



Islamabad POST

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Egypt greatly values relations with Pakistan

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DPM Ihsaq Dar Concludes his China sojourn

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Middle East imbroglio

Iran launches strike on US base in Eastern Syria

According to the IRGC, the operation targeted the al-Tanf garrison – a key US-led coalition base near the Syria-Iraq-Jordan border triangle – in retaliation for the recent killing of Iranian soldiers

DNA

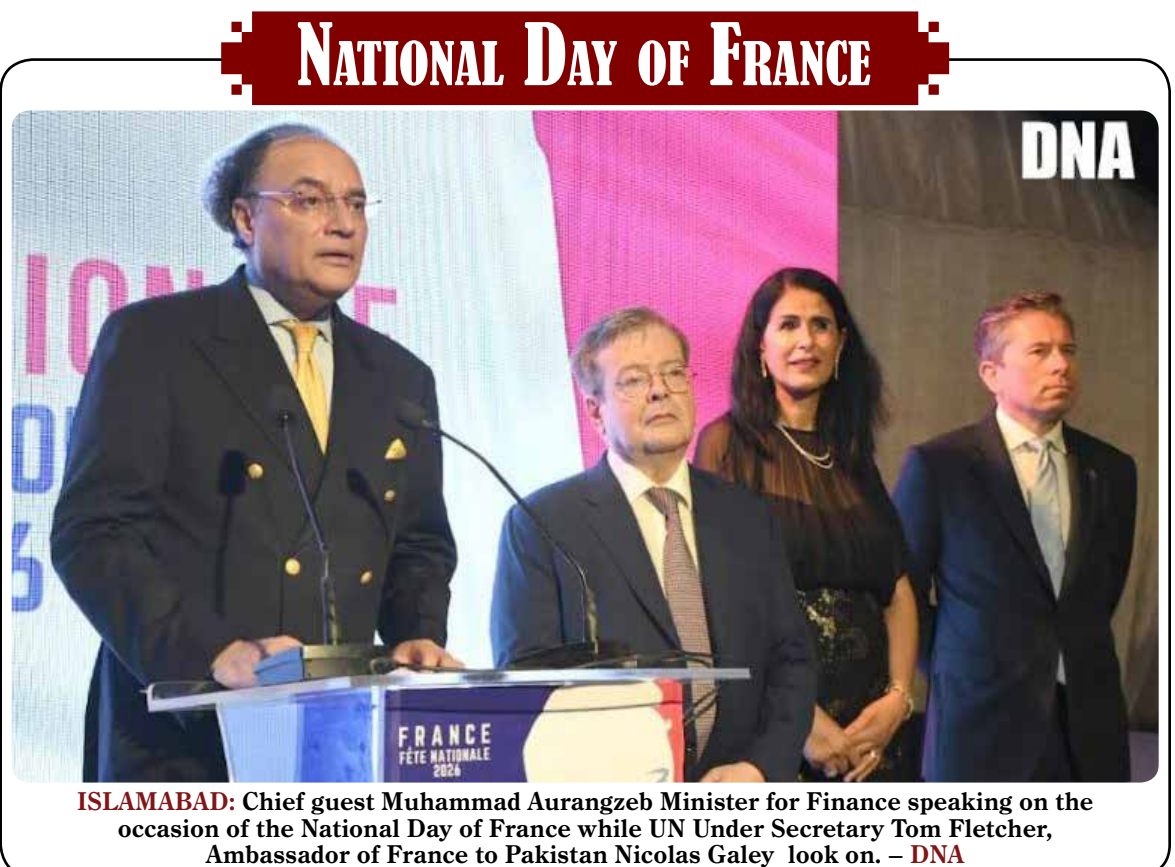
TEHRAN/DAMASCUS: Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) announced on Friday that it carried out a direct strike on a US military operations command centre at al-Tanf in eastern Syria, marking the first such Iranian attack in the region during the current conflict. According to the IRGC, the operation targeted the al-Tanf garrison – a key US-led coalition base near the Syria-Iraq-Jordan border triangle – in retaliation for the recent killing of Iranian soldiers. The IRGC stated that the strike was a "precise and successful" response and warned of further consequences if attacks on Iranian forces continue. This marks a significant escalation, as it is the first direct Iranian strike on the al-Tanf base amid the ongoing regional tensions. The al-Tanf area has long served as a strategic outpost for US and coalition forces to counter ISIS remnants and monitor Iranian-backed militias in the region. There has been no immediate confirmation or comment from US or Syrian sources regarding damage or casualties from the Iranian strike. The development comes amid heightened friction across the Middle East, with Iran vowing to respond forcefully to any threats against its personnel or interests in Syria. Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) claimed that it carried out a heavy surprise attack on the US Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar during the 15th wave of its Operation Nasr 2, state-run Press TV reported on Friday. The IRGC Aerospace Force said the strike destroyed a long-range radar system and several US strategic aerial refuelling aircraft, while causing severe damage to others. Iran has warned that its armed forces will not overlook the "shedding of innocent blood," vowing to take action against those responsible for alleged attacks on civilians.

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Two killed in Russian strike

DNA

KYIV: A Russian strike on the Black Sea port city of Odesa hit a residential building and killed two people, the deputy mayor of the Ukrainian city said Friday. The official, Oleksandr Filatov, confirmed the fatalities and the missile strike at the scene. Other officials said eight people, including two children, were wounded. Residential buildings, a religious institution, a pre-school facility, vehicles and other civilian infrastructure were damaged in the latest strikes, they said. More than four years after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, strikes from both sides have been intensifying for several months, causing a growing number of civilian casualties. According to the UN, June was the deadliest month for civilians in Ukraine since April 2022.



ISLAMABAD: Chief guest Muhammad Aurangzeb Minister for Finance speaking on the occasion of the National Day of France while UN Under Secretary Tom Fletcher, Ambassador of France to Pakistan Nicolas Galey look on. – DNA

Govt shifts to daily fuel price revision mechanism

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has decided to review fuel prices on a daily basis amid a surge in global oil rates, Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik said on Friday. Addressing a press conference alongside Information Minister Attaulah Tarar, Malik said the decision was approved by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the federal cabinet. Renewed military strikes in the Middle East were also weighing on risk sentiment, keeping oil prices elevated and reigniting concerns about inflation and growth. Oil prices were on the rise, with Brent crude

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Ishaq Dar concludes his China visit

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SHANGHAI: Deputy Prime Minister / Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar concluded his two-day visit to Shanghai, China, on 17 July 2026. During the visit, the Deputy Prime Minister / Foreign Minister signed the Agreement on the Establishment of the World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organization (WAICO) on behalf of Pakistan. A total of 29 countries signed the Agreement. It may be recalled that Pakistan is one of the founding members of WAICO, a key platform for international cooperation, capacity building, and bridging the digital divide.

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Security of Chinese in Pakistan 'paramount for us', says Shehbaz

PM Shehbaz's assurance came two days after State Minister for Interior Tallal Chaudhry said authorities were stepping up security around the China-run Saindak copper and gold mine in Balochistan after supply routes were disrupted in the region by terrorists

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif asserted on Friday that the security of Chinese in Pakistan was "paramount for us". "I would like to say with fullest force at my command that the security of Chinese brothers and sisters in Pakistan is paramount for us, it is most important. And we will leave no stone unturned to provide them with the best possible security," he said while addressing the Pakistan-China Pharmaceutical and Healthcare B2B Investment Conference in Islamabad. The conference also saw the signing of multiple agreements between Pakistani and Chinese companies in the areas of healthcare, biotechnology and pharmaceuticals, with PM Shehbaz saying that the deals were cumulatively valued at almost \$440 million. PM Shehbaz's assurance came two days after State Minister for Interior Tallal Chaudhry said authorities were stepping up security around the China-run Saindak copper and gold mine in Balochistan after supply routes were disrupted in the region by terrorists. His statement came against the backdrop of kinetic operations in the province under Operation Shaban, a high-intensity counter-terrorism and counterinsurgency campaign launched by security forces following multiple high-casualty and high-profile terrorist attacks in Balochistan. Chinese citizens and projects have also come under attack

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Bilawal kicks off AJK election campaign

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Kicking off his election campaign in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Friday promised to be the voice of the people of AJK in the Centre and globally by bridging the "gap" between the federal capital and the people. Addressing the rally, the PPP chairman said: "We have seen both good and bad times in AJK, but I have not witnessed the conditions that I am seeing today." He termed the prevailing situation a "test" for the AJK government, the state of Pakistan and all political parties. "It is the primary duty of a politician to be the voice of the people in the Centre and on international forums, but they are not fulfilling their responsibilities," he said, adding that "politicians have to act as a bridge between the people of AJK and the Centre, but this is not happening." He emphasised that this was not an issue limited to AJK; Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan and Gilgit-Baltistan were facing the same fate.

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Briefs

Fmr AJK PM survives life attempt

NEWS DESK

MUZAFFARABAD: A personal security guard of former Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) prime minister Sardar Tanveer Ilyas was shot dead on Friday after his convoy came under fire while travelling through his native constituency via the Tain-Dhalkot area, according to officials and his aides. Officials said that the convoy of Ilyas, who now heads the Istehkam-i-Pakistan Party (IPP) in the region, had travelled around one-and-a-half kilometres beyond the Tain-Dhalkot bridge over the Jhelum River, when unidentified assailants opened fire from the mountainside at around 1:30pm. Muhammad Asif, a retired commando from Sudhnoti district serving as one of Ilyas's security guards, was struck in the head after reportedly moving to shield the former premier.

Govt hikes petrol, diesel prices

FIAZ CH

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Friday announced a fresh increase in petroleum prices, raising petrol by Rs5.44 per litre and high-speed diesel (HSD) by Rs31.05 per litre. The fresh hike has raised petrol price from Rs310.71 to Rs316.15 per litre, and diesel from Rs323.30 to Rs354.35 per litre. The Petroleum Division issued a notification stating that the new fuel prices will take effect on July 18 and remain applicable until July 20. The revised fuel prices were announced after the federal government enforced a daily review mechanism for the petroleum products rates. The move to daily price reviews follows the government's earlier decision to conduct weekly petroleum price adjustments.

24 more Indian-baked terrorists killed in Bannu

Weapons and ammunition have also been recovered from killed Khwarij, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities and killing of innocent civilians

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RAWALPINDI: In the backdrop of recent surge in terrorist activities against Police and vehicle borne suicide bombing in Bannu District, in which Indian Proxy Fitna Al-Khwarij targeted Law Enforcement Agencies and innocent civilians, Security Forces have initiated extensive joint intelligence-based operations to hunt the perpetrators of these heinous attacks and their support infrastructure. Accordingly in last twenty four hours following the fierce fire exchanges in Bannu district and adjoining areas, twenty-four khwarij belonging to Indian proxy Fitna

Al Khwarij have been sent to hell. Weapons and ammunition have also been recovered from killed Khwarij, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities and killing of innocent civilians. The operations in the area would continue and perpetrators of these heinous and cowardly act will be brought to justice, as the relentless Counter Terrorism campaign under vision "Azm-e-Istehkam" (as approved by the Federal Apex Committee on National Action Plan) by Security Forces and Law Enforcement Agencies of Pakistan will continue at full pace to wipe out the menace of foreign-sponsored and supported terrorism from the country.

Andy Burnham now set to be UK new PM

Incoming UK Prime Minister Burnham pledges 'to give hope back' to people

LONDON: Veteran UK politician Andy Burnham was confirmed on Friday as the new leader of the ruling Labour Party, and is now set to be Britain's next prime minister. "There being no other eligible nominated candidate, it is therefore my honour to declare that the duly elected leader of the Labour Party is Andy Burnham," interior minister Shabana Mahmood told a special party conference. Burnham also vowed to give "hope back" to the British people as he prepares to become to the UK's next prime minister. He told a special party conference after being declared the winner of a leadership contest that "people and places... have been waiting too long for politics to let them hope again. That's what we're going to do, everybody. We're going to give them hope back." "We



are united and we put the power that comes from that unity at the service of people and places who have been waiting too long for politics to let them hope again," he told a room full of Labour lawmakers and party officials. "And that's what we're going to do,

everybody, we're going to give them hope back." He also paid tribute to Keir Starmer, the man he will replace as British prime minister on Monday, when the party will be eager to find out his cabinet team and learn more about his approach to government. Burnham's big 'rebalancing of power' Despite his offer of hope to places that feel 'left behind', there is still much to know about how Burnham will govern. He has given one speech since returning to parliament last month after winning a seat in Makerfield, the start of a four-week process to remove Starmer, whose unpopularity across Britain turned his lawmakers against him, and take his place as prime minister.

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Pakistan's largest circulated diplomatic magazine

CENTRELINE

Pakistan's Premier News & Diplomatic Affairs Magazine

Fred Seneviratne
Sri Lanka: Climbing global rankings in governance and integrity

Global CEO Serena Hotels Aziz Boolani Fetes Italian, Bulgaria Bulgaria envoys
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Legendary Nepali mountaineer talks to Centreline

Chairman Moani Group Luqman Ali Afzal hosts dinner
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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

Rescue (Police).....15

Bomb Disposal.....15

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

Emergency Ambulance.1122 & Rescue Services.4451122

Motorway Police...9266044

Motorway Police.9270601-20

Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596

Rawalpindi.....9270601-20

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Emergency Ambulance.....	1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
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Expert emphasizes path ahead for labor mobility in SA

Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, President of IRS, highlighted the enduring strategic partnership between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, describing it as a relationship founded on decades of friendship, shared values, religious affinity, and strong people-to-people ties. He noted that Saudi Arabia remains Pakistan's largest destination for overseas workers and a key source of remittances

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) organized an Eminent Speaker Series talk on "Pakistan's Labor Mobility Strategy and the Saudi Vision 2030: Future Opportunities," featuring Mr. Haroon Sharif, Chairman of the Pakistan Regional Economic Forum (PREF) and Former Minister for Investment, as the principal speaker. Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, President of IRS, highlighted the enduring strategic partnership between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, describing it as a relationship founded on decades of friendship, shared values, religious affinity, and strong people-to-people ties. He noted that Saudi Arabia remains Pakistan's largest destination for overseas workers and a key source of remittances. The Kingdom's market also presents immense untapped potential for trade and investment. He emphasized that Pakistan's young and growing population represents a strategic advantage at a time when the global risks

of aging populations and shrinking workforces run high. However, he stressed that this demographic dividend can be effectively realized through sustained investments in education, technical training, and skills development. Referring to Saudi Arabia's transformation under Vision 2030, he underscored that the Kingdom's shift towards a diversified, knowledge-based economy presents significant opportunities for Pakistan to align its workforce with emerging labor market demands. In his talk, Mr. Haroon Sharif argued that Pakistan-Saudi relations are entering a new phase, moving beyond traditional labor migration and towards a broader partnership centered on innovation, technology, knowledge, and human capital. He explained that global labor markets are undergoing profound demographic and technological changes. With 1.2 billion young people looking for job opportunities, and four million Pakistanis constituting that toll every year, Pakistan must fundamentally rethink its workforce development strategy. Mr. Sharif emphasized that the future is skill-based, and thus invites recognition of

performance capacities that are in line with changing industrial needs. While Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming the nature of work, it is also generating new opportunities in sectors spanning machine learning, healthcare, renewable energy, information technology, and advanced manufacturing. Drawing lessons from Singapore's transformation into a knowledge-based economy, he argued that Pakistan must align its education and technical training systems with evolving global market requirements to drive sustainable economic progress. Discussing Pakistan's labor mobility strategy, Mr. Sharif underscored the value of the Saudi-Pakistan Economic Cooperation Framework (SPECF) and the Human Resource Deployment Plan (2025-2039), which seeks to deploy one million Pakistani workers to Saudi Arabia. Effective labor force gains demand a studied assessment of emerging priorities within the Kingdom's US\$1.4 trillion-strong economy, which is supported by low inflation and unemployment. However, the Saudi economy continues to rapidly diversify beyond oil through investments in tourism, logistics,

technology, healthcare, sports, and renewable energy. While acknowledging the significance of Saudi Arabia's US\$500 billion Public Investment Fund (PIF), he emphasized that Pakistan should prioritize attracting greenfield investments that establish new industries, create jobs, and expand exports rather than relying solely on portfolio investments. Mr. Sharif cautioned that Pakistan receives "nearly US\$40 billion in remittances" but that these inflows "primarily support foreign exchange reserves and cannot replace productive investment." He proposed several innovative models of regional cooperation, including triangular partnerships in which Pakistani professionals are trained domestically, collaborate with technologically advanced partners such as China, and contribute to projects in third country markets. Mr. Sharif advocated a shift from "brain drain" to "brain circulation," encouraging policies that enable skilled Pakistanis working abroad to return as entrepreneurs, investors, and innovators. The event concluded with actionable policy recommendations and an interactive Question and Answers (Q&A) session.

Envoy Moin ul Haque assumes charge as DG ISSI



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Moin ul Haque has assumed charge as Director-General of the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI). He took over from Ambassador Sohail Mahmood upon completion of his term. Ambassador Moin ul Haque brings with him vast experience of diplomacy and high-level decision-making. He served in the Foreign Service of Pakistan for nearly 35 years on key assignments both at Headquarters and Missions abroad. His last assignment was Pakistan's Ambassador to China (2020-2023). Prior to that, he also served as Ambassador to France (2016-2020) and Consul General in Vancouver

(2007-2010). He has also served as Additional Secretary (Administration), Chief of Protocol, Director-General (Europe) and Director (Foreign Secretary's Office). Earlier in his diplomatic career, he served in Pakistan Embassies in Brussels, Colombo, Ankara and also as a Counsellor at Pakistan's Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York.

Pak invites Chinese investment in slaughterhouses

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has invited Chinese companies to invest in modern slaughterhouses and meat processing facilities as part of efforts to expand halal meat exports to China, Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain said. Speaking at a high-level meeting with a visiting Chinese delegation in Islamabad, the minister said Pakistan's large livestock population, strategic location and growing capacity to produce high-quality halal meat position the country as a strong partner for meeting China's increasing demand for imported meat. According to a Gwadar Pro's report, he encouraged Chinese investors to establish state-of-the-art slaughterhouses and meat processing plants equipped with modern technology, international hygiene standards, cold-chain infrastructure and traceability systems to facilitate exports to China and other global markets. Rana Tanveer said the livestock sector is a key pillar of Pakistan's agricultural economy, contributing to value addition, rural employment and national economic growth. He noted that investment in modern meat processing would help increase exports, create jobs, improve food safety and quality, and raise incomes for livestock farmers. The minister said the government is committed to providing a business-friendly environment, policy support and investment facilitation for foreign investors in the agriculture and livestock sectors. Members of the Chinese delegation expressed interest in cooperating with Pakistan on meat processing, technology transfer, quality assurance and export-oriented infrastructure development. Both sides agreed to strengthen technical cooperation, promote business-to-business linkages and work together to meet regulatory and sanitary requirements necessary for expanding meat exports.—DNA

Rain, windstorms likely from July 18

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) on Friday forecast widespread rain, windstorms and thundershowers across most parts of the country from July 18 to 25, warning of heavy to very heavy rainfall, flash floods, landslides and urban flooding in vulnerable areas. According to the PMD, monsoon currents from the Arabian Sea are continuously penetrating the upper and central parts of the country and are likely to strengthen over the weekend, while a western disturbance is expected to approach the upper parts of the country on Monday, enhancing rainfall activity. The Met Office said Kashmir is likely to receive rain, windstorms and thundershowers, with scattered heavy to very heavy falls, from the evening of July 18 to July 25 with occasional gaps. Areas expected to be affected include Neelum Valley, Muzaffarabad, Rawalakot, Poonch, Hattian, Bagh, Haveli, Sudhanoti, Kotli, Bhimber and Mirpur.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, rain, windstorms and thundershowers with scattered heavy to very heavy falls are expected from the evening of July 19 to July 23 in Dir, Chitral, Swat, Kohistan, Malakand, Nowshera, Charsadda, Karak, Tank, Lakki Marwat, Swabi, Shangla, Battagram, Buner, Kohat, Kurram, Dera Ismail Khan, Bannu, North and South Waziristan, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Peshawar, Mardan and Hangu. The PMD said Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Murree, Galliat, Attock, Chakwal, Jhelum, Mandi Bahauddin, Gujrat, Gujranwala, Hafizabad, Wazirabad, Faisalabad, Khushab, Sargodha, Lahore, Sheikhupura, Sialkot, Narowal, Sahiwal, Jhang, Toba Tek Singh, Nankana Sahib, Chiniot and Okara are likely to receive rain, windstorms and thundershowers with scattered heavy to very heavy falls from the evening of July 19 to July 23. Southern and western districts, including Noorpur Thal, Bhakkar, Mianwali, Layyah, Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar, Dera Ghazi Khan, Multan, Khanewal, Lodhran, Muzaffargarh, Kot Addu, Rahim Yar Khan and Rajanpur, are expected to receive rainfall from July 20 to 24.—APP

Pak-China friendship hospital donates medicines

ISLAMABAD: Pak-China Friendship Hospital Gwadar, as part of its commitment to social welfare, has donated medicines to the Hoth Bakhsh Allah Welfare Trust. The Trust's management expressed its appreciation and thanked the hospital for its generous support. On this occasion, the Trust's Chief Communication Officer (CCO), Shah Ibn Sheen, met with the hospital's Head of Campus (HOC), Dr. Nasir Sheikh, and Deputy Manager Sir

Nadeel Baloch to seek cooperation for a free medical camp planned in the B-Areas of Gwadar. According to Gwadar Pro, during the meeting, it was highlighted that the Hoth Bakhsh Allah Welfare Trust has been providing healthcare services to remote and underserved communities for the past 15 years without any government assistance. On the instructions of the Trust's Chairman, Hoth Abdul Ghafoor, a free medical camp will be organized in

dunyo

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JOINING HANDS FOR JOURNALISM

Daily Islamabad POST / DNA News Agency & DUNYO News Agency Sign Historic MOU



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.

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Briefs

5,000 booked
for lane
violation

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has intensified its campaign against lane discipline violations, taking legal action against more than 5,000 motorists during the past week as part of efforts to improve road safety, ensure smooth traffic flow and reduce accidents in the federal capital. An official told APP on Friday that challan tickets were issued to over 5,000 drivers found violating lane discipline, while the ITP Education Wing simultaneously launched an extensive awareness campaign across major roads, educational institutions and public places, reaching more than 100,000 citizens with messages on road safety and compliance with traffic laws. ITP Motorists To further strengthen public awareness, Islamabad Traffic Police organized a road safety walk from Jinnah Avenue to Express Chowk. The walk was attended by Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Kainat Azhar Khan, Director ITP FM Ayesha Jamil, members of civil society, journalists, students and a large number of citizens, who pledged support for promoting responsible road behaviour. Speaking to the media after the walk, CTO Kainat said lane discipline violations, wrong-way driving, riding motorcycles without helmets, the use of non-standard number plates, illegal parking and overloading were not merely traffic violations but serious threats to human life. CTO Kainat She said Islamabad Traffic Police would continue indiscriminate legal action against serious traffic offenders and would not allow anyone to endanger the lives and property of road users. The CTO Kainat said road safety workshops, awareness walks and educational campaigns were aimed at creating greater public awareness and fostering a culture of responsible driving. —APP

Sherry pays
tribute to
security
forces for
successful
operation

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Vice President Senator Sherry Rehman on Friday paid tribute to the security forces for killing 24 terrorists during an operation in Bannu, praising their courage and unwavering commitment to safeguarding the nation. In a statement, she said the brave personnel fighting against terrorism were the pride of the entire nation and had rendered remarkable sacrifices for the country's peace and security. Sherry Rehman said the people of Pakistan stood shoulder to shoulder with the security forces in the fight against terrorism and would not hesitate to make any sacrifice for its complete eradication. —APP

Danyal calls
out 'selective
lectures'
for Pakistan
on minority
rights

ISLAMABAD: Federal Parliamentary Secretary for the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Danyal Chaudhry on Friday called out "selective lectures" directed at Pakistan regarding minority rights during its GSP+ assessment. "Pakistan's GSP+ assessment has once again become a platform for selective lectures on minority rights," the parliamentary secretary stated in a post on X, highlighting religious tolerance and inter-faith harmony in the country. "Pakistan with a 97% Muslim population has got 2,189 churches (1 per 1,206 Christians), 732 temples (1 per 5,669 Hindus) and 58 gurdwaras (1 per 159 Sikhs)," he said, contrasting this with the UK, which, he noted, has one mosque for every 2,249 Muslims. In Pakistan, neither the state nor society discriminated against religious minorities, he added. —APP

ERC orders high alert as
monsoon risks intensify

The Committee undertook a comprehensive review of preparedness measures put in place across the country. It assessed contingency plans, deployment of emergency response resources, coordination with district administrations, public awareness initiatives and arrangements for timely response to emerging emergencies during the monsoon season

ISLAMABAD: The Emergency Response Committee, constituted on the directions of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to oversee national preparedness and coordinated response during Monsoon 2026, on Friday directed all federal and provincial stakeholders to maintain a high state of operational readiness as it reviewed monsoon preparedness, emergency response plans and inter agency coordination at the National Emergencies Operation Centre of the National Disaster Management Authority Headquarters in Islamabad. The Committee's third meeting was chaired by Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal and attended by Chairman NDMA Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik, HI(M), senior NDMA officials, representatives of federal ministries, departments and other key stakeholders. The Committee undertook a comprehensive review of preparedness measures put in place across the country. It assessed contingency plans, deployment of emergency response resources, coordination with district administrations, public awareness initiatives and arrangements for timely response to emerging emergencies during the monsoon season. The status of relief supplies, emergency communication mechanisms, evacuation plans and inter agency coordination was also reviewed to ensure swift and effective response capabilities. Chairman NDMA Inam Haider briefed the participants on the round the clock operational activities of the National Emergencies Operation Centre. Haider informed the



Committee that the Centre continues to monitor weather developments through its integrated multi hazard monitoring system and is issuing timely impact based forecasts, advisories and early warnings to all stakeholders. The Committee directed all concerned departments to remain on high alert throughout the monsoon season. It laid particular emphasis on strengthening institutional coordination, ensuring unin-

terrupted communication among response agencies, protecting vulnerable communities and critical infrastructure, and maintaining the operational readiness of rescue and relief resources. Preparedness and contingency plans presented by the Ministry of Communications, Ministry of Power and WAPDA also came under review during the meeting. Addressing the participants, Professor Ahsan Iqbal underscored

the need for seamless coordination among all response agencies to enable timely decision making and rapid mobilization of resources whenever required. The meeting reaffirmed the Emergency Response Committee's commitment to strengthening national coordination and ensuring a unified response mechanism to safeguard lives, livelihoods and critical infrastructure throughout Monsoon 2026. —DNA

Media-policy
collaboration
discussed for uplift

ISLAMABAD: Prominent political and media figure Kazi Asad Abid visited the office of Freedom Gate Prosperity (FGP) on Friday and held detailed discussions on media and policy collaboration for sustainable development. The meeting was attended by FGP Chief Executive Officer Muhammad Anwar, former Managing Director of Daily Pakistan Islamabad and noted businessman Pervaiz Zulfiqar, Strategic Policy Advisor at FGP Shafqat Aziz, and Head of Economy at FGP Dr. Shahbaz Tariq. The participants exchanged views on governance, economic reforms, climate resilience, the media's role in national development, and opportunities for collaborative initiatives. Speaking on the occasion, Kazi Asad Abid said the media must move beyond event-based reporting and play a more effective role in shaping informed national discourse on key issues. He emphasized that meaningful progress depends on sustained dialogue, institutional cooperation, and informed public participation. Welcoming the visiting delegation, Muhammad Anwar highlighted FGP's commitment to promoting evidence-based policy dialogue and multi-stakeholder partnerships. He said sustainable development could only be achieved through stronger collaboration among public institutions, academia, the private sector, the media, and development organizations. Pervaiz Zulfiqar stressed that responsible journalism and constructive public engagement are essential for strengthening democratic institutions and fostering informed debate on national priorities. Shafqat Aziz highlighted the growing importance of strategic communication in advancing national development objectives. He said stronger collaboration between development organizations and media institutions could enhance public understanding of climate change, economic empowerment, governance reforms, and environmental sustainability. Dr. Shahbaz Tariq emphasized that research-driven policy dialogue and informed economic discourse are essential for developing practical solutions that promote inclusive growth and create greater opportunities for Pakistan's youth. The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to strengthening collaboration in policy dialogue, development communication, capacity-building, and public awareness initiatives aimed at promoting Pakistan's sustainable and inclusive development. —APP

IESCO notifies power
suspension programme

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Friday issued a power suspension programme for Saturday in various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to an IESCO spokesperson, in Islamabad Circle, electricity supply will remain suspended from 5 am to 10 am, Tramri, Lehrtrar, ISI, Chattha, Rehara, feeders. In Rawalpindi City Circle, power supply will remain suspended from 06:30 am to 02:00 pm, Chairing Cross, Millatabad, Askari-XI feeders. Similarly, in Attock Circle, electricity supply will remain suspended from 6 am to 10 am, Fawara Chowk, Feeder. In Jhelum Circle, power will remain suspended from 6 am to 10 am, Saeela, Karyala, Metro City, Grand City, Bolani, feeders. In Chakwal Circle, from 6 am to 10 am, Khanpur, Jhand Khan Zada, Feeders. In GSO Circle, power supply will remain suspended from 5 am to 7 am, Mumtaz, Potohar, Banni, M. Steel Mill, Inter School, SH Steel, Cap-

ital Steel, New PTN, Muhammadi, Ameen Town, I-10/1, Faisal Floor, Noor Floor, Exchange, I-10 sector, Furnace, KH.S.Syed, P.T.N, United Steel, PTV-2, Industrial-1, Katarian, Warid, Holy Family, New United, M. Hussain, Industrial-2, Fazal Steel, MG Steel Mill, Ittehad Steel, Industrial-3, EVI-II, from 06:30 am to 05:00 pm, RA Bazar, AWT, Mall Road, AFIC, Tench Bhatta, MH-3, Qasim Market, CMH-1, CMH 2, Sprint Mall, Kiyani Road, Army Flats, MH-1, MH-2, Zeeshan Colony, Haider road, NLC, Canning Road, Hospital Road, NIASR, New GHQ, from 08:00 am to 01:00 pm, 200KV Burhan Tarbela Circuit-II alongwith Bubari-I, from 09:00 am to 04:00 pm, 132kv AWC HMC Taxila and 132KV Sangjani-Burhan, from 08:00 am to 06:00 pm, 132KV Kahuta City- Palandri, 132KV New Wah-Bahtermore along with related earth switch, and surrounding areas. IESCO apologized to consumers for the temporary inconvenience and said electricity supply would be restored before the scheduled time if the maintenance work was completed earlier than expected. —APP

Sardai gains popularity as
summer heat intensifies

ISLAMABAD: As temperatures continue to soar during the peak summer season, people across Pakistan are increasingly turning to traditional beverages to stay cool and hydrated. Among them, Sardai remains one of the most popular and refreshing drinks, offering relief from the scorching heat while providing a rich blend of nutrients. Prepared from a mixture of almonds, pistachios, melon seeds, fennel seeds, poppy seeds, black pepper, cardamom, rose petals, and milk, Sardai has been a cherished part of South Asian culinary traditions for generations. Served chilled, it is especially popular during the hottest months of the year and on festive occasions. Street vendors, beverage shops and dry fruit stores across the country witness a significant increase in Sardai sales during heatwaves. In Islamabad, long queues can be seen at well-known stalls serving freshly prepared Sardai, reflecting its enduring popularity despite the widespread availability of carbonated soft drinks and energy beverages. The ready-to-make Sardai mix is also witnessing growing demand in the federal capital. Dry fruit shops are reporting increased sales of the traditional blend, while online stores are making it more accessible to consumers seeking a convenient way to prepare the drink at home. Ahmad, a shopkeeper at Aabpara Market, told APP that social media has played a major role in boosting Sardai's popularity, with many people opting for ready-made mixes available in the market. "People are becoming more health-conscious and prefer Sardai because it is packed with nutritious ingredients while providing a

natural cooling effect. It has become one of the most sought-after drinks during the summer season," he said. He added that the rising demand has made Sardai a profitable seasonal business and encouraged aspiring entrepreneurs to consider selling the traditional beverage during the peak summer months. Ayesha, a nutrition expert at a private hospital in Blue Area, said Sardai provided instant energy while helping the body remain hydrated. She explained that the nuts and seeds used in its preparation are rich in healthy fats, protein, vitamins and essential minerals, while fennel and cardamom are known for their cooling and digestive properties. The drink also contains natural antioxidants that contribute to overall health and well-being. However, she advised moderation, noting that Sardai was often prepared with sugar and full-fat milk, which may increase calorie intake, particularly for people with diabetes or those trying to manage their weight. She recommended preparing the drink with less sugar and low-fat milk to make it a healthier option without compromising its nutritional value. Beyond its refreshing taste, Sardai represented Pakistan's rich culinary heritage. Unlike artificially flavoured beverages, it was prepared from natural ingredients and continues to be valued for both its nutritional benefits and cultural significance. As climate change contributes to longer and more intense summers, health experts advise people to stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water and consuming natural beverages such as Sardai alongside seasonal fruits. —APP

IRSA releases
265,800
cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 265,800 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 288,500 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam stood at 1505.11 feet, which was 103.11 feet higher than the dead level of 1402.00 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 182,200 cusecs and 162,100 cusecs, respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1173.30 feet, which was 123.30 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 22,600 cusecs and 20,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 203,300, 182,500, 128,700, and 63,200 cusecs, respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 31,700 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera, and 22,700 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala. —APP

RCCI partners
with New York
trade mission

RAWALPINDI: President, Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), Usman Shaukat on Friday held a meeting with Pakistan's Trade and Investment Counsellor in New York, Adnan Mehmood Awan, to dig out fresh avenues for expanding bilateral trade and attracting foreign direct investment (FDI). The high-level meeting focused on promoting trade facilitation, expanding business-to-business (B2B) collaboration, and exploring untapped markets to increase trade flows between Pakistan and the United States. During the discussions, the RCCI President highlighted the immense potential of Pakistani enterprises, noting that local industries were fully equipped to meet international standards if provided with direct market access. He observed that strengthening commercial ties with the US remained a cornerstone for boosting national exports, adding that both sides need to work closely to simplify trade procedures. According to the chamber's spokesman, Usman Shaukat underlined the need for sustained interaction between the private sectors of both countries, suggesting that regular exchange of trade delegations would help identify new economic horizons. He lauded the proactive role played by the Pakistani Consulate General in New York in facilitating domestic exporters and organizing promotional activities in the US market. —APP

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Iran threatens the Red Sea to create a second chokepoint

DR. ABDEL AZIZ ALUWAI SHEG

In its latest bid to escalate, Iran has gone all-out. After closing the Strait of Hormuz, on Wednesday it threatened to go after other waterways in the region to stop energy exports, as reported by Iran's official media. The escalation in Yemen is part of that plan. Tehran seems to have been especially enraged by the new channel Oman has provided for safe passage through its own territorial waters in the Strait of Hormuz. After Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi failed to persuade Oman to abandon this effort, Iran attacked ships crossing the Omani channel, ships elsewhere on the other side of the Gulf and other targets hundreds of miles away in a country that has, for decades, stood by Tehran when most countries abandoned it and mediated its numerous conflicts with the international community. Iran also repeatedly attacked other Gulf Cooperation Council states and Jordan. Stating the obvious, Tehran on Sunday announced that it was no longer bound by the memorandum of understanding it signed with the US. Part of the escalation is due to Iran's belief that the agreement gave it full control of the Strait of Hormuz, which was not how the US or mediators understood the deal, as that would be contrary to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, which bars any country from controlling any international waterway.

As it decided to escalate in the Gulf, Iran also opened a new front in Yemen. For months, the Houthis had been threatening to join the fray. Barrages of fiery speeches were directed at Saudi Arabia and the internationally recognized government of President Rashad Al-Alimi. Almost daily, the Houthis threatened to attack the Kingdom unless it paid them untold amounts of money to fund the salaries of the same forces they planned to use against their neighbor to the north. Part of the escalation is due to Iran's belief that the agreement gave it full control of the Strait of Hormuz. The escalation in Yemen started with dispatching a flight by Mahan Air to Sanaa without seeking permission from the Yemeni government—a basic requirement under international civil aviation rules in any other part of the world—thus jeopardizing the people on board.

Mahan Air is no ordinary carrier. It is owned by a private entity controlled by the Quds Force, the notorious arm of Iran's Revolutionary Guards. It was instrumental in transporting weapons and military personnel, including terrorists, to, among others, the Assad regime in Syria, Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen. The airline is sanctioned by the US and EU. In addition, many countries, including GCC states, have banned the airline from using their airports or airspace. The government of Yemen is among those to have barred Mahan Air. Yet the airline persisted in violating the government's repeated orders to turn back. After government forces disabled Sanaa Airport, the flight's original

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destination, it landed in another airport controlled by the Houthis.

Besides its violation of civil aviation agreements, the brazen disregard of Yemen's law and its government's clear instructions to turn back was also a clear violation of UN Security Council Resolution 2216, which imposed a sweeping arms embargo on the Houthis. Resolution 2216 was adopted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, meaning that force could be used to enforce it.

After the Mahan Air incident, the Houthis on Monday launched ballistic missiles against civilian targets in southern Saudi Arabia—a clear violation of the four-year-old truce mediated by the UN. Since this truce started in April 2022, the Houthis had avoided, with rare exceptions, targeting Saudi territory. That they have now returned to attacking the country is a serious development.

Monday's Houthi attack on Saudi Arabia can be seen as part of a new Iranian escalation in the Red Sea and the Bab Al-Mandab Strait. For months, the Houthis have threatened to block the strait but Iran apparently reined them in.

However, after reclosing the Strait of Hormuz, Iranian officials started to put other waterways in their crosshairs. On Wednesday, they threatened to close "all other export corridors that benefit the US and its allies," as per a Revolutionary Guards statement carried by Iran's state media.

Echoing Iran's declaration, a Houthi spokesman was quoted by Iran's official media warning that they were ready to close the Bab Al-Mandab Strait, a move that he said would raise oil prices to \$200 per barrel.

If Iran and the Houthis carry out their threats and close Bab Al-Mandab or attack ships in the Red Sea, they would put at risk significant amounts of international trade. While trade crossing the Bab Al-Mandab Strait has dropped significantly since Houthi attacks on shipping started in 2023, as much as about 15 percent of global maritime trade went through it in 2025. The International Energy Agency estimates that about 4.2 million barrels of crude oil and petroleum liquids crossed the waterway daily last year, or about 5 percent of international production. In the final quarter of 2025, about 40 percent of the nearly 3,400 ships passing through the Red Sea were carrying oil and gas, including 1,330 oil tankers and 88 liquefied natural gas ships. General cargo made up another 40 percent, carrying agricultural commodities, coal and iron ore, among others. Much of the trade between Asia and Europe goes through the Red Sea.

So, look for shortages of key commodities and additional spikes in prices all over the world—although not the \$200 oil price as the Houthis dreamed up—if Iran and the Houthis carry out their threats. These developments make it urgent to go back to the implementation of UNSC Resolution 2216, especially as it relates to monitoring compliance with the arms embargo, which Mahan Air has now broken in broad daylight. While diplomatic efforts must resume, the international community, including China and Russia, must speak with one voice against escalation in the Red Sea and the Bab Al-Mandab Strait. A number of UN bodies have been created to monitor compliance with the arms embargo against the Houthis, such as the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism, established in 2015, and the UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement, established by the Security Council in 2018. The Houthis have prevented these two bodies from carrying out their activities in Yemen, rendering them futile. In light of the new escalation and renewed threats from Iran and the Houthis, they must be empowered to carry out their duties without hindrance.

Is Israel the Biggest Threat to the US?

Qamar Bashir



The American Israel Public Affairs Committee functions as a powerful lobbying force that has effectively shaped US foreign policy to serve Israeli interests, sometimes against American interests, with documented "revolving-door"

relationships between AIPAC, the US government, and the Israeli government.

Unlike other countries seeking to influence US policy, Israel has legal and institutionalized access through these organizations, giving it a level of domestic influence that no other foreign power can match. This access extends beyond lobbying to actual legislative drafting, with critics...

FOR decades, the United States has viewed Israel as its most trusted ally in the Middle East—a beacon of democracy, a strategic bulwark, and a partner in shared values. Yet a growing body of evidence suggests this relationship has evolved into something far more complicated, raising an uncomfortable question: could Israel actually be the biggest threat to American security and sovereignty? When we examine cyber capabilities, espionage activities, influence operations, and legislative maneuvers, Israel emerges as a uniquely dangerous actor—one whose authorized access to American systems makes it more capable of doing harm than any traditional adversary. Israel's cyber warfare capabilities are widely considered among the most sophisticated in the world, with the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency rating its espionage threat against the US as "critical"—the highest designation available. The country has demonstrated this prowess through operations like the mass pager explosions in Lebanon and the Stuxnet virus, but what makes Israel uniquely threatening is that these capabilities were largely built with American assistance, meaning they understand US systems from the inside out.

This insider knowledge, combined with their own innovations, arguably gives them an asymmetric advantage over other adversaries like China or Russia, who lack the same level of authorized access to American military and intelligence infrastructure. The espionage is not hypothetical—Israel has been caught numerous times planting spyware on the phones of American Iran negotiators, attempting to place listening devices inside US Secret Service vehicles, and running the infamous Jonathan Pollard spy ring.

These incidents represent a pattern of behavior inconsistent with an ally relationship and more characteristic of an adversarial power operating against American interests. While China and Russia certainly conduct espionage against the US, neither has the same level of institutionalized access to American systems, making Israel's intelligence-gathering capabilities uniquely dangerous and harder to detect. Perhaps the most alarming development is the revelation that the Israeli government engaged Brad Parscale, Donald Trump's former campaign manager, to run a multimillion-dollar digital influence campaign targeting American conservatives to prevent them from turning against Israel. The operation escalated to the point where Vice President JD Vance publicly accused elements within the Israeli government of funding a campaign "to try to derail the negotiation" of a US-Iran deal and attacking him personally to shift American foreign policy in Israel's favor.

When a sitting US Vice President must publicly call out a foreign government for attempting to undermine American foreign policy, the relationship has moved beyond normal ally dynamics into dangerous territory.

The legislative threat is even more concrete—Section 219 of the NDAA would have effectively merged the US and Israeli military industrial bases, allowing joint weapons development and granting Israel co-ownership of American weapons systems. While the Senate blocked this proposal by a narrow 50-46 vote, the fact that nearly half of US senators supported such an unprecedented surrender of sovereignty demonstrates the depth of Israeli influence within the American legislative branch.

Prime Minister Netanyahu framed this as moving "from aid to partnership," but critics like Representative Thomas Massie called it an "unprecedented escalation of foreign involvement" that amounts to "fully capitulating our nation's autonomy to foreign influence." The American Israel Public Affairs Committee functions as a powerful lobbying force that has effectively shaped US foreign policy to serve Israeli interests, sometimes against American interests, with documented "revolving-door" relationships between AIPAC, the US government, and the Israeli government. Unlike other countries seeking to influence US policy, Israel has legal and institutionalized access through these organizations, giving it a level of domestic influence that no other foreign power can match. This access extends beyond lobbying to actual legislative drafting, with critics charging that Netanyahu runs Congress through the legislation he writes and sends to American lawmakers. The current crisis is exacerbated by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's personal legal troubles—facing corruption charges that would likely end his political career, he has been described as taking aggressive actions to secure Israel's position while simultaneously fighting for his political survival.

This introduces an unstable element into US-Israel relations: a foreign leader willing to manipulate American politics and policy to serve his personal legal and political interests, with critics arguing his aggressive policies are driven more by self-preservation than Israeli national security. The combination of capability, access, influence, and personal motivation makes Israel a uniquely dangerous actor in the American political landscape. To determine if Israel is truly the biggest threat, we must compare it to other adversaries—China remains America's primary strategic competitor with global ambitions to displace US dominance, while Russia poses an immediate military threat through its war in Ukraine and proven willingness to interfere in American elections. However, neither China nor Russia has the same level of authorized access to US military technology, intelligence systems, and governmental processes that Israel enjoys, nor do they have domestic lobbying networks as powerful as AIPAC operating on their behalf. The old adage "trust, but verify" does

not apply when you have literally integrated your defense systems with a foreign power. If "biggest threat" means greatest military potential or most expansive geopolitical ambitions, China retains that title, but if "biggest threat" means greatest capability to harm the United States from within through espionage, influence operations, and legislative capture, then Israel is at minimum among the top tier and arguably the most dangerous.

The distinction between "biggest" and "most unique" is crucial—Israel presents a threat unlike any other because it comes from an "ally" where the US has let its guard down, making it more capable of doing damage than any traditional adversary precisely because of the trust extended to it.

The Defense Department's own intelligence assessments placing Israel's espionage threat above even China and Russia confirm that this is not mere conspiracy theory but a genuine intelligence concern. If we compare any other country with influence in the United States, no nation can be more dangerous than Israel itself should the relationship turn adversarial.

This is not to say that Israel is currently an enemy or that the alliance should be abandoned, but rather that the current trajectory of ever-deepening integration without appropriate safeguards is dangerously naive and threatens American sovereignty in unprecedented ways. The central question for US policymakers is whether the current path of military integration, intelligence sharing, and legislative deference serves the American people or a foreign power with its own distinct interests.

When a foreign government can fund social media campaigns to shape American public opinion, draft legislation for US lawmakers, and threaten to derail American foreign policy when it doesn't align with its interests, the alliance has fundamentally shifted from partnership to something resembling dependency. America's founders warned against entangling alliances that could compromise sovereignty—their wisdom deserves renewed attention in this context.

Ultimately, whether Israel is the "biggest" threat depends on whether we define threat as "potential for conflict" or "capacity for harm from within." In the latter category, Israel may well be the single greatest danger to American sovereignty and security—hidden in plain sight, protected by the very alliance that makes it so dangerous, and operating with capabilities that no other nation can match.

The time for honest conversation about this relationship is now, before the integration becomes so complete that disentanglement becomes impossible.

— Press Secretary to the President (Rtd.)

Former Press Minister,
Embassy of Pakistan to France
Former Press Attaché to Malaysia
Former MD, SRBC | Michigan, USA

The Cost of Indian Expediency

Ammarah Farhat



A major reason for the degradation of trust is the Indian posturing over Palestine. India has chosen to be on the wrong side of history. Instead of sympathising with the aggrieved palestinian people, Indian foreign policy has shunned its neutral posture under the Modi regime. Modi wears the relationship with Israel on his sleeve as something to be proud of...

SOMETIMES it seems that the louder someone claims sainthood, the bigger the horns they are hiding." No other country truly finds itself in such a state of ambivalent existence but the self-proclaimed "largest democracy" of the world. Today when the global conscience has awakened to the genocidal fanaticism of the Zionist state of Israel, perhaps, conscience is too esoteric a thing for the Indian state to comprehend. Just days before Israel carried out its ignominious attacks against the people of Iran in February 2026, Narendra Modi was busy declaring Israel as the "Fatherland" of Indians. So much bonhomie with a state that stands guilty of the ethnic cleansing of the helpless people of Gaza has cost India every shred of little credibility that it ever possessed as a non-aligned nation.

A major reason for the degradation of trust is the Indian posturing over Palestine. India has chosen to be on the wrong side of history. Instead of sympathising with the aggrieved palestinian people, Indian foreign policy has shunned its neutral posture under the Modi regime. Modi wears the relationship with Israel on his sleeve as something to be proud of. That is exactly why Middle Eastern states have lost trust in India as a diplomatic and strategic partner. Wooing a state that has destabilised the entire Middle East since its inception has made India irrelevant in West Asia.

Perhaps the most far-reaching implication of India's love story with Israel is its estrangement with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Iran found itself fighting for its very existence in 2025 and 2026. Not a single word of condemnation or consolation originated from the "largest democracy of the world" against the targeted assassinations of the Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, and the top brass of the Iranian state. Legitimizing the assassination of the immensely re-

vered head of a state is the new low India foreign policy finds itself in. The people of Iran will never forget the faces who tacitly stood by the thuggery of their blood-thirsty arch-enemies. Owing to that, the dream of acting as a "counterweight" to China has lost any probability of fruition. China has filled the investment gap that India created in Iran. That is not all; India has created grave concerns for its energy supply chain in future. Iran has demonstrated the ability to choke the Strait of Hormuz with immense efficacy, and it is a no-brainer that, in a seemingly precarious future, only friendly states will have the luxury to maintain unobstructed supply of oil and gas through the crucial strait, and friendly is not how Iran perceives India in the current phase of its trial by fire.

The deafening Indian silence on the targeting of the Iranian sailors by the US on March 4, 2026, when they were returning from the naval exercises on the Indian coast of Visakhapatnam, speaks volumes for the assertion that Indian foreign policy has long left the ship of principles, and has taken its place in the transactional boat.

In South Asia itself, irony manifested itself when Modi's India tried all possible efforts to discredit and subjugate Pakistan into submission, but it only gave way to the geopolitical rise of the only nuclear power of the Islamic world. Israeli Harop drones and loitering munitions, operated by Israeli defense personnel, tried to bolster India in its bid to intimidate Pakistan during Operation Sindoor, but destiny had other plans for the region. Operation Sindoor was swept away by the tide of Operation Bunyan al Marsoos. Nothing helped establish the credibility of Chinese defense systems and Pakistan's meteoric rise as a force to be reckoned with in South Asia more than the failed bullying tac-

tics of India employed from the Israeli handbook. Pakistan showed to the world that it is not Gaza. The events that followed the May 2025 clash between the two South Asian states laid bare the new reality: The "new normal" of India was trampled over by geopolitical, geostrategic, and economic dividends paved by Pakistan's response to the Indian aggression. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia signed the momentous Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement (SMDA) on September 17, 2025 with Pakistan. PAF got orders for S400 killer, JF17 Thunder, worth billions of dollars from around the world. Pakistan emerged as the most credible mediator for the US-Iran peace process to save the world from the global economic recession. And now Pakistan is playing a key role in bringing peace to the African nation of Libya that has been reeling from the civil strife since 2011. Indian efforts to dig a grave of diplomatic isolation for Pakistan in West Asia have generated the opposite results. The world is not ready to listen to the hypocritically edifying Indian tirade against Pakistan. Cosying up with a genocidal state has tarnished the moral ascendancy cloak.

Accusing Pakistan of terrorism on one hand and being in cahoots with the Zionist state has unearthed the sinister face of the Indian state. Truly, birds of a feather flock together. Expediency coupled with anti-Muslim and anti-Pakistan sentiments have dictated the Indian tilt toward Israel, but has it been a bright chapter of the Indian foreign policy? Too far from it. As the old adage goes, "a man is known by the company he keeps", India has chosen to be a global embarrassment by romancing Israel on one side, and claiming to be a Vishwa Guru on the other.

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Briefs

Iran launches strike on US Base in Eastern Syria

"The enemies of the brave Iranian nation must know that the armed forces will not overlook the shedding of innocent blood, and will make their days black"

FROM PAGE 01
Iran's parliamentary National Security Commission chief Ibrahim Azizi said that United States attacked civilian in southern Iran, a school in Minab, a children's cancer hospital in Ahvaz and a gym in Lamerd. Azizi said the strikes and repeated attacks on residential areas reflected what he described as the "helplessness and desperation" of the US military. "The enemies of the brave Iranian nation must know that the armed forces will not overlook the shedding of innocent blood, and will make their days black," he posted on X.

Andy Burnham now set to be UK new PM

FROM PAGE 01
In it, he sketched out some of his domestic agenda, saying he wanted to oversee the "biggest rebalancing of power" from London to Britain's regions — something he believes will reduce inequality and the anger felt by "left-behind communities" who have increasingly flocked to Reform. That message of having a plan to thwart the rise of Reform won over Labour lawmakers, who feared they would lose their parliamentary seats to veteran Brexit campaigner Nigel Farage's populist party at the next national election, due by 2029. Reform has topped opinion polls for months. Some of that sheen has been tarnished in recent weeks by Farage's acceptance of funds from wealthy donors, perhaps giving Burnham an opening to revive Labour's fortunes. Yet he does not have much time. With a general election no more than three years away, Burnham will need to start implementing some of his pledges, many of which are based on long-term thinking, as quickly as possible. Nigel Wilcock, executive director at the Institute of Economic Development, an independent body representing economic development professionals, said Burnham had spent years making the case for a different approach to economic growth: "The challenge is turning that vision into a reality."

Security of Chinese in Pakistan 'paramount for us', says Shehbaz

FROM PAGE 01
multiple times in Pakistan in the past. According to data shared by the National Counter Terrorism Authority in December 2024, as many as 20 Chinese citizens had been killed and 34 injured in terror attacks in the country from 2021 until then. In 2024, five Chinese nationals working on the Dasu dam project perished in a suicide bombing in Bisham in March. In April 2022, at least four people, including three Chinese nationals, were killed while four others were injured in a suicide attack outside the University of Karachi's Confucius Institute, which was claimed by the banned Balochistan Liberation Army. Of the major attacks that have targeted Chinese citizens in Pakistan since 2021, a major one was when at least 12 persons, including nine Chinese engineers and two Frontier Corps personnel, were killed when a bus was attacked near the Dasu hydropower plant in KP's Upper Kohistan district in July 2021.

Trump to attend World Cup final on Sunday: White House

Trump confirmed earlier this month that he asked FIFA's Infantino to review a decision to hand a red card to star US striker Folarin Balogun during a game against Bosnia

DNA

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump will attend Sunday's World Cup final between Spain and Argentina, the White House said, saving his first appearance at the tournament for its grand finale. "His attendance will cap what has been the most watched, most secure, and most successful World Cup in American history," Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt told a briefing on Thursday. "This is a fitting conclusion to a tournament that showcased America's ability to host the world on the grandest stage."

The US leader will also attend a reception for football's world governing body FIFA at Trump Tower in New York on Friday, Leavitt said. FIFA President Gianni Infantino had announced in June that Trump would attend the final in New Jersey and present the trophy to the winners, but it had not been confirmed by the White House. Leavitt said she did not know whether Trump would be supporting Argentina or Spain, after he criticized the European nation at a NATO summit last week for failing to help with the Iran war. While Trump has not attended any World Cup games so far, he has been involved in the tournament in a more controversial

way. Trump confirmed earlier this month that he asked FIFA's Infantino to review a decision to hand a red card to star US striker Folarin Balogun during a game against Bosnia. FIFA suspended Balogun's one-game ban ahead of the Americans' next match, against Belgium. Despite Balogun's presence on the field, the hosts were embarrassed in a 4-1 blowout. Trump has repeatedly claimed credit for securing the United States the right to co-host the 2026 World Cup along with Canada and Mexico, a decision made by FIFA in his first term. Infantino has meanwhile cultivated a close relationship with Trump, awarding him with a

newly created FIFA peace prize at the World Cup draw in Washington last year, months before the US launched military action against Venezuela and Iran. Letting Trump present the World Cup trophy follows controversy surrounding the presentation of the Club World Cup to English club Chelsea after their victory over Paris Saint-Germain at the same stadium in New Jersey last year. Trump handed the trophy to Chelsea captain Reece James, but then failed to leave the stage, meaning he initially took part in the team's celebrations alongside bemused players. He later kept a replica of the trophy in his office.

Referee Ismail Elfath's sajda goes viral after World Cup semi-final

Fans praise Moroccan-born American official's gesture of humility after Argentina's 2-1 win



REFEREE Ismail Elfath's act of prostration, or sajda, after Argentina's World Cup semi-final win over England has gone viral, with fans praising the Moroccan-born American official's gesture of humility and gratitude. Elfath was seen performing an act of prostration after Argentina's 2-1 comeback victory, which sent Lionel Messi's side into the World Cup final against Spain. Born in Casablanca, Elfath moved to the United States at the age of 18 after win-

ning a Diversity Immigrant Visa. He has officiated in Major League Soccer since 2012, became a Fifa-listed referee in 2016 and has twice been named MLS Referee of the Year. He was also selected for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, where he served as fourth official for the final between Argentina and France. Elfath's appointment for the England-Argentina match also made him the first American to referee a World Cup semi-final. However, his

handling of the match came under scrutiny after several contentious decisions during a physical first half. Former PGMOL chief Keith Hackett criticised Elfath for not issuing an early yellow card to Argentina midfielder Enzo Fernandez after a head-high challenge on England's Elliot Anderson. Critics said the decision helped set the tone for a tense match marked by frequent fouls and repeated appeals from England players. The decision drew further

attention after Fernandez later scored Argentina's equaliser in the 85th minute, cancelling out Anthony Gordon's 55th-minute opener. Lautaro Martinez then completed Argentina's comeback with a stoppage-time header. Elfath's appointment had already prompted debate online because Messi's teams were 5-0 in matches in which Elfath had worked in some capacity. Critics used the statistic to claim favouritism towards Argentina, though no evidence of bias has been presented. Supporters of Elfath have pointed to his experience and record in major matches, while critics argue that the appointment created an optics problem for Fifa before such a high-profile fixture. After the match, Messi dismissed allegations that Argentina had benefited from refereeing decisions, saying the team's success was built on consistency, effort and quality on the pitch. — APP

PSB issues facts to clarify reports on HEC Baseball C'ship

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) has taken notice of reports circulating regarding an isolated incident that occurred following the closing ceremony of the HEC Inter-Varsity Women Baseball Championship, which concluded successfully on 13 July 2026. The championship was jointly organized by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and the Pakistan Federation Baseball (PFB), while PSB facilitated the event by providing the playing venue and accommodation for participating players and officials, said a press release. Following the prize distribution ceremony, a brief altercation occurred between members of two participating teams due to a mutual disagreement. Officials of HEC and PSB on site intervened immediately, resolved the matter on the spot and ensured that the situation was brought under control without any further incident. The PSB wishes to clarify that the incident was isolated, was promptly resolved and did not affect the successful conduct of the championship in any way. The event concluded peacefully, with the participation of women athletes from universities across the country in a safe and competitive environment.

The PSB believes that some reports have presented the incident without adequate context, creating an impression that does not accurately reflect what transpired. Balanced and fact-based reporting is essential to ensure that isolated incidents do not overshadow the successful organization of national sporting events or discourage the promotion of women's sports in Pakistan. The PSB remains committed to providing a safe, professional and supportive environment for athletes and will continue working closely with HEC, national sports federations and all stakeholders to uphold the highest standards of sportsmanship, discipline and event management. — APP

Saudi Football Federation sets election date

JEDDAH: The Saudi Arabian Football Federation has announced elections for a new president and board of directors will take place on Aug. 30. The elections follow the resignation of its president, Yasser Al-Mishehal, who stepped down after the Kingdom's group-stage exit from the 2026 FIFA World Cup. SAFF's election committee approved the timetable for the 2026-2030 electoral cycle, with voting to take place during an extraordinary general assembly meeting. Al-Mishehal's resignation comes after seven years at the helm of Saudi football. Announcing his departure, he said he accepted full responsibility for the national team's performance at the 2026 World Cup and that his decision was intended to allow for a new chapter in the development of Saudi football. Saudi Arabia finished bottom of its World Cup group with two points after drawing against Uruguay and Cape Verde and losing to Spain. Under SAFF regulations, candidates for the presidency must have at least two years of leadership experience in either domestic or international football in the previous five years. Candidates must also hold a university degree, demonstrate proficiency in English, possess Saudi nationality and reside in the Kingdom. They should also have no record of expulsion or suspension from a sports club, federation or governing body, be aged between 28 and 70, and have no convictions or disciplinary findings relating to dishonesty, integrity or breaches of trust. — APP

National Chess Championship concludes at Pakistan Sports Complex

ISLAMABAD: The Chess Federation of Pakistan concluded the 34th National Men's Chess Championship and the 10th National Women's Chess Championship at the Pakistan Sports Complex in Islamabad. Zaman Sohaib of the Higher Education Commission and Punjab's Fariha Siddiq won the national titles after outperforming 250 players from across Pakistan in the country's premier chess competition. Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry attended the closing ceremony as Chief Guest and distributed prizes among the winners, while senior parliamentarians, government officials and sports leaders participated as Guests of Honour. Zaman Sohaib secured the men's national title with five points, while Punjab's M Zarwais Shabbkhez finished second with 4.5 points. AR Akhtar of the Higher Education Commission claimed third place on tie break after also scoring 4.5 points. Fariha Siddiq remained unbeaten throughout the women's championship to claim the national title with 10.5 points. Zainubia Wasif finished runner up with nine points, while Javeria secured third place with eight points. The championship showcased some of Pakistan's finest chess talent and highlighted the growing popularity of the sport across the country. Addressing the closing ceremony, Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry said Pakistan's stature at the international level was steadily rising and reaffirmed the government's commitment to pro-

moting sports, nurturing talent and creating opportunities for young athletes. He lauded Chess Federation of Pakistan President Syed Zeeshan Ali Naqvi for his contributions to Pakistani sports and expressed confidence that the federation would further strengthen chess in the country under his leadership. Federal Secretary for Inter Provincial Coordination Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani congratulated the Chess Federation of Pakistan on successfully organising the championship and assured continued government support for the promotion of chess in Pakistan. The Guests of Honour included Federal Secretary for Inter Provincial Coordination Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani, Member of the National Assembly, President of the Young Parliamentarians Forum and Chairperson of the National Assembly Standing Committee on National Heritage and Culture Syeda Nosheen Iftikhar, Senator Nuzhat Sadiq, Member of the National Assembly and Parliamentary Secretary for National Heritage and Culture Farah Naz Akbar, Parliamentary Secretary for Federal Education and Professional Training Wajha Qamar, Prime Minister's Coordinator Rana Ehsan Afzal Khan, Chess Federation of Pakistan President Syed Zeeshan Ali Naqvi, Vice President Rehan Azam and President of the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists Afzal Butt. Syeda Nosheen Iftikhar announced a cash award of Rs100,000 for specially abled player Saeaba Shah and Rs25,000 for the oldest participant of the championship. — APP

2026 World Cup final is also about the time Spain's De la Fuente taught Argentina boss Scaloni

"I've been lucky enough to teach various coaching courses," De la Fuente recalled during Euro 2024

DUBAI: Sunday's FIFA World Cup final has been billed as a showdown pitting Lionel Messi against Lamine Yamal, defending champions Argentina against European champions Spain; and perhaps the final appearance of football's greatest player in the sport's premier showcase. Yet one of the most intriguing stories behind the match has little to do with the players. Before Luis de la Fuente and Lionel Scaloni became two of international football's most respected coaches, the Spain manager found himself teaching the Argentine during UEFA Pro License coaching courses organized by the Spanish Football Federation. As an instructor, De la Fuente taught subjects including the evolution of football and team building, with Scaloni among the aspiring coaches who attended his classes before embarking on his own managerial career. "I've been lucky enough to teach various coaching courses," De la Fuente recalled during Euro 2024. "We taught this generation of footballers like Xavi Hernandez, Xabi Alonso and Raul, football stars who wanted to become coaches, and I had the luck to train Lionel Scaloni among them." De la Fuente has continued to speak warmly of Scaloni over the years, describing him as a friend and admitting before the semifinal that he would relish the opportunity to meet Argentina in the final. That possibility became reality after Messi inspired Argentina's dramatic comeback victory over England, setting up a meeting between two coaches whose paths crossed long before they reached football's biggest stage. The connection adds another dimension to what already promises to be one of the most compelling World Cup finals in recent memory. Both coaches inherited national teams



facing questions about their future, both arrived with relatively limited experience at senior international level, and both responded by building united squads capable of competing with the world's best.

Their teams, however, have reached the final in very different ways. Spain have been the tournament's great neutralizers. Their 2-0 semifinal victory over France extended an unbeaten run of 37 matches, equaling Italy's European record in men's international football, and reinforced the belief that De la Fuente's side have become the benchmark in world football. After eliminating France, the Spain coach said his players were "feeling unbeatable" and insisted Les Bleus had faced "the best team in the world." The results support that confidence. Spain have conceded only once while eliminating Portugal, Belgium and France, repeatedly limiting some of the tournament's strongest attacks. De la Fuente's influence also goes beyond tactics. Before taking charge of the senior team in 2022, he spent over a decade in Spain's youth system, winning the European under-19 and under-21 titles and Olympic silver in Tokyo. Several key players, including Rodri, Pedri, Dani Olmo, Mikel Merino and Mikel Oyarzabal, had already played under him before reaching the senior side. Rather than simply inheriting this generation, he helped shape many of the players now driving Spain's success. Argentina's journey to the final has followed a different script. While Spain have imposed control over matches, Argentina have repeatedly found ways to survive them. The defending champions needed extra time to overcome Cape Verde, Egypt and Switzerland before producing another dramatic comeback against England in Wednesday's semifinal. — APP

Govt shifts to daily fuel price revision mechanism

FROM PAGE 01
futures LCOc1 up 0.6% at \$84.75 a barrel, while US crude CLc1 advanced 1.1% to \$79.8 per barrel. He said the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) would determine fuel prices daily, with updated rates to be published on its website. Expressing concern over renewed tensions in the Middle East, the minister said the conflict heightened uncertainty in global energy markets. He noted that international diesel prices had risen sharply following the latest hostilities, increasing from around \$110 per barrel to \$140 per barrel. Malik said the government continued its targeted fuel subsidy programme, but acknowledged that consumers were still feeling the impact of higher fuel costs. He added that petroleum and carbon support levies on petrol and diesel remained lower than previous levels, while the government was also moving towards the deregulation of petroleum products. Addressing the news conference, Tarar said the latest increase in domestic fuel prices was linked to regional developments and volatility in international oil markets. He added that Pakistan's energy requirements were met through imported cargoes from various countries. The information minister said the country had not experienced any energy shortages due to the government's policies. He stressed that oil marketing companies (OMC) were operating under strict regulatory oversight and warned that no one would be allowed to engage in hoarding. Tarar added that many countries immediately pass changes in petroleum prices on to consumers, describing the practice as a common feature of global energy markets.

Ishaq Dar concludes his China visit

FROM PAGE 01
The signing ceremony was preceded by a banquet hosted by President Xi Jinping in honour of the visiting delegations. The Deputy Prime Minister / Foreign Minister also attended the opening ceremony of the World Artificial Intelligence Conference, which was inaugurated by President Xi Jinping. The Deputy Prime Minister / Foreign Minister also held a bilateral meeting with Foreign Minister Wang Yi. During the meeting, the Deputy Prime Minister / Foreign Minister underscored the importance of ensuring equitable access to artificial intelligence and emerging technologies. Besides reaffirming their resolve to further strengthen bilateral relations, the two leaders agreed that technological advancement should support sustainable development and the socio-economic progress of developing countries. The Deputy Prime Minister / Foreign Minister also held meetings on the sidelines of the Conference with his counterparts and other dignitaries to discuss bilateral and multilateral matters of mutual interest.

Bilawal kicks off AJK election campaign

FROM PAGE 01
"If the people of AJK give me the mandate, I promise that I will be your voice in Islamabad and globally," Bilawal said. He stressed that there was "no issue that cannot be resolved politically and peacefully", and affirmed his commitment to resolving the AJK issue. The PPP chairman further said that he had proposed the formation of a truth and reconciliation commission to address the AJK issue. "If this is acceptable to the government and the protesters in AJK, then this can be a way to resolve our issues." He also urged the protesters to halt their demonstrations and the government to refrain from taking further measures until the proposed truth and reconciliation commission was formed and completed its work.

Briefs

Rupee gains
01 paisa
against Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Friday appreciated by 01 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 277.96, compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 277.97. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 278.95 and Rs 279.15, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee decreased by Rs 0.70 and closed at Rs 317.98 from the previous day's closing of Rs 318.68, 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 a decrease of Rs 1.95 and closed at Rs 373.96 compared to the previous day's Rs 375.91. The exchange rate of the Emirati Dirham declined by 01 paisa, while the Saudi Riyal stood stagnant, closing at Rs 75.67 and Rs 74.01, respectively.—APP

Gold price
drops sharply
by Rs3,600 per
tola

LAHORE: The significant drop in gold prices in the global bullion market also affected the local market, where a major decline was recorded in the prices of both gold and silver. The price of gold per ounce in the international market fell by \$36 to \$3,994, after which a decline in the prices of precious metals was also seen in Pakistan. In the local bullion market, the price of gold per tola fell by Rs3,600 to Rs421,836, while the price of 10 grams of gold fell by Rs3,086 to Rs361,656. On the other hand, silver prices also continued to decline. Silver per tola fell by Rs 126 to Rs 6,029, while the price of 10 grams of silver fell by Rs 108 to Rs 5,168.—APP

PSX turns
bearish, sheds
over 2,320
points

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bearish trend on Friday, losing 2,320.78 points, a negative change of 1.30 percent, to close at 175,802.79 points against 178,123.57 points recorded on the previous trading day. During the session, the ready market recorded a trading volume of 621.024 million shares with a traded value of Rs29,884 billion, compared to 736.956 million shares valuing Rs34,609 billion in the previous session. The market capitalization declined to Rs19,790 trillion from Rs20,040 trillion a day earlier. Out of 497 active companies in the ready market, 101 advanced, 367 declined, and 29 remained unchanged. Cnergycio PK led the volume chart with 86.492 million shares, followed by TPL Properties with 62.545 million shares and Pak Refinery with 38.580 million shares. The top gainers included PIA Holding Company LimitedB, which surged by Rs329.17 to close at Rs18,102.67, and Khyber Textile Mills Limited, which gained Rs138.05 to settle at Rs2,199.38.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain meets with the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Sweden to Pakistan, Alexandra Berg von Linde, to discuss strengthening bilateral cooperation in agriculture, food security, livestock, research, innovation, and sustainable development.

Haroon invites Chinese companies for joint manufacturing

The SAPM said the government was creating an investment-friendly environment through the National Industrial Policy, National Tariff Policy and the Regulatory Guillotine Initiative to strengthen industrial competitiveness, simplify regulations and make Pakistan a more attractive destination for investors

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production, Haroon Akhtar Khan on Friday invited Chinese companies to not only invest in Pakistan but also innovate, manufacture and grow together. Addressing the Pakistan-China Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Business-to-Business (B2B) Investment Conference, Haroon Akhtar said Pakistan envisioned a new era of cooperation with China where both countries would jointly advance science, strengthen healthcare, create opportunities and improve the lives of millions of people. He said every great nation was transformed by leaders who refused to accept the limits of the present and possessed the courage to shape the future by turning vision into action and ambition into national progress. Paying tribute to Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, the SAPM said Pakistan was fortunate to have visionary leadership that consistently encouraged institutions to think bigger, move faster and compete globally. He said the prime minister had made it clear that Pakistan could not achieve sustainable prosperity by following outdated models and must instead embrace innovation, strengthen its industrial base, invest

in science and technology, and build partnerships capable of unlocking the country's full potential. Haroon Akhtar said Pakistan was determined not merely to participate in the industries of the future but to help shape them. He added that the prime minister's recent visit to China had opened a new chapter in Pakistan-China economic cooperation by creating fresh opportunities for investment, technology transfer and industrial collaboration. He said the prime minister's emphasis on implementation reflected true leadership, adding that success should be measured not by the agreements signed but by the transformation delivered. Highlighting China's remarkable development, Haroon Akhtar described the country's transformation as one of the defining development stories of modern times, driven by visionary leadership, long-term planning and relentless innovation in pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, advanced manufacturing and healthcare. He said Pakistan greatly valued China's experience and looked forward to expanding cooperation in research, technology transfer, innovation and high-value manufacturing. The SAPM said the government was creating an investment-friendly environment

through the National Industrial Policy, National Tariff Policy and the Regulatory Guillotine Initiative to strengthen industrial competitiveness, simplify regulations and make Pakistan a more attractive destination for investors. "Our objective is simple—less bureaucracy, more facilitation; less complexity and more competitiveness," he said. Haroon Akhtar said healthcare had become one of the world's most important drivers of innovation, industrial growth and economic resilience, while the COVID-19 pandemic had underscored that the ability to produce medicines, vaccines and medical technologies was a strategic necessity. He said Pakistan had therefore placed pharmaceuticals, biotechnology and vaccine manufacturing among its highest industrial priorities, adding that the National Vaccine Policy would strengthen local manufacturing, promote technology transfer, encourage research collaboration and help build a resilient healthcare ecosystem capable of serving Pakistan and the wider region. Later, addressing a press conference along with Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, Mustafa Kamal, the SAPM said growing participation by Chinese investors and

the signing of new investment agreements demonstrated increasing international confidence in Pakistan's economy. He said, more than 300 Chinese delegates and over 350 Pakistani businessmen participated in the forum, describing it as evidence of expanding bilateral economic engagement. He said recent visits by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to Beijing and Hangzhou resulted in agreements covering information technology, mobile phone manufacturing and battery energy storage systems, including a cooperation agreement with Alibaba. The official added that around 700 to 800 memorandums of understanding (MoUs) and agreements were currently under process with China, with 30 to 35 percent already moving into implementation within the past seven to eight months. He claimed fresh agreements worth US\$ 500 million were signed at the event, while MoUs worth billions of dollars were expected to follow. Highlighting Pakistan's macroeconomic stability and business-friendly policies, the official said Chinese companies were increasingly interested in establishing manufacturing facilities in Pakistan, positioning the country as a future regional manufacturing hub.—DNA

Mexico arrests leader of major fuel smuggling ring

MEXICO CITY: Mexico on Thursday arrested a former state governor identified as one of the leaders of a billion-dollar smuggling ring, authorities said. Trafficking of stolen fuel is one of the most lucrative criminal activities in Mexico, alongside the drug trade. Ernesto Ruffo, a former governor of the border state of Baja California, was arrested following "a highly complex investigation related to large-scale fuel smuggling operations," the Attorney General's Office said. It is "the largest fuel smuggling network detected to date," Attorney General Ernestina Godoy said in a video statement. The smuggling operations were carried out by a port services company founded by Ruffo, Godoy said. The company formally imported petroleum products from the United States, but upon arrival in Mexico, it declared smaller quantities or products different from those being transported, she said. The fuel was then distributed mainly in the northern states of the country, bypassing customs controls, before being transported to other regions, she added. According to Godoy, the network's financial movements show transfers of more than 3 billion pesos (around \$170 million) and foreign-exchange operations totaling over \$1.3 billion. In September, authorities arrested a vice admiral and five sailors from Mexico's navy as well as former customs officials and businessmen, as part of a crackdown on fuel theft.—APP

Philippines outraged by Chinese media's racist monkey video

MANILA: The Philippines condemned as racist a video posted by the state-run China Daily depicting Filipinos as monkeys, saying on Friday it had lodged a diplomatic protest with Beijing over the "offensive, distressing and unacceptable" imagery. Manila has demanded the removal of the video, which it called "contemptible propaganda," with the foreign ministry saying that "disagreement over legal and political issues does not justify resorting to imagery that has no place in the public discourse of responsible states." The AI-generated video on the China Daily's Facebook account shows a monkey dressed in Filipino attire being directed on what to sing by arms representing the US and Japan. After being called "stupid," the monkey grabs a sheet of lyrics bearing the words "South China Sea arbitration award" before being thrown into the sea and blasted by a vessel's water cannon. China's foreign ministry said on Friday the video did not represent China officially and that it had no comment on it. The video was posted on July 10, coinciding with Philippine events marking the 10th anniversary of a landmark arbitral ruling that invalidated China's sweeping claims in the South China Sea. Beijing rejects the ruling. "The recent spate of schizophrenic behavior of the Chinese Communist Party is too clear to disregard or to ignore.—APP

SBP injects Rs 12t in market to maintain liquidity

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) injected Rs 12,929.05 billion through Reverse Repo Purchase and Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based Open Market Operations (OMO) on Friday to maintain liquidity in the market. The central bank conducted the Open Market Operation, Reverse Repo Purchase (Injection) for 7 and 14-day tenors on July 17, 2026, and injected Rs 12,505.85 billion against 41 bids while other Rs 423.2 billion were injected through Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based OMO. The central bank, for the Reverse Repo Purchase of 14-day tenor, received 31 bids cumulatively offering Rs 12,623.35 billion at the rate of return ranging between 11.51 to 11.57%. The SBP accepted Rs 12,250 billion against 31 quotes at 11.51% rate of return. The total amount offered at 11.51% was Rs 5,538 billion, out of which SBP accepted Rs 5,420.5 billion on a pro-rata basis. Moreover, the SBP also received 10 bids for the 7-day tenor, cumulatively offering Rs 255.85 billion at the rate of return ranging between 11.54% to 11.56%. The SBP accepted all the 10 quotes with the entire amount at 11.54% rate of return. Meanwhile, SBP also conducted Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based Open Market Operation for the 7 and 14-day tenors. The central bank received 5 quotes for the 7-day tenor offering Rs 63.2 billion at the rate of return ranging between 11.53 to 11.56%. SBP accepted the entire amount at 11.53% rate of return. The central bank also received 4 bids for the 14-day tenor offering Rs 448 billion at the rate of return ranging between 11.52 to 11.57%.—DNA

Pak attracts Dutch investment interest in textile sector

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's economic diplomacy has secured another significant milestone as The Beddinghouse, one of the Netherlands' leading home textile companies, announced plans to substantially expand its long-term engagement with Pakistan by establishing a permanent corporate presence, investing in skilled human capital and partnering in circular textile innovation. The announcement came during a meeting between Pakistan's Ambassador to the Netherlands, H.E. Syed Haider Shah, and The Beddinghouse Chief Executive Officer Ms. Henriëtte van Beynum at the Head Office of The Beddinghouse in Lisse, The Netherlands, said a release issued here on Thursday. Having sourced textile products from Pakistan for several decades, the company informed the Ambassador that it now regards Pakistan as a strategic partner for future growth rather than merely a sourcing destination. As part of this vision, The Beddinghouse is finalising the establishment of its first corporate office in Lahore and has initiated the recruitment of senior Pakistani professionals to lead its local operations. The company also unveiled its "Circular Dreams" initiative, aimed at developing a circular textile value chain by converting post-consumer textile waste collected in the Netherlands into recycled yarns and finished products through Pakistan's advanced textile manufacturing ecosystem. Company executives observed that Pakistan's vertically integrated textile industry, technical expertise and growing focus on sustainability make it well-positioned to become a key partner in Europe's transition towards a circular economy. The Beddinghouse CEO further appreciated the significant progress made by Pakistani textile manufacturers in renewable energy, water stewardship, emissions reduction, social compliance, workforce development and women's empowerment, describing these developments as enhancing Pakistan's competitiveness in global markets. Welcoming the company's expansion plans, Ambassador Syed Haider Shah termed the decision a strong vote of confidence in Pakistan's textile industry and a reflection of the country's growing reputation as a reliable and sustainable manufacturing partner. He said the Embassy would continue to facilitate stronger business-to-business partnerships and connect Dutch companies with investment opportunities in Pakistan's priority sectors. Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan welcomed the development, saying it reflected the success of the Government's policy of strengthening economic diplomacy and promoting value-added exports. "The decision by a leading Dutch company to expand its footprint in Pakistan is a strong endorsement of our textile industry's competitiveness, resilience and commitment to sustainability. It is also a testament to the dedicated efforts of our Embassy in The Hague under Ambassador Syed Haider Shah and Trade & Investment Counsellor Muhammad Shafiq Haider Virk, who have been actively building strategic partnerships and creating new opportunities for Pakistani businesses in the Netherlands. The Government remains committed to facilitating such collaborations that generate investment, create skilled employment and enhance Pakistan's value-added exports," the Minister said.—DNA



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Briefs

UK police
charge man
over spying
for Iran

DNA

LONDON: British police said on Friday they had charged a 39-year-old man on suspicion of assisting Iran's intelligence service, the latest in a series of incidents involving Tehran and offenses covered under UK National Security laws. Police said the suspect, Vaheed Aberi, from Liverpool, northern England, was taken to a police station in central England and searches had been carried out at addresses in nearby Birmingham and Liverpool. UK security officials have repeatedly warned that Iran has sought to use criminal proxies to carry out hostile activity in the country. Since the beginning of the US-Iran war there have been a number of antisemitic attacks in Britain linked to Iran. Seeking to use new powers designed to stop the use of state-sponsored proxies, Britain banned support for Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps earlier this week. On the Aberi investigation, police said they had not identified any direct threat to any community or individual, but said they were having to intervene more frequently to disrupt suspected activity by foreign intelligence services. "We have seen a significant and sustained increase in the tempo of our work in national security investigations in recent years," Helen Flanagan, head of counter terrorism policing in London, said in a statement. Last week, Britain summoned Iran's most senior diplomat over the stabbing of an Iranian journalist in London, for which two Romanians were convicted.

Landslide
buries resident
in China

BEIJING: An unknown number of people were buried after a landslide struck a county in the southwestern Chinese city of Chongqing on Friday, causing multiple residential buildings downhill to collapse, according to state media. Preliminary verification indicated that a Pengshui county community worker spotted scattered falling rocks around 8 a.m. local time (0000 GMT) and issued an emergency warning, state broadcaster CCTV said. Authorities ordered an evacuation of more than 60 residents, but the landslide occurred during the evacuation at 9:08 a.m., burying some people. The exact number of those trapped was still being confirmed, the report said. Nine people had been pulled from the rubble, with none in life-threatening condition, according to the official Xinhua news agency. — APP

Egyptian envoy highlights
strong bilateral relations

Federal Minister Jam Kamal also spoke on the occasion. He said Pakistan greatly valued relations with Egypt adding these relations are on a positive trajectory and constantly on the move



ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of Egypt to Pakistan delivered a heartfelt address at the National Day of Egypt reception held at the Islamabad Serena Hotel, emphasizing the deep-rooted friendship and growing strategic partnership between Egypt and Pakistan. Speaking at the elegant ceremony, the Ambassador warmly welcomed dignitaries and guests, including Chief

Guest Jam Kamal Khan, Federal Minister for Commerce, members of the diplomatic corps, and other distinguished personalities. Federal Minister Jam Kamal also spoke on the occasion. He said Pakistan greatly valued relations with Egypt adding these relations are on a positive trajectory and constantly on the move. The Ambassador further said, "It is an honour and a privilege to welcome you this evening as we celebrate the National Day of the Arab Republic of Egypt," the Amba-

sador said. He expressed gratitude to the Government of Pakistan and all guests for their presence on this important occasion. The Ambassador reflected on the significance of the 1952 Egyptian Revolution, describing it as a defining milestone in Egypt's modern history that embodied the nation's aspirations for independence, social justice, dignity, and development. He reaffirmed Egypt's commitment to building a modern, prosperous, and resilient state anchored in peace, stability, and internation-

al cooperation. Praising the bilateral relationship, the Ambassador stated that Egypt and Pakistan share a "deep, longstanding, and multifaceted friendship" rooted in mutual respect, shared values, and fraternal bonds between the two peoples. He noted the remarkable momentum in bilateral relations over the past two years, highlighted by high-level exchanges, including two visits by Egypt's Foreign Minister Dr. Badr Abdelatty to Pakistan and the visit of Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar to Egypt. "These milestone exchanges have not only strengthened our political consultations but have also broadened cooperation in key strategic sectors," the Ambassador said, adding that both countries are laying a solid foundation for a more dynamic and robust partnership. The Ambassador stressed that amid current regional and global challenges, Egypt and Pakistan stand united in their belief in dialogue, diplomacy, and adherence to international law as the path to peace and sustainable development. He expressed Egypt's desire to translate the positive political momentum into concrete outcomes, particularly through enhanced economic cooperation, increased trade, and stronger people-to-people ties. Concluding on a personal note, the Ambassador said he has personally experienced the warmth and hospitality of the Pakistani people since his arrival, which he described as a true reflection of the enduring friendship between the two nations. "I remain profoundly confident that the partnership between Egypt and Pakistan will continue to grow stronger in the years ahead," he added. The National Day reception was attended by senior Pakistani officials, diplomats, business leaders, and members of the Egyptian community in Pakistan.

Truth Social to sell
fastest access to Trump's
posts for traders

Move is TMTG's first step into data licensing, and opens up a new revenue stream for the company

WASHINGTON: Trump Media & Technology Group has unveiled a paid-for, licensed data feed that will give banks and trading firms "the fastest" access to posts from influential Truth Social accounts, such as President Donald Trump's, whose posts often move global markets. The product, called "Truth API," will deliver posts from the 10 most influential accounts to customers at a significantly faster pace than a regular push notification on the Truth Social platform, a spokesperson said. The feed is designed for organisations "most impacted by the cost of a delay in information", such as algorithmic trading firms, the company said in a statement. "Until now... firms that prioritise tracking influential Truth posts have relied on manual monitoring. Truth API closes the gap." The move is TMTG's first step into data licensing, and opens up a new revenue stream for the company, which has faced challenges in scaling its media business amid stiff competition from larger social media firms. "Markets already move on Truth Social posts ... As adoption grows, we expect Truth API to become a meaningful, ongoing source of revenue for the company," TMTG's interim CEO Kevin McGurn said.

Trump has made several announcements

through his Truth Social handle that have jolted markets worldwide, including his "Liberation Day" tariffs and posts regarding trade restrictions on China, making the platform a crucial feed for traders, businesses and financial institutions. On April 9, 2025, Wall Street's main indexes turned sharply higher after Trump said in a Truth Social post that he would pause many of his new tariffs for 90 days. "As far as I know, the only market-moving poster on Truth Social is Trump himself and his posts definitely move the market," said Mark Spiegel, managing member and portfolio manager at Stanphyl Capital Partners. Asked if the move would create uneven trading opportunities for traders with deeper pockets, Spiegel said there were always uneven trading opportunities — this would be just one more. The Donald J. Trump Revocable Trust holds roughly 114.75 million shares, representing about 41% of all outstanding stock in Truth Social's parent company TMTG, according to regulatory filings. That trust administers Trump's investments and is overseen by his children. The White House did not respond immediately to a request for comment, but a spokeswoman has in the past denied any conflicts of interest. — APP

Xi Jinping offers four
observations on AI

SHANGHAI: Chinese President Xi Jinping on Friday presented four observations on artificial intelligence (AI) development and governance while addressing the opening ceremony of the 2026 World AI Conference and High-Level Meeting on Global AI Governance. First, he called for adhering to the principle of openness and win-win cooperation while boosting innovation-driven development. Second, he stressed strengthening risk awareness and ensuring that AI is secure and controllable. Third, he encouraged inclusiveness and promoting mutual learning among civilizations. Fourth, he advocated solidarity and improving global governance. — DNA

Canada
wildfire
smoke
blankets
US Midwest

DNA

NEW YORK: Heavy smoke from hundreds of wildfires in Canada enveloped a swath of the US from the Midwest to the Northeast on Thursday, prompting warnings from officials that residents should stay indoors wherever possible and avoid the acrid, unhealthy air. Detroit registered the worst air quality of any city in the world on Thursday, according to monitoring company IQAir, with a pollutant index of 600, twice the level considered "hazardous" by the US Environmental Protection Agency. Federal data showed dangerous levels of smoke across Minnesota, Michigan, northern Illinois, northern Ohio and into Ontario, with hazardous readings in such major cities as Minneapolis, Milwaukee and Toronto. Ten states reported at least some locations with an "unhealthy" reading, stretching from Minnesota to as far south as Maryland. "It's wild because when you look outside you think it's fog, and it's completely covered the city, and it's smoke, because when we walk outside it burns," Chicago resident Stephanie Villanova, 33, said while out for a late-morning downtown stroll with her 68-year-old father. Both were wearing face masks.

SC rules in
favor of FBR

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan has ruled that claims for input tax adjustment on construction materials, such as cement and steel used in the construction of factories or other immovable structures, are not admissible under the Sales Tax Act, 1990. The court further emphasized that mandatory legal requirements, particularly those concerning banking channels and the deposit of tax into the national exchequer, could not be overlooked. A three-member bench, comprising Chief Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Irfan Saadat Khan, and Justice Shakeel Ahmed, accepted the civil appeal (No. 939/2018) filed by the Commissioner Inland Revenue. The court set aside the decisions of the Sindh High Court and the ATIR. — APP

Finance minister to visit US
to talk trade, investment

DNA

WASHINGTON: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb is expected to arrive in Washington on Saturday for a three-day visit during which he will hold talks with officials on trade, finance and investment as Pakistan and the United States continue negotiations on a broader bilateral economic partnership, diplomatic sources told Dawn. According to the sources, Aurangzeb is scheduled to meet officials from the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR), the US Export-Import (Exim) Bank, the US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). A key focus of the visit will be discussions on the framework of a potential bilateral trade agreement aimed at expanding trade and investment between the two countries. The talks are expected to cover tariffs, market access, investment opportunities and broader economic cooperation. Meetings with the Exim Bank and the DFC are also expected to explore avenues for financing infrastructure, energy and private-sector investment projects. Aurangzeb's visit comes as Pakistani and US officials continue negotiations that began in Washington last week over tariffs on Pakistani exports and a wider trade agreement. The latest round of talks follows months of negotiations over the global tariff regime announced by US President Donald Trump on April 2, 2025, under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), which initially imposed a 29 per cent tariff on Pakistani exports. A Pakistani delegation that visited Washington in July 2025 succeeded



in persuading US officials to reduce the proposed tariff from 29 per cent to 19pc. The tariff landscape has since changed following a US Supreme Court ruling earlier this year that invalidated the IEEPA-based tariffs. In response, the Trump administration invoked Section 122 of the Trade Act to impose a temporary global tariff of 10pc, which is due to expire on July 24 after the statutory 150-day period. Pakistan is also among nearly 60 countries facing USTR investigations under Section 301 over alleged forced labour and related trade practices. Islamabad has submitted detailed responses to the USTR, including an additional submission this week ahead of the latest negotiations. Under the ongoing Section 301 process, Pakistan faces a proposed additional tariff of 10pc, while India and 53 other countries are subject to proposed tariffs of 12.5pc. Public hearings before the USTR are continuing.

Beyond tariffs, both sides are also expected to discuss measures to expand bilateral trade and investment. Aurangzeb last visited Washington in April to attend the IMF and World Bank Spring Meetings, where he held more than 50 meetings with international financial institutions, investors and rating agencies to present Pakistan's economic reform programme and efforts to restore macroeconomic stability. During that visit, he briefed investors on Pakistan's plans to return to international capital markets through Panda Bonds and Eurobonds after several years. He also met US Treasury officials and representatives of multilateral institutions to discuss Pakistan's response to the economic impact of regional tensions and volatility in global energy markets caused by the conflict involving Iran.



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