder's imprisonment is unjust," he said, adding that the party had approached the courts but decisions on its appeals had yet to be announced. According to Barrister Gohar, the PTI political committee and the opposition alliance will jointly announce the future course of action. Referring to the planned rallies, he said the upcoming protest would be of a different nature this time.

UN praises Pakistan...

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Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in responding to complex emergencies worldwide. He acknowledged OCHA's continued support to Pakistan, particularly during the devastating floods of 2022, and expressed gratitude for its assistance in strengthening the country's disaster response capacity. Highlighting Pakistan's progress, the Prime Minister noted that national and provincial disaster management institutions had significantly enhanced their ability to respond to climate-induced disasters. He emphasized, however, that the increasing frequency and intensity of climate-related events underscored the need for greater preparedness, resilience, and closer coordination among stakeholders at national, regional, and international levels. Mr. Fletcher thanked the Prime Minister for the warm reception and commended the longstanding partnership between Pakistan and OCHA. He praised the Prime Minister's efforts to promote regional peace and stability, stressing that sustainable peace was essential to addressing humanitarian and economic consequences of conflicts.

PM directs NDMA...

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meeting with the NDMA Chairman Lt. General Inam Haider Malik, who called on him here. The NDMA chairman briefed the prime minister on the preparedness to handle any emergency situation during the monsoon rains, as well as the progress on making the early warning system fully functional, and co-operation with the Ministry of Climate Change in this regard.

ICC approves sweeping overhaul of ODI, T20 World Cup formats**Board also approves qualification pathway for 2028 ICC Men's T20 World Cup**

KARACHI: The International Cricket Council (ICC) has approved major changes to the formats of its flagship men's global tournaments, introducing new competition structures for the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup and the ICC Men's T20 World Cup in a bid to increase competitiveness and ensure every match carries greater significance. The decisions were taken at the ICC Board's annual meetings in Edinburgh, where the Board approved recommendations from the Chief Executives' Committee aimed at creating more meaningful contests, strengthening the competitive structure of the tournaments and enhancing the experience for players and fans. While the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup will continue to feature 14 teams, the tournament will now follow a three-stage format before the knockout rounds. Under the revised structure, the teams ranked 12th, 13th and 14th will first compete in a round-robin "Super Series", with the winner advancing to the main competition. The second stage will feature two

groups of six teams each. The top three teams from each group, along with the next highest-placed team across both groups, will qualify for a newly introduced "Super 7" stage. The Super 7 will be played in a round-robin format, with the top four teams advancing to the semi-finals. The semi-finals will see the first-placed team take on the fourth-placed side, while the second-placed team will face the third-placed team, with the winners progressing to the final. According to the ICC, the new structure has been designed to ensure every stage of the tournament carries greater consequence, with meaningful contests from the opening match through to the final while continuing to provide emerging nations with opportunities to compete on cricket's biggest stage. The ICC also approved significant changes to the Men's T20 World Cup, retaining the 20-team event while expanding opportunities for teams to remain in contention deeper into the tournament. The group stage will now consist of five groups of four teams instead of four groups

of five. The top two teams from each group will qualify for a new Super 10 stage, replacing the previous Super Eights. The Super 10 stage will comprise two groups of five teams. The winners of each group will qualify directly for the semi-finals. A new Eliminator stage will also be introduced, with the second-placed team in one Super 10 group facing the third-placed team from the other group. The winners of the two Eliminators will claim the remaining semi-final berths. The ICC said the revised format was influenced by the performances of emerging teams at the 2026 Men's T20 World Cup and is intended to increase competitive intensity while ensuring the closing matches of the Super 10 stage remain significant. The ICC Board also endorsed a proposal for a new 16-team global tournament exclusively for Associate Member nations, which is expected to be played before future Men's T20 World Cups. The proposed event aims to improve competitive standards among Associate teams while providing them with

a marquee global competition. The proposal remains subject to final approval by the ICC Finance and Commercial Affairs Committee at its November meeting. The Board also approved the qualification pathway for the 2028 ICC Men's T20 World Cup. Scotland will enter directly into the Europe Regional Final due to exceptional circumstances surrounding its participation in the 2026 tournament. Teams that featured in the 2026 Men's T20 World Cup but did not secure automatic qualification for 2028 will advance directly to the Global Qualifier. The remaining eight places in the Global Qualifier will be filled through regional qualification, with two teams each qualifying from Africa, Asia and Europe, and one team each from the Americas and East Asia-Pacific. The highest-placed team from each region at the Global Qualifier, together with the next three highest-placed teams overall, will qualify for the 2028 ICC Men's T20 World Cup, subject to minimum performance criteria. – APP

Briefs

Industrialists seek regularization, investor-friendly reforms

LAHORE: Industrialists and business representatives from Daroghawala, Saggian, Mahmood Booti, Barki Road and other industrial areas sought regularization, investor-friendly reforms during a protest here at Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) on Tuesday. The participants also expressed concerns over relocation of industrial units, and the actions of Lahore Development Authority (LDA), Ravi Urban Development Authority (RUDA) and the district administration. They demanded an immediate halt to the relocation of industries, regularization of long-established industrial units and the provision of a safe and business-friendly environment for investors. Referring to a recent incident at Masood Tech Industries, they called for a transparent and impartial inquiry into the conduct of the officials involved. LCCI President Faheem Ur Rehman Saigol addressed the gathering, while Senior Vice President Tanveer Ahmad Sheikh, Executive Committee Member Rana Shouban Akhtar, office-bearers and members of industrial associations also attended the gathering. Among those present were Rameez Dewan and Masood Akhtar from Daroghawala Industrial Association; Haji Liaqat, Malik Amin, Haji Dilawar, Malik Asif and Faraz from Saggian; Naeem Shehzad from Wahga Union; along with representatives of various industrial unions and business organizations.—APP

FCCI announces election schedule

FAISALABAD: Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) has formally unveiled the election schedule for 2026-28 term and constituted a three-member Election Commission headed by former chamber presidents. according to FCCI spokesman, the election schedule and formation of the Election Commission comprising former FCCI presidents Muzzamil Sultan, Atif Munir and Chaudhary Muhammad Nawaz were approved during a meeting of the Executive Committee chaired by FCCI President Farooq Yousaf Sheikh. According to the notified schedule, FCCI members may submit requests to the Secretary General for any amendments to the provisional voter list by July 18 and the provisional list will be displayed on chamber's notice board on July 22 while objections against the list can be filed by July 29, 2026. FCCI Secretary General will communicate decisions on objections by August 03 while the aggrieved members may file appeals before the election commission by August 06 and the election commission will decide all such appeals by August 10. Any further appeal against the commission's decision may be submitted to the regulator by August 13 whereas its decisions would be announced by August 24, 2026.—APP

The 4th Shusha Global Media Forum

Azerbaijan's path to progress and global dialogue

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

The 4th Shusha Global Media Forum, held on July 13-14, 2026, in the historic city of Shusha, once again placed Azerbaijan at the center of international attention. With the theme "The Mission of the Media in Promoting Peace: Restoring Truth and Rebuilding Trust," the forum gathered more than 160 media representatives from 54 countries, including 30 international news agencies and 60 leading media organizations. This gathering was not only a celebration of media's role in shaping narratives but also a reflection of Azerbaijan's remarkable development under the leadership of President Ilham Aliyev. Under President Aliyev, Azer-

baijan has undergone a profound transformation. Economic modernization has been a cornerstone of his vision, with investments in infrastructure, energy diversification, and digital innovation. The country has successfully positioned itself as a regional leader in connectivity, ensuring that its economy is resilient and future oriented. Beyond economics, Aliyev's leadership has emphasized cultural revival. Shusha, once devastated by conflict, has been restored as a symbol of Azerbaijan's heritage and resilience. Its revival demonstrates the government's commitment to preserving tradition while embracing modernity, making Shusha a fitting venue for a global media forum.

The Shusha Global Media Forum itself serves as a bridge between nations, cultures, and perspectives. In an era where disinformation and mistrust dominate headlines, Azerbaijan has taken the initiative to host a platform that encourages dialogue and collaboration. The forum's discussions on peacebuilding, media diplomacy, and the ethical use of artificial intelligence in journalism highlight Azerbaijan's role as a responsible global actor. By convening experts and journalists from across the world, the forum strengthens cross border trust and fosters a shared commitment to truth. One of the most significant contributions of the forum is its ability to bridge gaps. Me-

dia professionals from diverse backgrounds engaged in conversations that transcended political and cultural divides. These exchanges are vital in countering disinformation, which often fuels conflict and misunderstanding. Azerbaijan's decision to host such a forum in Shusha underscores its dedication to reconciliation and dialogue. The city, once a site of division, now stands as a beacon of unity and cooperation, projecting a powerful message to the international community. The forum also plays a crucial role in projecting a positive image of Azerbaijan. By highlighting its cultural revival, economic progress, and commitment to peace, Azerbaijan positions itself as a nation that

values both tradition and innovation. Hosting global thought leaders in Shusha demonstrates the country's ability to blend heritage with modernity, appealing to international audiences who seek examples of resilience and forward thinking leadership. Moreover, the emphasis on media ethics and transparency reinforces Azerbaijan's image as a promoter of truth in an age of misinformation. President Ilham Aliyev's vision for Azerbaijan is evident in the success of the Shusha Global Media Forum. His leadership has not only advanced the nation's development but also ensured that Azerbaijan plays a meaningful role in global conversations. The forum's focus on peace, trust, and truth

aligns perfectly with Aliyev's broader agenda of positioning Azerbaijan as a bridge between East and West, tradition and modernity, conflict and reconciliation. The 4th Shusha Global Media Forum was more than an international media gathering. It was a strategic showcase of Azerbaijan's progress under President Ilham Aliyev. By fostering dialogue, addressing disinformation, and highlighting cultural renewal, the forum bridged gaps between nations and projected a positive, forward looking image of Azerbaijan. As the world grapples with challenges of trust and truth in media, Azerbaijan has demonstrated that it is not only a participant in global discourse but also a leader in shaping it.

ICCI awareness session

BOI showcases one-window business facilitation centre

Government committed to facilitating investors through One-Window Services

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), in collaboration with the Board of Investment (BOI), organized an awareness session on the Business Facilitation Centre (BFC), established by the BOI in Islamabad, to familiarize the business community with the government's flagship one-window initiative designed to simplify investment procedures, improve inter-agency coordination and enhance Pakistan's ease of doing business. Addressing the session as the chief guest, Additional Secretary and Executive Director General, Board of Investment, Zulfiqar Ali, described the Business Facilitation Centre as a landmark initiative aimed at creating a more investor-friendly business environment in Pakistan. He said the Centre has been designed to provide investors and entrepreneurs with seamless access to a broad range of government services through a single platform, eliminating the need to approach multiple departments separately. He said the BFC offers comprehensive facilitation in company registration, business incorporation, investment approvals, licensing, regulatory compliance, documentation, tax guidance and coordination with relevant government agencies. By integrating these services under one roof, he noted, the Centre would reduce procedural delays, enhance trans-



parency, improve institutional coordination and strengthen investor confidence. Zulfiqar Ali reaffirmed the Board of Investment's commitment to providing an efficient and responsive facilitation mechanism for both domestic and foreign investors. He urged the business community to fully utilize the Business Facilitation Centre and its digital platform to expedite business operations and capitalize on emerging investment opportunities in Pakistan. Earlier, welcoming the distinguished guests and participants, Acting President ICCI Tahir Ayub said the private sector requires efficient, transpar-

ent and accessible public services to remain competitive in today's rapidly evolving business environment. He observed that initiatives such as the Business Facilitation Centre are not merely administrative reforms but strategic interventions that will help transform Pakistan into a more competitive and investment-friendly economy. He expressed confidence that the Business Facilitation Centre would play a pivotal role in improving Pakistan's ease of doing business, attracting greater domestic and foreign investment and strengthening the country's economic competitiveness. A comprehensive technical pres-

entation was delivered by Saib-ul-Hussain Warsi, Manager, Business Facilitation Centre, Board of Investment, who gave a detailed briefing about the BFC as well as the milestones achieved by the initiative. In his vote of thanks, ICCI Vice President Irfan Chaudhry reaffirmed ICCI's commitment to strengthening collaboration with government institutions to promote investor facilitation, improve the ease of doing business and foster sustainable economic growth. Among those present were Ms. Aasiya Jahangir Khan, former Provincial Minister, entrepreneur and women rights

champion; Ms. Hina Razzaq, Assistant Registrar, Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP); Ms. Sama Gul of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR); ICCI Executive Members Imran Minhas, Waseem Chaudhry and Zulqurnain Abbasi; former Senior Vice President Khalid Chaudhry; senior members Ms. Sadaf Asim and Ms. Rabiha Raheel; Kashif Qureshi, Chairman, and Ms. Muqaddas Chaudhry, Vice Chairperson, ICCI Standing Committee on Social Mobilization and Communication, along with a large number of entrepreneurs, industrialists and members of the business community.

KSA keen to expand investment in Bangladesh's transport sectors

DHAKA : Saudi Arabia has expressed strong interest in expanding its investment footprint in Bangladesh, particularly in transport and logistics, with a special focus on maritime sector development. The interest was conveyed during a meeting between Saudi Deputy Minister of Transport and Logistics Dr. Rumaih Mohammed Al-Rumaih and his delegation with Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) Executive Chairman Ashik Chowdhury at Biniyog Bhavan today, said a press release. The Bangladesh side was led by Ashik Chowdhury, who also serves as Chief Executive Officer of the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Authority. Officials from BIDA, the PPP Authority and the Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (BEZA) attended the meeting. During the discussion, the Saudi deputy minister praised Bangladesh's ongoing efforts to promote privatisation and improve the business climate, saying the initiatives are aligned with Saudi Arabia's own economic strategy. He said Saudi Arabia aims to become a global logistics hub and is keen to create greater opportunities for Saudi companies to invest in Bangladesh, while also supporting Bangladeshi businesses interested in expanding into the Saudi market. The meeting also discussed the operations of Red Sea Gateway Terminal (RSGT) in Bangladesh, where over 98 percent of employees are Bangladeshi. The company is exploring further opportunities to modernise terminal operations by introducing advanced technologies and improving operational efficiency.—APP

Rupee gains 01 paisa against Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Wednesday appreciated by 01 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.00, compared to the previous day's closing of Rs278.01. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 279.00 and Rs 279.05, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee increased by Rs 0.78 and closed at Rs 317.60 from the previous day's closing of Rs 316.82, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen remained unchanged to close at Rs 1.71, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed an increase of Rs 0.29 and closed at Rs 371.67 compared to the previous day's Rs 371.38. The exchange rate of the Emirate Dirham stood stagnant to close at Rs 75.69, and the Saudi Riyal surged by 02 paisa, closing at Rs 74.04.—APP

Uzbekistan's exports reach \$12.6b

BAKU: Uzbekistan exported 12.6 billion US dollars worth of goods during the first five months of 2026, according to data released by the National Statistics Committee, UzA reported. Russia was Uzbekistan's biggest export market during the January-May period, receiving 1.9 billion US dollars worth of goods, followed by China at 1.2 billion US dollars. Afghanistan ranked third with imports totaling 817.8 million US dollars, while France received 626.2 million US dollars in Uzbek exports. Kazakhstan followed with 573.7 million US dollars, ahead of Türkiye at 508.2 million US dollars. Other major export destinations included Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China (\$385.1 million), the United Arab Emirates (\$343.9 million), the Kyrgyz Republic (\$341.9 million).—APP



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Briefs

Muslim man
stabbed
several
times in US

WASHINGTON: A man was arrested in Utah for stabbing a Muslim man multiple times and stated that he targeted the victim because of the victim's religion, police said in court records on Tuesday. Police said the suspect told them he "intends to kill Muslims" and that he constituted "a substantial danger to the public if released based on his violent actions ... ideologies and pre-planned mass casualty events." The incident took place inside the Valley Fair Mall in Utah's West Valley City on Monday. The male victim had "multiple stab wounds all over his body and was bleeding profusely," police said in an affidavit. Authorities said the suspect was pinned to the ground by bystanders before officers arrived on the scene. The suspect, Peter Michael Larsen, 48, was booked into the Salt Lake County jail for a probe over attempted murder and prohibited dangerous weapon conduct, jail records showed on Tuesday. The victim was a male Muslim kiosk worker. The suspect said "he had targeted the victim with intent to kill him because of his religion (Muslim)," according to the police booking affidavit. The suspect approached the Muslim man, asked for his name, asked about his religion and indicated he wanted a bottle of water, the Salt Lake Tribune reported, citing comments from Imam Shuaib Din, who leads the Utah Islamic Center and had been in contact with the victim's family. — APP

Israel kills
four in Gaza

CAIRO: An Israeli airstrike killed a man, his wife and their six-year-old daughter in the Gaza Strip on Wednesday, Palestinian health officials said as talks to advance the US-brokered Gaza ceasefire deal faltered. The strike on an apartment building in Deir Al-Balah in central Gaza killed Omar Abu Qassem, his wife, Asma, and their daughter, Habeeba, medics said. Their son survived, but was injured, medics said. In Sheikh Radwan neighborhood in Gaza City, an Israeli airstrike killed one person, medics said. The Israeli military didn't immediately comment on this incident. The deaths add to a toll of more than 1,100 Palestinians, mostly civilians, killed by Israeli attacks since an October ceasefire between Israel and Hamas to end the war took effect, according to health officials in the enclave. Hamas doesn't usually disclose information about its fatalities. The truce halted major fighting, but has failed to stop near-daily Israeli strikes. Four Israeli soldiers have been killed by militants in Gaza over the same period. The latest violence comes as Hamas leaders wrapped up another round of truce talks in Cairo on Tuesday. — APP

SCO Secy Gen commends
Pakistan's constructive role

Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Meets SCO Secretary-General

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar received the Secretary-General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Nurlan Yermekbayev. The two sides held a productive exchange on SCO priorities and explored ways to further strengthen cooperation among Member States in key areas, including economy, transport, and connectivity. They also discussed regional and international developments. The SCO Secretary-General commended Pakistan's constructive contributions to promoting regional peace, stability, and cooperation. He shared his perspective and proposals for enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the SCO, and briefed the Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister on preparations for the forthcoming SCO Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) Meeting in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Senator Ishaq Dar reaffirmed Pakistan's strong commitment to advancing the SCO's objectives. He expressed readiness to work closely with all Member States ahead of Pakistan assuming the Chairmanship of the SCO Council of Heads of State (CHS) in September 2026 and hosting the SCO Summit in 2027.



Pakistan calls for dual-track strategy to eradicate terrorism from Africa's Sahel

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan Tuesday called for a comprehensive strategy that combines effective security responses with measures addressing the root causes of terrorism and violent extremism in the West Africa Sahel region in a bid to wipe out the menace. "Strengthening regional cooperation remains indispensable," Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, permanent representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, told the UN Security Council, which held a briefing on the activities of United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS). "The grave terrorist threat across West Africa and the Sahel such as the coordinated terrorist attacks in Mali, Niger and elsewhere remains a foremost concern which also underscores the need for sustained regional and international cooperation," he said. The debate was organized by the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), which hold the presidency of the 15-member Council for the month of July. In his remarks, Ambassador Asim Ahmad highlighted Pakistan's "longstanding, deep-rooted, and wide ranging" partnership with Africa, with Pakistani peacekeepers having served with distinction across the

continent contributing to UN's peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts.

"We firmly believe that durable solutions entail national ownership, coordinated regional response and constructive international engagement and support," he said, adding that discussions in the Council could be more productive if there were enhanced participation by the countries of the region and the regional and sub-regional organizations. The international community, he said, must remain engaged in addressing the region's broader humanitarian and development challenges.

"Persistent funding shortfalls that continue to undermine humanitarian response must be addressed," the Pakistani delegate said, pointing out that lasting peace and security was linked to sustainable development, resilient institutions and expanded economic opportunities. At the outset, Leonardo Santos Simao, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel and Head of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel, said terrorist and non-State armed groups are adapting their operations through drones, sophisticated communications and cryptocurrencies. — APP

Australia to
enact laws
to govern AI

SYDNEY: Australia will enact laws to regulate how artificial intelligence data centers use power and water, and to protect creative copyright, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said Wednesday. In a landmark speech setting out his government's policies, Albanese sought to allay public concern over AI, saying it could be adopted in a way that enhanced the national interest. The center-left leader said he would meet Australia's state and territory leaders next month to discuss the proposed laws, which would be introduced next year to build trust in AI and protect national security. Australia had led other countries in imposing limits on social media use for children, but the challenge to shape AI in Australia's interest was greater and demanded action now, he said. Letting others write the AI rules "would mean subcontracting our national sovereignty and security to the con-

trol of foreign monopolies," he said in a speech at the University of Sydney. "Our great country can be much more than a data warehouse for AI products made overseas." Albanese's speech came after it emerged this week that US startup Anthropic had lobbied Australian officials to change copyright laws to assist the training of AI models, as it considered investing in data centers in the country.

Musicians, writers and publishers have urged the government to resist such pressure and protect their work.

Australian creative content was not "up for grabs," and the new laws will provide "the strongest possible protection for Australian artists and Australian media," Albanese said. "No company should use Australian books, music, art or news to build or train AI without the artist's control. That includes the artist's control of the price and value of their work. Anything less is theft," he said. The new standards would set clear legal obligations for large data centers, requiring them to put more power into the electricity grid than they take out so AI does not increase power prices for Australians, and ensuring they do not compete for land with housing. — APP

One killed as boat sinks

SAN FRANCISCO, United States: One person was dead and two were missing after a boat carrying 19 people sank near Alcatraz, the former prison and tourist site in San Francisco Bay, US officials said Tuesday.

Helicopters, planes and rescue boats operated by local fire and police teams were working alongside US Coast Guard to find the missing. Fire Chief Dean Crispin said rescuers first responded to a report of "a boat on fire, 600 yards off Alcatraz" Island around 3:35 p.m. (1035 GMT), according to a short Instagram video posted by San Francisco's mayor. When rescuers approached, the boat had capsized and efforts were made to resuscitate the person who died. "They immediately initiated CPR, transported that patient to the shore. They were declared

deceased," Crispin said. "We still have two missing and one deceased dog." San Francisco Fire Department Lt. Elias Mariano told AFP the search for the two people still missing will continue "through the night." The boat was a privately owned cabin cruiser motorboat from Stockton, California, Mariano said.

Authorities did not know if the boat was headed to Alcatraz, a major tourist attraction, where shuttered buildings of the famous former prison still stand. At least one person was severely injured in the water when rescuers arrived, the Los Angeles Times reported. Authorities confirmed the remaining 16 passengers were rescued. Local television stations aired footage of the final moments of the boat sinking in the San Francisco Bay. — APP

First bird flue case in NZ

NEW Zealand reported its first case of the deadly H5N1 bird flu after a migratory seabird found on a beach near the capital, Wellington, tested positive, Biosecurity Minister Andrew Hoggard said on Wednesday. The case in a brown skua seabird comes after the virus was detected last month in Australia, the last continent to report the virus. The virulent H5 strain has spread through wild bird and mammal populations since 2021, killing millions and infecting poultry and dairy farms as well as some farmworkers. "There is no evidence of any mass mortality in wildlife or transmission between wild birds in New Zealand. There has been no detection in poultry," Hoggard said in a statement. New Zealand has been preparing for the arrival of H5N1, working with the poultry industry to develop biosecurity and resilience plans. Hoggard said New Zealand may see a similar pattern to cases reported in neighboring Australia, where there have been 14 confirmed or presumed positive detections of H5 bird flu as of Wednesday. Health officials have started a vaccination program for 300 core breeding birds from five of the country's most endangered species, Hoggard said. H5 was confirmed on Heard Island, a sub-Antarctic Australian territory, in late 2025. — APP

Russia
accused of
spreading
misinformation

BERLIN: Some German lawmakers and anti-Kremlin activists suspect Russia of inflaming sensitive regional divisions, smearing mainstream political parties and spreading disinformation to help the far right ahead of hotly contested regional elections in Germany.

In the former communist eastern states of Saxony-Anhalt and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, the Alternative for Germany (AfD) is topping the polls ahead of votes scheduled for September 6 and 20. The anti-immigrant, pro-Russian party is aiming to take control of a regional government — which would be a first in Germany for the far right since 1945 — and deal a blow to Chancellor Friedrich Merz's unpopular ruling coalition.

In recent months, posts spreading misinformation have been appearing in ever greater numbers across X, TikTok and Bluesky.

For lawmakers focused on security issues, the prime suspect is Moscow, which — in its efforts to destabilize Germany — is accused of relying on the AfD. The party denies this, claiming instead that it is the victim of "political" manipulation. Antibot4Navalny, a group of anonymous anti-Kremlin activists named after the late Russian opposition figure, detected a first campaign in June. — APP

Body of
Indian sailor
missing

NEW DELHI: The body of an Indian sailor who went missing after his ship was attacked off the coast of Oman has been recovered, a seafarers' union official said Wednesday. Heramb Karmarkar, a 30-year-old marine engineer from the western Indian city of Pune, had been missing since Sunday's attack on the Cypriot-flagged GFS Galaxy.

"I got a call Tuesday evening from the company the ship belonged to informing me that Heramb Karmarkar's body has been found by the Omani coast guard," Manoj Yadav, of the Forward Seamen's Union of India, told AFP. "This was almost 60 hours after we first received news that he was missing." The other 23 crew members — including 10 Indian nationals — were rescued Sunday. — APP

UN calls for halt to lethal
Strait of Hormuz tanker attacks

The maritime agency said it has been working with parties in the region after Israel and the United States began an intense bombing campaign against Iran in late February drawing counterstrikes across the Gulf against US allies by Tehran

DNA

UNITED NATIONS: The UN maritime agency, IMO, condemned overnight attacks on shipping in and around the Strait of Hormuz that killed at least two seafarers as fresh strikes were reported Tuesday in the escalating US-Iran war. "We are gravely concerned by the latest attacks," an IMO spokesperson said, adding that the agency is urgently working with authorities to confirm the circumstances. "IMO wholly condemns these attacks. The cycle of escalation must end." The maritime agency said it has been working with parties in the region after Israel and the United States began an intense bombing campaign against Iran in late February drawing counterstrikes across the Gulf against US allies by Tehran. Recent days have seen a major escalation in strikes, which has broken the fragile interim truce established

under the Pakistan-mediated US-Iran Memorandum of Understanding signed in mid-June.

The IMO's efforts to alleviate the closure of the strait since hostilities erupted include establishing evacuation routes for ships stuck in the critical commercial waterway through which 20 per cent of oil and natural gas exports used to pass.

All parties have a responsibility to show restraint, avoid further escalation and return to dialogue, IMO said. The escalation which began last week has seen multiple strikes on ships trying to navigate the Strait of Hormuz. "IMO urges all parties to choose the path that protect seafarers' lives and the freedom of navigation, so that this dangerous situation does not spiral further out of control," the IMO spokesperson said.

"Reports on the closure of the Strait of Hormuz are very alarming for their impact on human rights far beyond the region," said Volker Turk, UN human rights chief on Tuesday. "It is a vital

lifeline on which millions are reliant."

Disruptions to the flow of food, medicines, and other necessary commodities have severe socioeconomic and humanitarian consequences, both regionally and globally, he continued, adding that diplomacy, restraint and de-escalation must be prioritized.

Reported attacks by Iran and the US "must stop immediately," Turk said, urging an immediate return to the ceasefire and its implementation consistent with international law.

Throughout the months-long war, the UN maritime agency said it has been closely monitoring developments to protect more than 20,000 seafarers in the region, including those stranded on vessels unable to exit the Strait of Hormuz.

In June, IMO said it managed to safely evacuate around 11,000 seafarers but paused the initiative on 25 June following a string of attacks. IMO said it is also participating in a UN-led dedicated Task Force on the Strait of Hormuz, established in March 2026.