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UK appreciates Pak role in region; fiscal development: Jane

Detailed News On Page-08

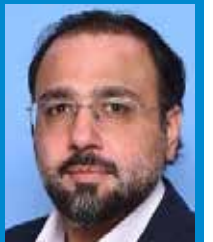
Japan upgrades girls schools in rural Sindh

Detailed News On Page-07



Salik launches immigration improved system

Detailed News On Page-03



Shehbaz reaffirms unwavering solidarity with Saudi Arabia

Pakistani Premier condemns Houthi attacks on Saudi oil tankers in the Red Sea, warning against escalation and threat to global maritime trade

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif held a telephonic conversation on Thursday morning with Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, strongly condemning recent Houthi militia attacks targeting Saudi oil tankers in the Red Sea. During the high-level exchange, Prime Minister Shehbaz denounced the maritime strikes in the strongest terms, characterizing such aggressive actions as completely unacceptable and a severe violation of international legal standards. The Prime Minister emphasized that targeted hostilities against commercial crude carriers pose a direct threat to the freedom of global navigation, compromise international shipping lanes, and gravely jeopardize regional peace and security. **Total Solidarity and Military Backing:** Reaffirming Pakistan's long-standing strategic alignment with the Kingdom, Prime Minister Shehbaz conveyed full solidarity with the Saudi leadership and its public during this critical juncture. He emphasized that the entire Pakistani nation, alongside Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir and the armed forces, stands resolutely shoulder-to-shoulder with Saudi Arabia in safeguarding its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and maritime interests. The Prime Minister reiterated Islamabad's firm commitment to the safety and security of the Kingdom, highlighting that Pakistan views any destabilizing attempt against Saudi interests as a matter of direct significance to broader regional stability. **Joint Bilateral Action for Regional Maritime Security:** During their conversation, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman reached a mutual consensus to maintain close, continuous coordination across political and diplomatic channels. Both leaders pledged to join efforts in safeguarding vital maritime arteries, ensuring the uninterrupted flow of lawful international commerce

Continued on Page 06

Marco Rubio accuses Iran of violating accord

"The Houthis largely were smart and stayed out of all this throughout the conflict, but they now apparently have gotten themselves suckered into this, going after Saudi Arabia and their ships"

APP

MANILA: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Thursday that Washington had upheld its side of an agreement with Iran, accusing Tehran of repeatedly reneging on deals while suffering "tremendous losses." "These people make deals and then break them almost immediately, or they decide, 'Oh, let's change the deal.' That's not how deals work," Rubio said. "Now they're paying the price for it. And maybe they'll change their mind over the next few days as they continue to suffer great losses," he added. Rubio also said Yemen's Houthi rebels had been "suckered" by Iran into attacking Red Sea shipping. "The Houthis largely were smart and stayed out of all this throughout the conflict, but they now apparently have gotten themselves suckered into this, going after Saudi Arabia and their ships," he said on the sidelines of a Southeast Asian summit in Manila. "I hope they will de-escalate, because I think the Houthis, frankly, got snookered into this thing by the Iranians," he told reporters.

Trump says

US-Saudi nuclear deal conditional on country joining Abraham Accords

Saudi Arabia maintains Abraham Accords require an agreed roadmap to Palestinian statehood first

DNA

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump said on Thursday that a civil nuclear deal between the US and Saudi Arabia is conditional on Saudi Arabia joining the Abraham Accords, adding that there would be no enrichment of the material. The US and Saudi Arabia reached an agreement on civil nuclear power, letting the kingdom enrich uranium and build nuclear reactors using US technology, without requiring the snap UN inspections that Washington has previously demanded from Iran. "The Civil Nuclear Deal (There will be no enrichment of material)... pertains only to non-military use such as the ones that Iran and UAE (and others) already have, will be approved, but is totally subject to Saudi Arabia joining the very respected and successful Abraham Accords," Trump said in a post on Truth Social, referring to normalising ties with Israel.

Continued on Page 06

United States vows 'major military punishment' on Iran

DNA

WASHINGTON: The United States has vowed "major military punishment" against Iran after Houthi attacks on oil tankers in the Red Sea, escalating tensions in one of the world's most strategic waterways. President Donald Trump declared that Tehran would be held responsible for the actions of the Houthis, whom Washington views as an Iranian proxy. American forces have already carried out strikes on Iranian targets for nearly two weeks, and officials warn of further retaliation if attacks continue.

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan 'disappointed' with EU report on GSP+

Pakistan rejects Amnesty claims, urges scrutiny of Taliban Regime's support for terrorist groups

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday expressed "disappointment" with the European Union's (EU) recent report that pointed out issues in Pakistan's compliance with its commitments under the Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+). The report was issued last week as part of the European Commission's global assessment of the GSP during the 2023-2025 period. It said Pakistan had "regressed in a number of areas while positive change was limited". Responding to a query during a weekly press briefing on Thursday, Foreign Office (FO) spokesperson Tahir Andrabi appreciated the report's "acknowledgement of Pakistan's legislative progress" and its continued compliance with 27 international conventions under the GSP+. "Nevertheless, I would be remiss if I do not express disappointment with the assessment, with the report's overall narrative which does not present sufficiently balanced pictures of Pakistan's performance," Andrabi added. He said the EU report "understates the breadth of reforms undertaken since Pakistan joined GSP+ in 2014" and "plac-

es disproportionate emphasis on the lower-than-desired progress in a few areas". At the same time, the FO spokesman affirmed that GSP+ remained "central to Pakistan's economic relationship with the EU, supporting exports, employment, women's economic participation, poverty reduction and broader economic development". He observed that GSP+ was a "mutually beneficial arrangement in that aspect". "We will remain constructively engaged with the European Commission and other EU institutions and remain committed to the effective implementation of international conventions underpinning the GSP framework," Andrabi affirmed. He highlighted that beyond GSP+, Pakistan's EU cooperation extended to development, migration, counterterrorism, regional stability, climate resilience, connectivity and many other areas. FO "completely rejects" Amnesty report on Kabul strikes. The FO spokesperson also "completely" rejected an Amnesty International report released on July 21 that claimed that Pakistan targeted a rehab facility in Kabul on March 16, which purportedly resulted in a large number of civilian casualties. The FO spokesperson asserted:

Continued on Page 06

Sessions judge, his guard killed

NEWS DESK

QUETTA: District and Sessions Judge Abdul Hakeem Kakar and his guard were gunned down on Thursday, while another judge was among two injured when they came under attack while heading to Mastung, officials said. Judge Kakar and Additional Sessions Judge Tariq Lashari were on their way to Mastung from Quetta when unknown armed men attacked the vehicles they were in, Balochistan Home Department's aide Babar Yousafzai told. The armed men targeted Kakar and others at Wali Khan crossing, killing him and his guard on the spot, Yousafzai said. He added that the two injured, including Lashari, were taken to a hospital in Mastung. The incident comes a day after three people were killed and five others were injured in a gun attack on a Karachi-bound passenger bus and a

Continued on Page 06

Internet service being restored in AJK

NEWS DESK

BAGH: Mobile phone and internet services started restoring in Mirpur city and its adjoining areas in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) on Thursday after a 45-day disruption. Connectivity had remained suspended across Mirpur for the past 45 days, affecting residents, businesses and routine communication in the area. Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari confirmed the development in a post on X, saying he had been hearing that "internet and digital connectivity will be restored in Mirpur AJK soon".

Continued on Page 06

Interacts with students

Balochistan is pride of Pakistan, says field marshal

COAS & CDF underscored that foreign-sponsored proxies have persistently sought to fuel violence, undermine stability and disrupt peace in Balochistan. Their nefarious designs, however, will be defeated through firm and decisive response of the Armed Forces, supported by the resilience and unity of the people of Pakistan

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces, interacted with participants of the 20th National Workshop Balochistan at General Headquarters, Rawalpindi. Addressing the participants, the Field Marshal stated that consistent efforts of security forces and law enforcement agencies, backed by the steadfast support of people would bring lasting peace to Balochistan. He reaffirmed that targeted operations against Fitna al Khawarij and Fitna al Hindustan would continue with full resolve until the menace of terrorism and its abettors are eliminated from Pakistan. He reiterated Pakistan's firm resolve to dismantle terrorist infrastructure wherever it poses a threat to the country and its people. COAS & CDF underscored that for-

eign-sponsored proxies have persistently sought to fuel violence, undermine stability and disrupt peace in Balochistan. Their nefarious designs, however, will be defeated through firm and decisive response of the Armed Forces, supported by the resilience and unity of the people of Pakistan. During the interaction, Field Marshal described Balochistan as the pride of Pakistan, endowed with immense natural wealth and blessed with vibrant, resilient and patriotic people who constitute the province's greatest strength. He highlighted the ongoing development initiatives of the Federal and Provincial governments are aimed at transforming Balochistan's socio-economic landscape through an inclusive and people-centric approach. COAS & CDF lauded the constructive role of civil society, academia, media and youth in strengthening

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

US House votes to stop Iran war

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: The Republican-led U.S. House of Representatives backed legislation on Thursday directing President Donald Trump to halt U.S. military action against Iran, the latest symbolic rebuke of the Republican president from Congress. The vote was 214-208 in favor of the war powers resolution as four Republicans joined Democrats in voting for it. The resolution, introduced by Representative Pramila Jayapal, a Washington Democrat, directs Trump "to remove the use of United States Armed Forces from hostilities" against Iran unless Congress authorizes it. However, it was largely symbolic. Lawmakers have passed similar resolutions repeatedly in recent months, but they have not led to cessation of the war.

Rains disrupt travel in GB

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Rainfall in Gilgit-Baltistan caused widespread travel disruptions in the mountainous region as flash floods and landslides washed away roads and bridges, leaving thousands, including tourists, stranded. The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) forecast rain and warned of glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs) in GB until July 26. Floods blocked the Karakoram Highway (KKH), Babusar Road, Baltistan Road, Naltar Highway, Ghizer-Shandur Road, Astore Valley Road and other routes connecting various remote areas, leaving thousands, including tourists, stranded at multiple locations. The GB Disaster Management Authority (GBDMA) said the KKH was blocked at multiple sections from Dasso to Hunza and Nagar districts.

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NHA accelerates highway restoration in GB

ISLAMABAD: The National Highway Authority (NHA) has intensified emergency clearance and restoration work on major highway networks across Gilgit-Baltistan following recent heavy rain-fall, mudflows, and severe landslides. NHA field teams and heavy machinery remain fully deployed across all affected areas to ensure the prompt restoration of safe traffic flow, said a press release issued on Thursday. According to the NHA spokesperson, clearance and debris removal operations have commenced at the bridge located on the Gilgit side of the Jaglot-Skardu Road (JSR). Heavy machinery dispatched from Shutot is currently clearing landslides between KM 16 (Ansar Camp) and KM 25 (Hanochal).—APP

Two children ran over by car

FAISALABAD: Two young siblings were killed in a road mishap on Samundri road near here on Thursday. According to Rescue-1122, 5-year-old Yasin s/o Nazir Khan along with his 6-year-old sister Nazia, was crossing the Dikot-Samundri road when a speeding car ran over them near Chak No 279-RB. Both died on the spot, while the car driver managed to escape. The rescue team handed over the bodies to heirs after completing legal formalities.—APP

Dacoit killed in police encounter

FAISALABAD: A proclaimed dacoit with a criminal record was killed in an encounter with Suddar police near here late on Wednesday night. According to a police spokesperson, the deceased suspect was wanted by police in more than 22 robbery cases. His accomplices managed to escape under the cover of darkness. Police said three armed suspects were fleeing on a motorcycle after allegedly snatching cash and a motorcycle from a citizen when a police team, led by SHO Muhammad Ali, intercepted them near Chak No. 209-RB. During the ensuing exchange of fire, one of the suspects, later identified as Tanveer, was killed.—APP

Modern transport links for Pakistan's ports discussed

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry, currently on an official visit to China, met with Li Lei, Vice President of China Railway Electrification Engineering Group Co., Ltd. (EEB), in Beijing to discuss expanding Pakistan-China cooperation in maritime connectivity, railway electrification and transport infrastructure. EEB is one of China's leading engineering companies specialising in railway electrification.—APP

SSUET celebrates its first-ever PhD graduate

DNA

KARACHI: Sir Syed University of Engineering & Technology (SSUET) proudly announces a historic milestone as the Department of Biomedical Engineering celebrates the successful completion of its first-ever Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Biomedical Engineering. Engr. Sania Tanvir daughter of Dr. Tanvir Ahmed Tahir, Executive Director of the All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS), has achieved this remarkable distinction, marking a significant moment in the academic and research journey of the department and the university. Her doctoral research, titled "Precision Diagnosis for Vitiligo Detection via Machine Learning," highlights the transformative potential of artificial intelligence in enhancing healthcare diagnostics and advancing biomedical innovation. The research was conducted under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Sidra Abid Syed, Supervisor and Chairperson of the Department of Biomedical Engineering. Her guidance and mentorship played a pivotal role in the successful completion of this groundbreaking research work. This achievement represents a proud moment for SSUET, reflecting the university's continued commitment to fostering excellence in higher education, research, innovation, and technological advancement. The successful completion of the department's first PhD program further strengthens SSUET's position as a leading institution dedicated to producing impactful research that addresses real-world healthcare challenges. Engr. Sania Tanvir's work demonstrates the growing importance of interdisciplinary collaboration between biomedical engineering and artificial intelligence. Through the application of machine learning techniques, her research contributes to the development of more precise and efficient diagnostic methodologies for vitiligo, offering promising opportunities for future advancements in medical diagnostics. Her accomplishment serves as an inspiration for students, researchers, and professionals striving to excel in scientific research and innovation.



PIO announces training programs for female journalists

She emphasized that the Pakistan Information Service Academy will launch courses on freelancing, digital media, climate reporting, and modern journalistic skills to help journalists adapt to the rapidly evolving media landscape



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Principal Information Officer (PIO) Raisa Adil visited the National Press Club Islamabad, where she was warmly received by President Abdul Razzaq Sial, Secretary Dr. Furqan Rao, Finance Secretary Abid Abbasi, and other office bearers. During a special session with women journalists, Raisa Adil announced initiatives to address their professional challenges and introduce training programs. She emphasized that the Pakistan Information Service Academy will

launch courses on freelancing, digital media, climate reporting, and modern journalistic skills to help journalists adapt to the rapidly evolving media landscape. Highlighting the importance of capacity building, she stressed that empowering women journalists is a pressing need in the digital era. Adil assured participants that she would raise their concerns with relevant authorities and extend full cooperation. She also underscored the necessity of facilities such as a dedicated ladies' room, rest area, and daycare center at the Press Club, promising to advocate

for these proposals. Furthermore, she supported the idea of accreditation cards, health cards, and a Women Journalists Help Desk at the Press Information Department. The event was attended by a large number of Press Club members, including senior journalists and women representatives. A question-and-answer session allowed female journalists to share issues such as difficulties in obtaining accreditation cards. At the conclusion, Raisa Adil was presented with a commemorative shield by the National Press Club.

Chinese, Pakistani cities sign sister city MoU to deepen coop

Under the agreement, the two sides will strengthen exchanges and cooperation in economic development, science and technology, cultural engagement, investment promotion and personnel visits, further facilitating business-to-business ties and fostering a more robust bilateral trade ecosystem

LAHORE: Loudi of Hunan Province and city of Gujrat signed a sister-city memorandum of understanding (MoU), marking a new phase of institutionalized and pragmatic cooperation between the two cities.

The MoU was signed by Yang Wei, Mayor of Loudi City, and Shafay Hussain, Minister for the Industries, Commerce and Investment Department of the Government of Punjab, at a ceremony in Lahore, witnessed by Sun Yan, Consul General of China in Lahore, according to a Gwadar Pro's report. The agreement establishes a framework

for long-term collaboration in economic development, trade, investment and cultural exchange, reflecting the growing synergy between the two countries under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) framework.

The sister city partnership is expected to facilitate knowledge sharing and technical cooperation in key sectors, particularly in agricultural modernization where Loudi's manufacturing strengths complement Gujrat's industrial and agricultural base. During the visit, Mayor Yang Wei led a delegation of chairpersons

from five leading agricultural machinery enterprises from Loudi for a three-day business mission in Lahore. The delegation conducted on-site inspections and held substantive discussions with their Pakistani counterparts to explore cooperation projects in the agricultural machinery sector. In a parallel development, the Loudi Branch of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) signed a friendship and cooperation agreement with the Pakistan-Hunan Chamber of Commerce and Industry.—DNA

UBG delegation, Pakistan envoy to Uzbekistan discuss bilateral trade

DNA

ISLAMABAD : A business delegation of prominent Pakistani business leaders, led by Zafar Bakhtawari, Secretary General, United Business Group (UBG), called on H.E. Muhammad Mudassir Tipu, Ambassador of Pakistan to Uzbekistan, at the Embassy of Pakistan in Tashkent. The meeting focused on enhancing bilateral trade and investment collaboration and strengthening business-to-business and people-to-people relations between Pakistan and Uzbekistan.

Welcoming the delegation, Ambassador Muhammad Mudassir Tipu, who has recently assumed his responsibilities as Pakistan's Ambassador to Uzbekistan, thanked the members of the delegation

for visiting Uzbekistan and appreciated their interest in exploring business and investment opportunities. He said that one of his foremost priorities is to further strengthen economic diplomacy and promote trade and investment between the two countries. The Ambassador emphasized that the positive image of both Pakistan and Uzbekistan, along with their immense trade and investment potential, should be projected more effectively to facilitate greater economic cooperation. He highlighted that Uzbekistan is making substantial investments in infrastructure development, creating promising opportunities for Pakistani companies as well as for the export of skilled Pakistani manpower. Stressing the importance of stronger private sector collaboration, he identified textiles, pharmaceuticals, leather, infrastructure and other

industrial sectors as key areas for bilateral cooperation. Referring to the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) and the Transit Trade Agreement, the Ambassador observed that improved connectivity and trade facilitation measures would further strengthen commercial relations between the two countries. He assured the delegation of the Embassy's full support in facilitating trade, investment, joint ventures and business partnerships between Pakistan and Uzbekistan. Zaheer Abbas, Trade & Investment Counsellor, informed the delegation that bilateral trade between Pakistan and Uzbekistan had once reached nearly US\$800 million. However, following disruptions in transit through Afghanistan and the closure of border routes, trade volume declined significantly.



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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

Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115

PIA Flight Info.....114

PIA Cargo.....9280979

Railway Inquiry.....117

Railway Exchange9270831-5

WASA Rawalpindi...5555489

CAA.....9281092

Hospitals

CMH.....5611111

MH.....561116

Cantt Hospital...9270907-11

DHQ.....5556311-4

RGH.....9290301-7

Holy Family.....9290322-7

PIMS.....9261170-79

Polyclinic.....9218300-09

Shifa International 4603666

Departments

CDA.....9221334-43

CDAA.....9208301-04

Met Office.....9250360-6

RDA.....5555864

TMA.....5770886

Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....9209224

Potohar Town.....9209224

Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

US embassy opens Liberty Bell display at Lok virsa

Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture, Aurangzeb Khan Khichi said Pakistan and the United States enjoy a broad-based relationship founded on mutual respect and shared objectives

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture, Aurangzeb Khan Khichi Thursday reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthening cultural ties with the United States as he jointly inaugurated the "Let Freedom Ring" American Liberty Bell display with U.S. Chargé d'Affaires Andy Halus at the Lok Virsa Heritage Museum. Addressing the inauguration ceremony, the minister congratulated the American nation on the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of U.S. Independence and extended heartfelt wishes on behalf of the people of Pakistan. Khichi said people-to-people contacts and cultural cooperation remained among the strongest pillars of the longstanding bilateral relationship between Pakistan and the United States. Although Pakistan is a younger republic, he said, it shares the ideals of constitutional democracy, individual liberty and economic self-determination that inspired the American Dream. He said it was a pleasure to host the exhibition at Lok Virsa, an institution that has long served as the custodian of Pakistan's living cultural heritage. The exhibition, he added, reflects the cultural, artistic and political connections between Pakistan and the United States while celebrating the rich traditions of both nations. Highlighting the creativity of Pakistani artists, the minister said Pakistan possesses extraordinary artistic talent, with artists from across the country expressing the aspirations of the nation through their work. He praised the 16 Pakistani artists who transformed life-size replicas of the iconic American Liberty Bell into unique artistic expressions, saying their work demonstrated that art transcends borders, languages and history. The minister said Pakistan and the United States enjoy a broad-based relationship founded on mutual respect and shared objectives. He emphasized that cultural diplomacy and people-to-people exchanges continue to strengthen bilateral ties and expressed confidence that such partnerships would further deepen mutual understanding and friendship between the two nations. Referring to growing cultural cooperation, Khichi said Pakistan was pleased to



join the celebrations marking the 250th anniversary of U.S. independence. He noted that the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation has remained an important initiative in promoting heritage conservation and cultural collaboration between the two countries. He also highlighted the successful repatriation of more than 450 valuable Pakistani cultural artifacts from the United States, valued at nearly US\$23 million, saying the achievement was made possible through close cooperation between the two countries. He acknowledged the efforts of the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture Division and the U.S. Mission in Pakistan for maintaining close coordination, which has further strengthened bilateral cooperation in the cultural sector. Calling

for further strengthening Pakistan-U.S. friendship through sustained cultural collaboration and people-to-people engagement, the minister said culture remains one of the strongest bridges connecting the people of the two countries. Speaking on the occasion, U.S. Chargé d'Affaires Andy Halus said cultural heritage serves as a powerful bridge between Pakistan and the United States, highlighting the successful partnership between the two countries in preserving history and promoting mutual understanding through art and culture. He thanked the federal minister Aurangzeb Khichi for the close cooperation that led to the successful recovery and repatriation of more than 450 Pakistani cultural artifacts, valued at nearly US\$23 million, earlier this

year, saying the joint effort reflected the importance both countries attach to cultural heritage. Describing Lok Virsa Heritage Museum as the ideal venue for launching the Liberty Bell project, Halus said the institution's commitment to preserving Pakistan's cultural heritage made it a fitting place to celebrate both American and Pakistani creativity, culture and the universal ideals of freedom. Recalling his personal connection with the Liberty Bell, he said he was born in Philadelphia, where the historic monument remains one of America's most cherished symbols of independence and freedom. While planning celebrations for the 250th anniversary of the United States, he said, it was natural to place the Liberty Bell at the heart of commemorative activities in Pakistan.

FIA busts fake medico-legal certificate racket at PIMS

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Anti-Corruption Circle Islamabad has busted an alleged fake medico-legal certificate (MLC) racket operating at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS), arresting three suspects, including hospital staff, during a trap raid. An FIA official told APP on Thursday that the operation was conducted on credible intelligence after obtaining approval from the competent authority. The trap raid was carried out under the supervision of a judicial magistrate. The official said an FIA official acted as a decoy complainant and handed over marked currency worth Rs50,000 as advance payment for obtaining a fake medico-legal certificate, leading to the arrest of the suspects red-handed. The investigation revealed that the accused allegedly issued fake medico-legal certificates in return for bribes, which were later used to register false criminal cases at various police stations in Islamabad. He said investigators further found that in cases where no visible injuries existed, superficial cuts were allegedly inflicted on the body and stitched to fabricate evidence before fake medico-legal certificates were prepared. During the operation, Muhammad Usman, a Lower Division Clerk (LDC) at the Medico-Legal Office, was arrested while allegedly receiving the marked currency. On his disclosure, a Medico-Legal Officer at PIMS and ward boy Rameez Akhtar were also taken into custody. The FIA also seized records of previously issued suspected fake medico-legal certificates from the spot. Forensic examination of the suspects' mobile phones allegedly uncovered incriminating chats and banking transactions, further strengthening evidence of their involvement in the racket.—APP

Senate body call for centralized flood monitoring

ISLAMABAD: Senate Standing Committee on Water Resources on Thursday reviewed the prevailing flood situation, preparedness measures and the role of the Federal Flood Commission (FFC). The FFC briefed the Committee, chaired by Senator Jam Sairullah Khan, that low flood conditions were prevailing at Tarbela, Chashma and Nowshera, while higher inflows of around 275,000 cusecs were reported in the Chenab. While high flood levels were anticipated at Marala on the Chenab, upstream of Mangla on the Jhelum and in the Kabul River. The Committee was also briefed on flood forecasts, river lag times and flash-flood incidents in various areas. The Committee expressed concern over reports regarding Indian dam releases and emphasized the need for effective early-warning and monitoring systems. It was informed that Pakistan's existing dams could mitigate only around 20 percent of flood flows—APP

Salik launches landmark immigration policy

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Chaudhry Salik Hussain on Thursday unveiled the National Immigration and Welfare Policy 2026, a landmark initiative aimed at transforming Pakistan's labour migration system through safer migration pathways, stronger worker protections, advanced skills development and enhanced support for more than 12 million overseas Pakistanis, whose record remittances of over \$41 billion last year played a pivotal role in strengthening the national economy. Addressing the launch ceremony, Chaudhry Salik Hussain described the policy as a historic milestone in Pakistan's migration governance framework and a reflection of the government's unwavering commitment to safeguarding the rights, welfare and aspirations of every Pakistani seeking opportunities abroad. He said the policy is designed to place overseas Pakistanis at the centre of national development by ensuring safe and orderly migration, expanding access to globally relevant skills, protecting workers from exploitation, strengthening engagement with the diaspora and facilitating the dignified reintegration of returning migrants. The minister noted that rapid technological advances, demographic shifts and evolving global labour market demands were reshaping economies across the world. In this increasingly competitive environment, he said, Pakistan must proactively prepare its workforce to seize emerging opportunities and position itself as a leading supplier of skilled human capital. Chaudhry Salik Hussain said the National Immigration and Welfare Policy 2026 would serve as a strategic roadmap for equipping Pakistani workers with the skills, knowledge and protections needed to thrive in international markets while contributing to national prosperity. Paying tribute to overseas Pakistanis, he said more than 12 million Pakistanis living across the globe had become the country's most effective ambassadors through their professionalism, dedication and hard work. Their record remittances exceeding \$41 billion during the last fiscal year, he added, demonstrated their unparalleled contribution to Pakistan's economic stability and growth. "The success of overseas Pakistanis is the success of Pakistan. Their welfare, dignity and protection remain our foremost national responsibility," the minister said. He emphasized that the policy integrates the efforts of government institutions, training providers, employers, development partners and the private sector under a unified national vision to ensure that every migrant worker receives support at every stage of the migration cycle. Chaudhry Salik Hussain stressed that the state's responsibility begins long before departure by providing workers with market driven skills, authentic information, ethical recruitment mechanisms and adequate preparation for overseas employment. He said the policy's successful implementation would require strong cooperation among federal and provincial governments, regulatory bodies, employers, development organizations and overseas Pakistani communities. The minister expressed gratitude to provincial governments, development partners including ICMPP and all stakeholders for their valuable contributions to the consultative process. He also commended the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) for its steadfast support and key role in shaping and finalizing the policy.—DNA

Business confidence rebounds in Q2

ISLAMABAD: Business confidence in Pakistan rebounded during the second quarter (Q2) of 2026, with firms reporting improved current business conditions and stronger expectations for the year ahead, Adviser to the Finance Minister, Khurram Schehzad said here Thursday, citing the latest Gallup Pakistan Business Confidence Index. In a post on social media platform X, Khurram Schehzad said all three major components of the Business Confidence Index registered improvement during the quarter, reflecting growing optimism among businesses about the country's economic outlook. According to the survey, the Current Business Conditions indicator improved by nine percentage points, rising from negative 19 percent in the previous quarter to negative 10 percent in Q2, 2026. Around 45 percent of businesses described current business conditions as good, showing a notable improvement over the previous quarter. The Future Business Conditions indicator recorded the strongest gain, increasing by 25 percentage points to positive 12 percent and turning positive for the first time in three quarters. The survey found that 56 percent of businesses expected business conditions to improve over the next 12 months. The Direction of the Country indicator also improved by 12 percentage points, indicating a more positive assessment of Pakistan's overall economic trajectory compared to the previous quarter. Schehzad said Gallup Pakistan attributed the improvement in business sentiment to easing external uncertainty and lower fuel prices ahead of the survey period. Quoting the Executive Director of Gallup Pakistan, he said, "There is no doubt there is recovery in business confidence in the country." The survey covered 527 businesses from the manufacturing, services, construction, financial services, and wholesale and retail trade sectors across 40 districts and cities of Pakistan. Schehzad said that despite existing challenges, the latest survey reflected a clear improvement in business sentiment, with confidence and expectations moving in the right direction, providing an encouraging signal for the country's economic outlook.—DNA

OGRA, Wafi Energy hold safety seminar

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Shahzad Iqbal, Member Gas OGRA, said: "Safety and transparency are shared priorities across the oil sector, and forums like this help the industry learn from one another and raise standards together. We value the contribution of companies like Wafi Energy that bring international experience and technology to these efforts, and we will continue to support collaboration that makes Pakistan's energy sector grow stronger, safe and more resilient

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA), in collaboration with Wafi Energy Pakistan Limited, organized a safety seminar in Islamabad to reinforce operational safety, strengthen regulatory cooperation, and promote the adoption of international best practices across Pakistan's oil supply chain. The seminar brought together senior government officials, regulators, industry leaders, and technical experts to discuss emerging safety challenges and opportunities for collaboration. The event was attended by representatives from the Ministry of Energy (Petroleum Division), the Department of Explosives, OGRA, Wafi Energy Pakistan Limited, Secretary General OCAC and other stakeholders from the downstream petroleum sector. Discussions focused on improving operational safety through stronger governance, technological innovation, and the sharing of global expertise. During the seminar, Wafi Energy Pakistan shared insights from its global operations, highlighting internationally recognized safety standards, operational excellence frameworks, and the use of digital technologies to improve safety performance, transparency, and risk management across fuel supply operations. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Shahzad Iqbal, Member Gas OGRA, said: "Safety and transparency are shared priorities across the oil sector, and forums like this help the industry learn from one another and raise standards together. We value the contribution of companies like Wafi Energy that bring international experience and technology to these efforts, and we will continue to support collaboration that makes Pakistan's energy sector grow stronger, safe and more resilient." Imran Qureshi, Director Corporate and Government Relations, Wafi Energy Pakistan, said the company remains committed to supporting Pakistan's energy sector by sharing global expertise and promoting a strong culture of safety. "As Pakistan's energy needs grow, a safe and well-governed oil sector is central to the country's progress. We are grateful to OGRA for the opportunity to share our experience and to learn from others in the industry. Seminars like these help build a safer, more resilient energy sector for Pakistan and its people." Owais Sultan, Director Manufacturing and Distribution, Wafi Energy Pakistan, emphasized that safety is fundamental to operational excellence. "Safety, at its core, is about people. Every global standard and system we invest in exists so that our teams, our customers and the communities around us stay safe. Industry progress is faster when government and companies work together with shared responsibility." Participants reaffirmed the importance of sustained collaboration between regulators and industry to enhance safety standards, protect people and the environment, and strengthen the long-term resilience of Pakistan's energy sector.

Briefs

PM grieved
over passing
of Ameer-ul-
Azeem

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday expressed deep grief over the passing of Secretary General of Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan Ameer-ul-Azeem. Paying tribute to the deceased, he described the late Ameer-ul-Azeem as a visionary politician and said that his contributions to the field of politics would always be remembered. Offering his condolences, he expressed sympathies with the bereaved family in this hour of grief. The prime minister prayed for peace for the departed soul and strength for the bereaved family to bear the loss.—APP

President
felicitates
Egyptian
leadership

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday extended warmest felicitations to President of the Arab Republic of Egypt Abdel Fattah El Sisi, and the people of Egypt on their National Day, reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to further strengthening bilateral ties for the mutual benefit of the two peoples. The president, in a statement, said that Pakistan and Egypt enjoyed close and cordial relations, rooted in shared values, mutual trust and long-standing bonds of friendship. He noted that the two countries have maintained a tradition of co-operation and understanding, both bilaterally and in multilateral forums, and continue to work closely on issues of common interest. The growing cooperation between the two nations across diverse fields including trade, investment, education, culture, defence and people-to-people exchanges is very encouraging, the president remarked. President Zardari said that Pakistan highly valued its relations with Egypt and remained committed to further strengthening this partnership for the mutual benefit of the people of both countries. He appreciated the fact that the leadership of both countries had actively coordinated for the resolution of the recent regional conflict and expressed confidence that the bonds of friendship and cooperation between Pakistan and Egypt would continue to deepen in the years ahead, while contributing to regional harmony, sustainable development and greater economic opportunity.—APP

Trans-Caspian Transport
Route importance highlighted

Chairman of the AIR Center, Baku, Dr. Farid Shafiyev, highlighted the growing geopolitical significance of the Caspian region, noting that recent global developments have reinforced the need for diversified transport and energy corridors

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Regional Studies in Islamabad convened a seminar jointly organized by its Türkiye, Azerbaijan and Central Asia Programs, featuring leading policymakers and regional experts. The seminar titled "Understanding the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR): Challenges, Opportunities and Prospects for Expanding Eurasian Connectivity to Pakistan and the Indian Ocean." was also followed by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Institute of Regional Studies, Islamabad and the Center of Analysis of International Relations (AIR Center), Baku, Azerbaijan. Speakers from Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Türkiye, and Kazakhstan emphasized the growing importance of the Middle Corridor in strengthening Eurasian connectivity, diversifying supply chains, and enhancing Pakistan's role as a gateway to the Indian Ocean.

President IRS, Ambassador Jauhar Saleem inaugurated the session by describing the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route as an emerging driver of regional integration and economic cooperation. Drawing on successful examples of regional integration, he noted that South Asia remains the world's least integrated region and stressed that maximizing the corridor's potential requires improved infrastructure, customs harmonization, digitalization, and stronger regional cooperation. He highlighted Pakistan's strategic location and maritime access through Karachi and Gwadar ports as key assets for linking Central Asia with global markets. He also welcomed the signing of the MoU between IRS and the AIR Center as a milestone for strengthening joint research and policy dialogue



on Eurasian affairs Chairman of the AIR Center, Baku, Dr. Farid Shafiyev, highlighted the growing geopolitical significance of the Caspian region, noting that recent global developments have reinforced the need for diversified transport and energy corridors. He described the Middle Corridor as a complementary route connecting China, Central Asia, and Europe while emphasizing Azerbaijan's investments in transport infrastructure and the importance of regional cooperation in strengthening connectivity. Dr. Kubatbek Rakhimov, Executive Director of Applicata – Centre for Strategic Solutions and Expert at the Valdai Discussion Club, discussed the corridor's operational challenges, including infrastructure bottlenecks and limited transport capacity. He stressed that Pakistan has be-

come an increasingly important component of Eurasian logistics and called for greater investment in digital systems and practical infrastructure to support future growth. Dr. Recep Yorulmaz of Ankara Yildirim Beyazıt University emphasized that successful connectivity depends as much on institutional cooperation as geography. He highlighted Türkiye's investments in regional infrastructure and stressed that integrated logistics hubs, stronger industrial cooperation, and improved regional connectivity would create new economic and diplomatic opportunities across Eurasia. Mr. Rakhim Oshakbayev, Director of the Center for Applied Research "TALAP", Astana, observed that the Middle Corridor remains a strategically important route between China and Europe despite ongoing

geopolitical challenges. He encouraged regional countries, including Pakistan, to pursue diversified connectivity strategies supported by greater investment, stronger logistics networks, and evidence-based policymaking. The seminar concluded with the signing of the MoU between the Institute of Regional Studies and the AIR Center, reaffirming both institutions' commitment to advancing research collaboration and policy dialogue. Participants agreed that while the Middle Corridor offers significant opportunities for expanding Eurasian connectivity, its long-term success will depend on coordinated investment, institutional cooperation, and sustained regional commitment. Pakistan's strategic location positions it to play an increasingly important role in linking Eurasia with the Indian Ocean.

Flood threat looms
as heavy rains batter
river catchments

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Thursday warned of rising flood risks across several parts of the country during July 23-24 as a strong monsoon system interacting with a westerly wave is expected to trigger widespread rainfall, rapid river inflows, flash floods in mountainous areas, hill torrents and urban flooding in vulnerable cities, prompting authorities to monitor river catchments and disaster-prone regions closely. According to a hydrological situation alert issued by the NDMA, widespread rain with isolated heavy falls is expected over Gilgit-Baltistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and parts of Balochistan during the next two days. The authority warned that flash flooding could occur in rivers, streams and seasonal waterways across several districts of Gilgit-Baltistan, including Ghizer, Hunza, Nagar, Gilgit, Diamer, Ghanche, Shigar, Astore, Kharmang and Roundu. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, flood risks have been highlighted for Chitral, Malakand, Shangla, Battagram, Kohistan, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Charsadda, Nowshera, Mardan, Swabi and Peshawar, as well as local streams and hill torrents in Khyber, Kurram, Orakzai, Kohat, Bannu, Karak, Hangu, North and South Waziristan, Bajaur and Mohmand districts. The alert said areas of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, including Bagh, Haveli, Poonch, Sudhnoti, Kotli, Bhimber and Mirpur, could also face flash flooding due to rising water levels in rivers and tributaries. In Punjab, hill torrents in Dera Ghazi Khan and Rajanpur and the Kurram River near Isa Khel in Mianwali district remain vulnerable to flooding. Similar threats have been identified in Balochistan, particularly in Zhob, Sherani, Musakhel, Loralai, Killa Saifullah, Ziarat, Duki, Barkhan, Harnai, Sibi, Kachhi, Khuzdar, Lehri and Jhal Magsi. The NDMA also warned of urban flooding in Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Faisalabad, Mianwali, Khushab, Gujrat, Gujranwala, Sialkot and Narowal in Punjab, as well as Peshawar, Nowshera, Charsadda and Mardan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. On the river system, the authority said high flood levels are expected in the Chenab River at Marala, while medium flooding is likely upstream of Mangla on the Jhelum River. Medium to high flood levels are also anticipated in associated nullahs of the Jhelum and Chenab basins, including Dora, Dotta, Dowara, Bhimber, Halsi, Aik and Pakhu. The alert added that flows are expected to increase in the Ravi basin nullahs, including Bein, Basantar, Deg and Sakki, while River Ravi at Balloki may reach low flood level during the next 24 to 48 hours.—APP

1 PM calls for
aligning population
planning

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday stressed the urgent need to align population planning with national development, economic stability, and human resource improvement, calling for enhanced provincial coordination and effective public awareness campaigns to control population growth. The prime minister, chairing a high-level meeting regarding population welfare in the country, said that rapidly growing population was the country's biggest challenge and measures for population control and welfare must be treated as a national duty. Calling the balance in population a sole guarantor for sustainable national development, he directed authorities to convene a meeting of the National Population Council at the earliest. During the meeting, the relevant officials briefed the prime minister on the country's demographic trends, population welfare initiatives, and preparations for the National Population Council meeting. It was informed that the council's meeting would be convened soon, bringing together the chief ministers of all provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan, the prime minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and representatives of all relevant institutions and stakeholders to formulate a comprehensive national strategy. It was told that the operating procedures for the National Population Council Secretariat have been finalized, and the National Stabilization Plan 2026-2035 was currently being prepared, which would present a unified national framework to curb the rate of population growth, setting a target to reduce the current growth rate from 2.55% down to 1.25% by the year 2035.—DNA

Industrialization, local
manufacturing vital

RAWALPINDI: Federal Minister for Law and Justice, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar emphasized that Pakistan's economic stability relies on expanding industrial capacity, bolstering local manufacturing, and reducing dependence on imported commodities. Addressing the inauguration ceremony of a new beverage facility at Murree Brewery, the minister highlighted that increasing domestic production is essential to curtailing the national import bill and fulfilling the market demand of a growing population. "We will see improvement in our economy as our industrial output increases. With such a large market, how can we cater to our public without industrialization," the minister said. Commending Isphanyar M. Bhandara, MNA for investing in modern, automated production lines for soft drinks, juices, and bottled water, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar noted that the facility successfully maintained workforce levels despite introducing advanced machinery. "I saw how, in a small space, mechanical processes enable high-volume production. What is also very positive is that even with the installation of such modern machinery, employment has not been eliminated. This, I believe, is the balance we need to

maintain," he said. He added that industrial growth generates an extensive trickle-down economic chain, spanning transportation, logistics, retail, and supply networks that strengthen the broader economy. "Look at the market here. They are producing juices and cold drinks, and then you have the people who take it to market, the carriage, the retailer and those who supply it further, is a whole chain of activity that increases employment and strengthens the economy," he said. He congratulated Bhandara on the new facility and expressed hope that hundreds of similar units would be established across the country to generate employment and contribute to national development. Speaking at the event, Isphanyar M. Bhandara said the installation of the new beverage plant would boost local production and create new jobs. "With the installation of this new plant, around 100 jobs have been added to our company. It is very encouraging to see new machinery being installed and production taking place locally," Bhandara said. He further said that there is no need to look outside the country. "We have a beautiful country with a huge market, and Pakistan has excellent potential in food and beverages.—APP

Polish delegation applauds
NDMA's high Tñyeche edge

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A high-level Polish delegation led by Pawel Dabrowski, Plenipotentiary of Poland's Minister of the Interior for International Cooperation, visited the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) headquarters on Thursday, where it reviewed Pakistan's disaster preparedness systems, emergency response capabilities and technological initiatives aimed at reducing disaster risks and strengthening resilience, according to a press release. The delegation was briefed at the National Emergency Operation Centre (NEOC) on Pakistan's evolving disaster management framework and the role of advanced technologies in forecasting, preparedness and response. Chairman NDMA Lt Gen Inam Haider Malik outlined measures being undertaken to enhance disaster risk reduction, regional cooperation and international coordination. He highlighted efforts to improve early warning systems, strengthen emergency preparedness and integrate next-generation technologies into disaster management

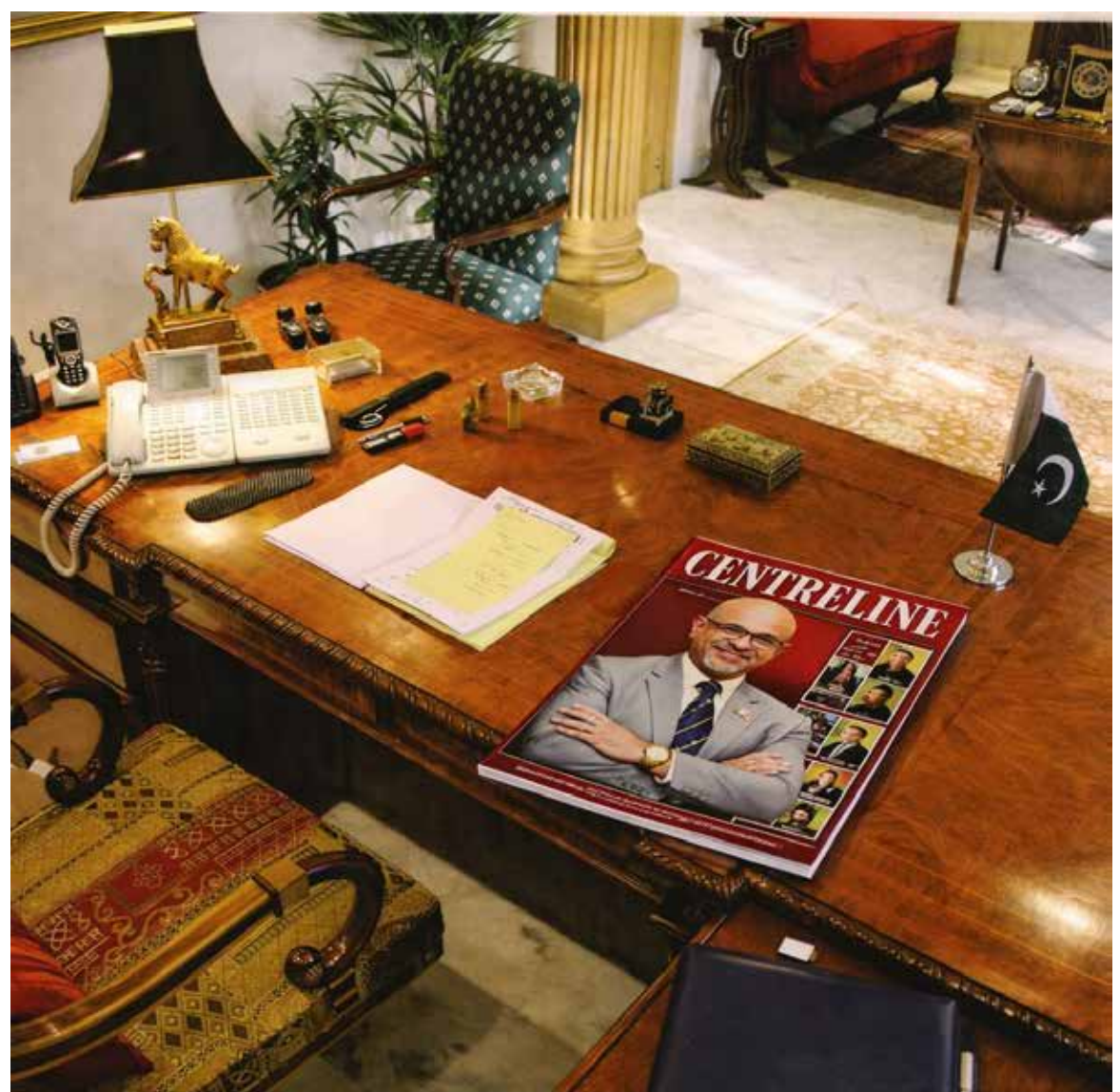
operations. The visiting delegation was given a detailed presentation on the NEOC's operational capabilities and NDMA's coordination mechanisms with federal and provincial authorities, security institutions, humanitarian organizations and international partners. Officials also explained Pakistan's approach to anticipatory action, localized risk communication and resource mobilisation aimed at ensuring timely and effective disaster response. During the visit, the delegation was shown Disaster Lens 2026, a platform designed to support disaster monitoring and preparedness, along with various comprehensive international simulation exercises conducted to test response readiness and coordination mechanisms. The Polish delegation appreciated NDMA's disaster management model and operational capabilities, describing them as a valuable example of modern disaster preparedness and response. Both sides expressed interest in expanding cooperation in disaster management, emergency response and capacity building, while underscoring the need for stronger institutional linkages to address growing challenges posed by climate change and complex disasters.

Registration
of cleft lip,
cleft palate
patients in
process

ISLAMABAD: Registration of Cleft lip, cleft palate patients is in process for providing them free medical services, this was by Islamabad Cleft Lip and Palate Association (ICLAPA). For this purpose, in a statement issued here, it was stated that a free medical camp will be arranged here within next couple of months for treatment and surgery of the registered patients. "The patients are being treated by a team of physicians and surgeons at in twin city hospitals. We formally register the patients before having their treatment and surgery," it was added. The deserving patients have been asked to get them registered with the Association at the earliest. The Association has been working to provide free medical facilities to the poor families since 2004 with the support of philanthropists. The ICLAPA is a group of volunteers, which relied on donors to bring hope and happiness in the lives of people, for whom it was financially difficult to give treatment to their children. She hoped that well-to-do people will come forward to support the Association for providing free services to this neglected section of the society.—APP

FIA secures
conviction
in money
laundering case

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Anti-Money Laundering Circle Islamabad has secured a major court victory after a special court convicted a former Auditor Controller in a money laundering case, sentencing him to two years' rigorous imprisonment, imposing a fine of Rs200,000 and ordering the confiscation of his vehicle. An FIA official told APP on Thursday that Special Judge Central Rawalpindi Abdul Rehman Muhammad Arif, in his judgment dated July 7, 2026, convicted Syed Maqsood Hussain Shah, a former Auditor Controller (MR Rawalpindi), in FIR No. 60/2021 under Sections 3 and 4 of the Anti-Money Laundering Act, 2010. The official said the investigation established that the accused had generated illegal proceeds through the predicate offence registered in FIR No. 40/2021, involving fraudulent salary bills prepared in the Officer Pay Section. He said the investigation further revealed that the accused laundered the illicit funds and purchased a Toyota Corolla XLi in his own name using the proceeds of crime.—APP



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Iran moves the battle to Kuwait and Yemen

ABDULRAHMAN AL-RASHED

ON the ground, the Iranian regime has begun executing its threats to expand the conflict by igniting two new border fronts. The first is in the southern Red Sea, threatening to close the Bab Al-Mandab Strait via the Houthis. The second is in the northern Arabian Gulf, through direct and unprecedented threats aimed at Kuwait. The gravity of this shift is not confined to Kuwait or the Red Sea; it extends to the entire regional security architecture. Iran is no longer limiting the confrontation to its original adversaries, the US and Israel, but is instead shifting the conflict toward neighboring countries and strategic waterways. This behavior does not represent a defensive reaction as much as it reflects a strategic trajectory that the Iranian military project has been building for decades, grounded in expanding its influence and geopolitical control over surrounding nations. Statements issued by Iranian institutions warrant close attention, as the intensity of threats against Kuwait has escalated. The Tasnim news agency has released statements that closely mirror those issued by Baghdad prior to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Tehran cites the limited American military presence in Kuwait as a pretext for an attack, completely ignoring the fact that this presence dates back decades and serves primarily as a deterrent against any potential invasion, rather than acting as a major base for the recent US operations against Iran. The question raised today is: how can Kuwait, and the Gulf states along with it, deal with this threat? The challenge surpasses individual national capabilities and demands a return to the concept of collective action, through building a cohesive regional front backed by an international alliance that explicitly rejects any pretexts for expanding the war or legitimizing aggression against neighboring countries. While Washington, amid its preoccupation with managing the military confrontation, may not be expected to lead the diplomatic initiative, it can draw clear red lines confirming that the security of the Gulf and its maritime waterways falls within its vital strategic interests. Iran has not confined itself to verbal threats against Kuwait; rather, it has repeatedly struck water and electricity facilities and expanded the circle of threat to include Bahrain as well. It appears that Tehran realizes that the tightening naval blockade on its ports, along with the potential expansion of US operations along its coastlines, could strip it of its influence over the Strait of Hormuz – the most critical leverage it has utilized in both the war and the negotiations. Consequently, it

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is attempting to manufacture alternative leverage. Among these efforts is transforming Bab Al-Mandab into a strategic blackmail point through the Houthis and seeking to impose a new security reality in the northern Gulf – an attempt that invokes, despite differing circumstances, some features of the fait accompli policy pursued by Saddam Hussein's regime in 1990. It is notable that Iran's behavior has become cyclical; whenever it loses a strategic card, it hastens to open a new front to reproduce its tools of pressure and blackmail. To mitigate the political and legal costs, and to avoid appearing as a direct aggressor state, it is highly likely to rely more heavily on its regional proxies, such as the Yemeni and Iraqi militias.

What are the prospects of success for this new Iranian positioning? The answer is not easy because analyzing Iranian behavior cannot rely solely on assumptions of traditional rationality. The Iranian leadership also faces complex domestic equations and it fears that any impression of defeat could destabilize its internal position, after spending the country's resources for decades on building military capabilities and financing wars. It appears that the Houthis in Yemen have been tasked with transforming Bab Al-Mandab into an operational alternative to the Strait of Hormuz, given Iran's declining ability to use the latter as leverage due to American military strikes. With the Houthis already rushing to threaten navigation, Yemeni forces – alongside the Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen – are highly likely to find regional and international support to prevent the disruption of one of the world's most vital trade arteries. The expected response is not confined to the military dimension; rather, the diplomatic arena could be wider on this specific front. Major powers relying on navigation in the Red Sea – foremost among them China and India, in addition to European nations – possess a direct interest in ensuring freedom of navigation. Consequently, any military action aimed at ending the Houthi threat to the maritime waterway may enjoy a broader international consensus because it would be a defense of the principle of international freedom of navigation, rather than an extension of the ongoing war in the Gulf. It appears that the Houthis in Yemen have been tasked with transforming Bab Al-Mandab into an operational alternative to the Strait of Hormuz, given Iran's declining ability to use the latter as leverage due to American military strikes. In any case, building this regional and international bloc is no longer a political option. It has become a strategic necessity – not only to confront current threats but also to deal with any arrangements that the outcomes of the war may impose in the future. Iran is not merely seeking to manage a temporary crisis; rather, it is attempting to redraw the strategic map of the region according to its new narrative so that it emerges from the war, even if it stops early, with zones of influence and rules of engagement different from those that existed before the war. Consequently, the discussion is no longer just about how to end the war but about the shape of the regional order that will form next.

Trionda, Trust, and Pakistan's Moment on the World Stage

Qamar Bashir



The third source of pride has been Pakistan's performance at the United Nations. During one of the most sensitive periods in recent international affairs, Pakistan's representatives articulated their positions with clarity, conviction, and professionalism. They defended principles of sovereignty, international law, dialogue, and peaceful dispute resolution while engaging effectively with representatives of major powers. For overseas Pakistanis, these moments were especially meaningful

AS the FIFA World Cup 2026 unfolds across the United States, Canada, and Mexico, billions of people are captivated by the world's greatest sporting event. Every goal, every save, every pass, every moment of triumph and heartbreak revolves around a single object: Trionda, the official FIFA World Cup 2026 match ball manufactured in Sialkot, Pakistan. For Pakistanis, Trionda is much more than a football. It is a symbol of excellence, craftsmanship, innovation, and international recognition. Although Pakistan has never qualified for the final stages of the FIFA World Cup, it has nevertheless become an indispensable participant in the tournament. Every team plays with a football made in Pakistan. Every goal scored in the tournament is scored with a football produced by Pakistani hands. Yet, as I watch these developments from the United States, I find that Trionda is only one part of a much larger story.

The real story is that Pakistan today finds itself at the center of global attention not merely because of what it manufactures, but because of what it has increasingly come to represent: a country capable of building bridges where others build walls, a country capable of facilitating dialogue when confrontation appears inevitable, and a country whose voice is increasingly being heard in discussions that shape the future of regions far beyond its borders. The first source of pride is Trionda itself. The success of Sialkot's football industry demonstrates that Pakistan possesses the talent, ingenuity, and entrepreneurial spirit necessary to compete at the highest levels of international manufacturing. The second and perhaps more consequential source of pride is Pakistan's growing diplomatic stature. The Middle East recently stood at the edge of a dangerous and potentially devastating confrontation. The conflict involving Iran, Israel, and the United States threatened not only regional stability but also the global economy. Energy supplies, international shipping routes, financial markets, trade flows, and investment confidence all faced uncertainty. The consequences of a prolonged conflict would have extended far beyond the region, affecting billions of people around the world. It was during this critical period that Pakistan emerged as an active diplomatic participant. What makes Pakistan's diplomatic role particularly noteworthy is not merely the outcome of the negotiations but the degree to which Pakistan was perceived as a trusted facilitator of communication during a period of extraordinary tension. In international diplomacy, agreements are often delayed, diluted, or derailed by layers of intermediaries, competing bureaucracies, conflicting agendas, and institutional rivalries. Messages pass through multiple channels, each adding interpretation, hesitation, or distortion. Frequently, noise overwhelms substance and misunderstandings replace clarity. The diplomatic engagement associated

with Pakistan appeared different. The most valuable asset in diplomacy is not military strength, economic power, or political influence. It is trust. Trust cannot be purchased. It cannot be demanded. It must be earned through consistency, discretion, credibility, and reliability over time.

The events surrounding the negotiations suggested that Pakistan had accumulated a remarkable reservoir of such trust. It appeared capable of maintaining communication with multiple stakeholders simultaneously while preserving confidence on all sides. Whether engaging with Washington, Tehran, regional capitals, or major international partners, Pakistan demonstrated a capacity to remain a credible interlocutor at a moment when credible interlocutors were desperately needed. The resulting Memorandum of Understanding carried significance far beyond the text of the document itself. It symbolized the possibility that dialogue could prevail over escalation and negotiation over confrontation. It also reflected a level of confidence in Pakistan's diplomatic role that would have been difficult to imagine only a few years ago.

For many Pakistanis, one of the most powerful aspects of the process was the perception that Pakistan's leadership had earned the confidence necessary to engage directly with key decision-makers during a period of historic importance. Whether viewed from Islamabad, Washington, Tehran, Ankara, Beijing, or elsewhere, the broader message was clear: Pakistan was no longer merely observing history; it was participating in it. The importance of this trust cannot be overstated. Military power creates deterrence. Economic power creates leverage. Diplomatic trust creates opportunity. A nation that can communicate with competing powers, maintain relationships across geopolitical divides, and contribute to reducing tensions acquires a form of influence that cannot be measured merely in economic or military terms. Such influence enhances strategic relevance and elevates international standing. The third source of pride has been Pakistan's performance at the United Nations. During one of the most sensitive periods in recent international affairs, Pakistan's representatives articulated their positions with clarity, conviction, and professionalism. They defended principles of sovereignty, international law, dialogue, and peaceful dispute resolution while engaging effectively with representatives of major powers. For overseas Pakistanis, these moments were especially meaningful. Watching Pakistan's voice resonate within the world's most important diplomatic forum created a sense that the country was participating confidently in debates of global significance. The interventions of Pakistan's representatives reflected preparation, intellectual rigor, and diplomatic maturity. Rather than reacting emotionally to unfolding events, they advanced their positions in a manner that projected confidence and credibility. Their performance demonstrated that Pakistan possesses

diplomats capable of representing the country effectively on the most consequential international stages.

The fourth source of pride has been the performance of Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States. As someone who has spent much of his professional life in communications, public diplomacy, and media management, I watched his appearances with particular interest. He appeared before major American and international media organizations and faced probing questions from experienced journalists determined to test every aspect of Pakistan's position. What distinguished his performance was his composure. He neither avoided difficult questions nor allowed himself to become entangled in controversy. Instead, he consistently articulated Pakistan's perspective with clarity, confidence, and discipline. He explained Pakistan's positions, defended its interests, advocated peace and stability, and communicated effectively with influential audiences throughout the world. His media engagements projected an image of Pakistan that was thoughtful, responsible, and constructive. He demonstrated that it is possible to defend national interests vigorously while maintaining professionalism and diplomatic decorum. Taken together, these developments tell a larger story. For too long, international narratives about Pakistan have focused almost exclusively on instability, conflict, and crisis. While challenges undoubtedly remain, they do not define the nation. Pakistan is also a country of skilled workers, innovative entrepreneurs, capable diplomats, resilient citizens, and remarkable achievements.

Most importantly, these achievements should inspire Pakistan's younger generation. The workers of Sialkot, the entrepreneurs who built world-class industries, the diplomats who represented the nation abroad, and the leaders who pursued dialogue rather than confrontation all demonstrate what Pakistan can achieve when vision, competence, and determination come together. As billions continue to watch FIFA World Cup 2026, Trionda will remain at the center of every match. Yet beyond football itself lies a larger and more enduring story: the story of a nation that is increasingly finding its voice, earning trust, building influence, and contributing to the world in ways that command attention and respect. For Pakistanis at home and abroad, that is a source of immense pride. And perhaps it is also a glimpse of the Pakistan of tomorrow—a Pakistan whose greatest contribution to the world is measured not by conflict or controversy, but by excellence, diplomacy, credibility, and constructive engagement.

– Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)
Former Press Minister,
Embassy of Pakistan to France
Former Press Attaché to Malaysia
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Defending Pakistan with Prophetic Guidance

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



Grievances, the Quran directs, must be channelled through lawful avenues – through courts, scholarly counsel, and reasoned advocacy – never through the chaos of the sword. Even in the face of oppression, the Prophet instructed believers to render due rights to authorities while petitioning Allah for their own. The exemplary patience of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, who suffered imprisonment under political duress yet never...

IN the shadowed epochs before the dawn of Islam, the affairs of mankind were beset by profound confusion and moral clutter. The pursuit of ethical values, the recognition of basic human rights, the establishment of social equality, and the fair administration of justice remained fragmented ideals, often trampled beneath tyranny, tribal feuds, and unchecked passions. It fell to the boundless mercy of Almighty Allah to illuminate this darkness through His divine word, the Holy Quran, which brought order, harmony, and clarity to the chaos of human existence. The Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, the final Messenger and Seal of the Prophets, then embodied these heavenly injunctions in his blessed life and teachings, translating sacred principles into living practice for all generations to follow.

As centuries unfolded, new challenges and complexities inevitably emerged within Muslim societies. These were met not by innovation detached from revelation, but through the profound insight and disciplined wisdom of the rightly guided Imams and classical Islamic scholars. Their verdicts and interpretations remained ever subordinate in spirit and letter to the Quran and the authentic Sunnah, ensuring fidelity to the original divine sources. In this rich tradition, the requirements of an Islamic state were meticulously outlined; the conduct of government, the promotion of public welfare, the organisation of society, and the solemn duties of jihad. Even the refined manners of warfare received explicit attention, together with the strict conditions and ethical boundaries that must govern any legitimate striving in Allah's cause. Thus, faith offered comprehensive guidance for both peace and peril.

Regrettably, in our own turbulent times, certain elements have invoked the noble name of Islam to perpetrate acts that the Quran and Sunnah utterly repudiate. Prominent among these forbidden paths is khuruj – armed rebellion against legitimate state authority – a violation that the classical scholarly tra-

dition of Islam has condemned with one voice across fourteen centuries as a source of fitnah and grave sin. In Pakistan, extremist factions deliberately distort this consensus to legitimise their campaigns of insurgency and terror. Yet the evidence stands irrefutable; upholding constituted authority remains a binding religious obligation upon every Muslim citizen.

The Holy Quran commands with unmistakable clarity: "Obey Allah, obey the Messenger, and those in authority among you." No scholarly interpretation grants sanction to armed revolt against Pakistan's institutions. The Prophet, peace be upon him, cautioned that whoever withdraws from the community even by a handspan and dies in that state departs in the death of ignorance. Ibn Taymiyyah, frequently misquoted by militants, in fact affirmed that prolonged rule by an imperfect leader is preferable to anarchy, and he rejected rebellion outright. Imam al-Nawawi and Imam al-Ghazali similarly warned that the cure of insurrection proves worse than the ailment of injustice it claims to heal. The Prophet likened rightful leadership to a shield behind which the people are protected; Pakistan's security forces fulfil this sacred role today, rendering support for them not merely civic duty but an act of profound religious obedience. Grievances, the Quran directs, must be channelled through lawful avenues – through courts, scholarly counsel, and reasoned advocacy – never through the chaos of the sword. Even in the face of oppression, the Prophet instructed believers to render due rights to authorities while petitioning Allah for their own. The exemplary patience of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, who suffered imprisonment under political duress yet never summoned revolt, offers Muslims an enduring model of principled forbearance. Pakistan's Constitution, itself rooted in Islamic ideals of justice and shura (mutual consultation), provides ample mechanisms for accountability and reform. Democratic participation and legal engagement thus constitute the Islamically sanctioned road to national betterment. At the heart of this guidance shines the Seerah of the

Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, as the consummate model of wasatiyyah – the divinely ordained path of moderation, mercy, and balance. He declared, "I was sent as a mercy to all of mankind," establishing that his mission was never one of bloodshed or domination but of compassion and upliftment. Upon the conquest of Makkah, he forgave his bitterest enemies with magnanimity, proclaiming that no reproach would cling to them. This act of clemency remains the authentic Sunnah, bearing no resemblance to the violence extremists perpetrate in his name.

The Quran defines the Muslim Ummah as "a middle nation," chosen for equity and temperance. The Prophet protected the lives, property, and dignity of non-Muslims under covenant, warning that he would be their opponent on the Day of Judgment if they were wronged. He commanded kindness and justice toward those who had not waged war against the faith, visited the sick among other communities, reasoned gently with adversaries, and consistently preferred peace when it could be honourably secured. "Make things easy and do not make them difficult," he counselled, rejecting the harsh extremism that burdens societies. True jihad, as he taught upon returning from the battlefield, begins with the greater struggle against one's own soul – an internal discipline that terrorism utterly betrays.

Pakistan was founded upon this prophetic ethos of justice, tolerance, and inclusive citizenship. In steadfastly defending its institutions against those who would fracture communal peace, its people engage in a service honoured by the divine. The Quran promises that Allah stands with the patient and the persevering. The path of rebellion leads only to greater discord and spiritual ruin, while the way of the Prophet calls believers to mercy, lawful order, justice for all citizens regardless of faith, and unwavering commitment to the welfare of the nation. In this balanced, compassionate, and principled course lies the true flourishing of Pakistan and the enduring honour of the Muslim Ummah.

Briefs

Shehbaz reaffirms unwavering solidarity...

FROM PAGE 01
through critical regional chokepoints, including the Red Sea, the Strait of Hormuz, and the wider Middle Eastern waterways. The bilateral dialogue underscores Pakistan's active defense and diplomatic posture in supporting its brotherly Gulf allies amidst rising maritime security challenges. Both nations reaffirmed their joint commitment to fostering long-term stability, protecting critical energy infrastructure, and upholding open international sea lanes against non-state threats.

Pakistan 'disappointed' with EU report on...

FROM PAGE 01
"Any military strikes by Pakistan were undertaken in exercise of its right to self-defence under principles of necessity and as a measure of last resort and directed only and exclusively against terrorists and their logistical support bases in Afghanistan." He maintained that Pakistan's "response was proportionate to the level of threat while strictly adhering to the principle of distinction, precaution and proportionality". "The scale and scope of this action reflected restraint, particularly in light of the severity and frequency of terrorist attacks faced by Pakistan. Pakistan rejects any insinuation in this regard otherwise." Both the government and the military had asserted that Pakistani forces had targeted an ammunition and drone storage site in the airstrikes conducted on the night of March 16.

US-Saudi nuclear deal conditional on country...

FROM PAGE 01
"The United States is not opposed to Civil (Non-Enriched) Nuclear Facilities," Trump said. Saudi Arabia's longstanding position has been that it would not sign the Abraham Accords unless there is an agreement on a roadmap to Palestinian statehood. The Saudi Embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Trump's post. Saudi Arabia's longstanding position has been that it would not sign the Abraham Accords unless there was an agreement on a roadmap to Palestinian statehood. The United Arab Emirates and Bahrain signed the Abraham Accords during Trump's first term in 2020, breaking a longstanding taboo to become the first Arab states to recognise Israel in a quarter century. Morocco and Sudan followed suit. The Trump administration on Wednesday said the civil nuclear deal abides by non-proliferation agreements in the US Atomic Energy Act, which are among the world's strongest. Saudi Arabia, the world's top oil exporter, said the agreement supports efforts to diversify energy sources, and includes the "highest international standards" of nuclear safety, security and nonproliferation.

United States vows 'major...'

FROM PAGE 01
The crisis has rattled global energy markets, with Brent crude prices surging past \$100 per barrel amid fears that the Bab el-Mandeb Strait could be closed, disrupting vital shipping routes. In response, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi denounced the U.S. approach as "irrational" and "domineering," accusing Washington of fueling instability instead of pursuing diplomacy. Tehran insists the Houthis act independently, though it has long provided them with financial and military support. Saudi Arabia has begun diverting oil exports through pipelines to bypass potential blockades, while global markets brace for wider fallout.

Spain top FIFA rankings, Saudi 58th after World Cup

The Saudi team are now in 58th place globally, and fifth in Asia. The highest-ranked nations from the Asian Football Federation are Japan in 17th, Iran (22nd), Australia (28th), and South Korea (32nd)

DNA

DUBAI: The Saudi Arabian national football team have jumped three places in the FIFA World Rankings, which were announced this week following the World Cup. Spain, who beat Argentina 1-0 on Sunday to claim their second World Cup triumph, climbed

to top spot. The Saudi team are now in 58th place globally, and fifth in Asia. The highest-ranked nations from the Asian Football Federation are Japan in 17th, Iran (22nd), Australia (28th), and South Korea (32nd). Qatar (59), Uzbekistan (60), Iraq (63), the UAE (68), and Jordan (73) all dropped in the rankings. Behind Spain in the rankings come losing finalists Argentina in second

place, France in third, England in fourth, and Brazil in fifth. Morocco have secured sixth place, their best-ever ranking, after their recent World Cup appearance was ended in the quarterfinals by France. Portugal fell two places to seventh, followed by Belgium in eighth, the Netherlands in ninth, and Mexico in 10th. After reaching the World Cup quarterfi-

nals, Norway achieved the biggest jump in the rankings, climbing 12 places to 19th. Tunisia suffered the worst drop of any team, falling 12 places to 57th. Egypt's performance at the World Cup propelled them to 24th place, while Panama dropped to 44th. The Democratic Republic of Congo came in at 41st, and Cape Verde climbed three places to 64th.

Dutch riders dreaming of crazy party corner of Alpe d'Huez

"I have super special memories of this climb because when I was a little kid, like so many other Dutch people, I went there with my parents on holiday," said the 26-year-old Netcompany Ineos rider, who won two Tour stages last year

VOIRON: Dutch corner is known for being the biggest and craziest party in cycling. For the latest updates, follow us @Arab-NewsSport Thousands of orange-clad, booze-fueled cycling enthusiasts and young revellers flock to corner seven of Alpe d'Huez every time the Tour de France climbs the iconic mountain. And they create a unique, noisy and hectic atmosphere – even by Tour de France mountain pass standards. This year, the Tour will head up the 21 Alpe d'Huez hairpins on Friday – and some of the Dutch fans rocking to Euro-pop tunes will have already been there for days by the time the peloton

passes. More Dutch riders have won a Tour de France stage on Alpe d'Huez than any other nationality, including the host country. For Dutch riders in the Tour, this will be a poignant moment. "It's a super special mountain, of course, Dutch Mountain and the famous corner seven," said Dutch rider Thymen Arensman before the Tour began. Arensman has been on Dutch Corner before – and not just for training rides. "I have super special memories of this climb because when I was a little kid, like so many other Dutch people, I went there with my parents on holiday," said the 26-year-old Netcompany

Ineos rider, who won two Tour stages last year. "I was really keen and eager as a little child to do this climb also as fast as possible. "So (I have) really good memories there from my childhood." Arensman and his Netcompany team-mates trained on the Alpe d'Huez hairpins before the Tour began. "We did the climb a few times, but the climb is still just as hard as I remember as a little kid," he added. "The famous corner seven will be amazing." Just getting to that point of the race this year will have been no mean feat, given how hard the 113th edition of the Grande Boucle has been. A suffocating heat-wave in the first 10 days,

as well as record-breaking speeds have made this Tour tougher than almost any other in history. But the hardest part of the race was saved for the end, with three consecutive uphill finishes in the Alps before Sunday's procession around Paris. Just a lot of suffering! For some riders, just getting to the end of the Alpe d'Huez stage within the time limit is the goal. "It will depend on how the legs feel and how tight the time limit will be that day! But for sure, the corner, I'm looking forward to (it)." Daan Hoole, who is a Decathlon CMA CGM team-mate of teenage French prodigy Paul Seixas, is riding his first Tour. – APP

ACP pays tribute to Austrian mountaineer

ISLAMABAD: Alpine Club of Pakistan (ACP) on Thursday honoured Austrian mountaineer Lukas Woerle for his extraordinary courage and selfless rescue of a Pakistani high-altitude porter during the Broad Peak (8,047m) expedition in July 2023. The ceremony, held at the ACP headquarters under the patronage of ACP President Maj. Gen. (Retd) Irfan Arshad, was attended by Austrian Ambassador to Pakistan Wolfgang Oliver Kutschera as chief guest. Secretary Ministry of Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) Mo-hyuddin Ahmad Wani, Director General Pakistan Sports Board Yawar Hussain, senior government officials, members of the diplomatic community, renowned mountaineers, climbers and media representatives also attended the event. According to the ACP, Woerle abandoned his summit attempt after finding Pakistani high-altitude porter Murtaza in critical condition on the summit ridge of Broad Peak. With the assistance of American climber Dan Buonomo, he successfully rescued the porter and brought him safely to Camp 3, placing human life above personal achievement. Speaking on the occasion, ACP President Irfan Arshad said Woerle's selfless act embodied the true spirit of mountaineering and would continue to inspire climbers across the world. He said such humanitarian actions further strengthened the longstanding friendship between Pakistan and Austria while promoting ethical values within the international mountaineering community. Austrian Ambassador Wolfgang Oliver Kutschera appreciated the ACP for recognizing an exceptional act of courage and praised Woerle's humanitarian spirit and commitment to save a fellow mountaineer. On the occasion, the ACP president presented a commemorative shield and a Certificate of Honour to Lukas Woerle in recognition of his bravery, sacrifice and invaluable contribution to save the life of the Pakistani high-altitude porter. The Alpine Club of Pakistan reiterated its commitment to promote responsible, ethical and humanitarian values in mountaineering, saying acts of courage and compassion such as those demonstrated by Woerle continue to inspire the global mountaineering community. – APP

Tarar grieves death of JI secretary general Ameerul Azeem

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Thursday expressed grief over the death of Jamaat-i-Islami Secretary General Ameerul Azeem, describing him as a principled political leader whose services to the country would be remembered. In a post on X, Tarar said the late JI leader was a dignified and principled political figure who earned respect through his commitment to public service and national politics. He extended his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and prayed that Allah Almighty grant the deceased the highest ranks in Jannah. The minister also prayed for patience and fortitude for the deceased's family, colleagues and workers of Jamaat-i-Islami to bear the loss. – APP

Balochistan is pride of Pakistan...

FROM PAGE 01
national integration and contributing to the Balochistan's long-term peace and prosperity. He also highlighted the need for national unity and perseverance to chart the future trajectory of the country. The session concluded with a candid and wide-ranging interaction. Participants reaffirmed their shared commitment to the stability, progress and sovereignty of Pakistan.

Sessions judge, his guard killed

FROM PAGE 01
bridge on the national highway was blown up in Mastung's Khud Kocha area. Subsequently, authorities imposed an indefinite curfew in the Khud Kocha sub-tehsil from 9pm on Wednesday. Thursday's attack also follows security forces killing three terrorists this week in Mastung, where the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said two suicide bombers and their facilitator were also apprehended. Another seven terrorists were eliminated in Surab district. Security concerns have heightened in Balochistan after a spate of major terrorist attacks took place earlier this month, which prompted counterterrorism operations across the province. Among the counterterrorism efforts was Operation Shaban, in which 91 terrorists were killed between July 5 and July 16, according to security sources cited by state media. This took the tally of terrorists eliminated in operations across the province since July 5 to 129.

Internet service being...

FROM PAGE 01
"I'm grateful to the AJK PPP for their efforts [and] the election commission of AJK for their intervention," he wrote. The PPP chief expressed hope that the party's requests for the restoration of internet and mobile phone services in Muzaffarabad and other areas will also be accepted at the earliest. Bilawal had repeatedly called for the restoration of internet and cellular services across the region during the election campaign. In an address to party workers in Mirpur on Wednesday, he said that both the protesters and the state were "punishing" the masses due to the suspension of internet and cellular services. The restoration of the services comes as the region gears up for elections next week. AJK Chief Election Commissioner Ghulam Mustafa Mughal on July 21 announced that elections in the region would be held in three phases, beginning July 27. According to the election commissioner, Mirpur Division will vote first on July 27, Muzaffarabad Division on August 2 and Poonch Division on August 10. Internet and cellular services were suspended last month after protests by the banned Jammu Kashmir JAAC demanding the abolition of 12 refugee seats in the AJK Assembly turned violent.

Prince Abdullah Al-Faisal Cup lands Group 3 status

The \$266,000 contest is a part of the grand finale to the 10 weeks of racing at King Khalid Racecourse, and sits alongside the Group 3 King Faisal Cup, also for Purebred Arabians, on the penultimate day of the season

RIVADH: Ahead of the start of the 2026 Taif Racing Season on Friday, the Jockey Club of Saudi Arabia has announced the upgrade of the Prince Abdullah Al-Faisal Cup for Purebred Arabians to Group 3 status. This year's race, which will take place on Sept. 25, received the new classification from the International Federation of Arabian Horse Racing. Won for the last two years by Saudi Arabian equine star, Tilal Al-Khaleidiah, the 2,000-meter race has risen through the ranks since its inception in 2021. It was upgraded to Listed status in its second running and has now achieved Group status just four years later. The \$266,000 contest is a part of the grand finale to the 10 weeks of racing at King Khalid Racecourse, and sits alongside the Group 3 King Faisal Cup, also for Purebred Arabians, on the penultimate day of the season.

Prince Salman bin Abdullah Al-Saud, CEO of the JCSA, said the promotion "represents another important milestone in the development of Purebred Arabian horseracing in the Kingdom, and reflects the growing status that our racing has reached on the international stage." He added: "This step is an extension of the club's strategy to build a competitive racing calendar that elevates the quality of racing and strengthens the Kingdom's presence as a leading destination for our sport. "This achievement embodies our continuous commitment to developing Purebred Arabian horseracing in accordance with the highest international standards, to enhance the national position on the global horseracing map, keeping pace with the historical and cultural heritage represented by Purebred Arabian horses in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia." – APP

First EASA-compliant Aircraft MRO facility to be set up at Islamabad Int'l Airport

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's first Aircraft Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) facility compliant with the standards of the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) is being established at Islamabad International Airport, marking a major milestone in the country's drive towards self-reliance in the aviation sector. The specialized MRO facility is being developed by private aviation services company Nortec, sources said. A modern aircraft maintenance hangar and an advanced flight simulator for pilot training are also being established at Islamabad International Airport as part of the initiative, they added. Once operational, the MRO facility will provide maintenance, repair and overhaul services for Airbus A318, A319 and other aircraft types. Meanwhile, Airblue Limited is constructing a state-of-the-art aircraft maintenance hangar at the airport. The new hangar will protect aircraft, engineers, technical personnel and maintenance equipment from adverse weather conditions, enhancing the safety and efficiency of maintenance operations. Airblue's project will also enable commercial airlines to obtain aircraft repair and maintenance services within Pakistan, reducing dependence on overseas facilities. The airline is also developing a modern Flight Training Centre, equipped with a Full Flight Simulator, which is expected to become operational by April 2027. – APP



Babar, Shaheen and Salman tick up in ICC ODI rankings

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan batter Babar Azam climbed in the latest International Cricket Council (ICC) Men's ODI Player Rankings, while several other national players also improved their standings following strong performances in the West Indies-New Zealand series. In the ODI batters' rankings, Babar climbed one place to sixth with 689 rating points, up from seventh. Salman Ali Agha also made progress, rising two places from 18th to 16th with 630 points. Former captain and wicketkeeper-batter Mohammad Rizwan retained his 31st position with 560 points, while left-handed opener Fakhar Zaman slipped one place from 36th to 37th with 544 points. Saim Ayub remained unchanged in 44th place. New Zealand's Daryl Mitchell continued to lead the ODI batting rankings with 802

rating points. India captain Shubman Gill held second place, while veteran batter Virat Kohli remained third. In the ODI bowlers' rankings, Pakistan left-arm pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi climbed two places from ninth to seventh with 604 rating points. Haris Rauf also gained two spots to move up to 20th with 556 points. Naseem Shah dropped two places to 49th with 477 points, while Mohammad Wasim Jr improved one place from 71st to 70th with 432 points. Spinner Mohammad Nawaz retained 80th position with 407 points. Afghanistan spinner Rashid Khan continued to top the ODI bowling rankings, while Pakistan's Abrar Ahmed remained second, keeping the pressure on the Afghan star. England fast bowler Jofra Archer climbed to third, replacing South Africa spinner Keshav Maharaj in the top three. – DNA

Commonwealth Games 'where champions are made'

GLASGOW: The president of Commonwealth Sport, Dr. Donald Rukare, told AFP the Commonwealth Games remains a stage "where champions are made" as Glasgow prepares to host a slimmed down version of the event. The Games were plunged into crisis when the Australian state of Victoria withdrew as hosts in July 2023, citing rising costs. Glasgow also played host 12 years ago and was therefore in position to offer the solution of a condensed format using existing venues to minimize taxpayer costs. A 10-sport and six para-sport event – down from a 19-sport and eight para-sport program four years ago in Birmingham – begins on Thursday with King Charles set to attend the opening ceremony and declare the Games open. "We had that dark cloud over us in terms of having no Games, but Glasgow stepped in. Scotland the brave as we say," said Rukare.

First held 96 years ago, the Commonwealth Games evolved out of the British Empire Games and now comprises 74 nations and territories, mainly countries that were once subject to British imperial rule. Positioned two years either side of the Olympic Games, the Commonwealths have historically served as an important staging post for stars of the future. "It's about the athletes," added Rukare. "For some of the athletes, they're going to be representing their countries, their territories, for the first time and we believe that the Commonwealth Games is where champions are made." Swimming and athletics are now the only two compulsory sports in the Commonwealth program, designed to give potential hosts more flexibility. But Rukare is confident that the future of the event is looking up.

The Indian city of Ahmedabad has already been confirmed as host for the centenary games in 2030, with strong interest from New Zealand among other candidates for 2034. "It won't remain at the 10 sports for sure, but we're looking at probably something in the range of between 15 and 18 sports going forward," he said. "At the end of the day, what we're looking for is how do we have a sustainable, smart, agile model, but also responding to the needs and aspirations of the athletes." The success or otherwise of the Ahmedabad Games could play a pivotal role in the Commonwealth project. Six of the last seven editions of the event have taken place in the UK or Australia. Only twice before have the Games gone to Asia and, despite boasting a huge number of the competing nations, they have never been to Africa.

Ahmedabad's candidacy is seen in India as a stepping stone toward the goal of hosting the 2036 Olympics and authorities hope it will establish the world's most populous nation as a sporting destination. "We'd like to see that the Commonwealth family, Commonwealth Sport, reflect the diversity, the multicultural cultures that we have," added Rukare, an Ugandan. "Going to one of the biggest countries in the Commonwealth, building on from Delhi 2010, there's no doubt that India now is a different place. They are ready to go. "We'd like to see how India will definitely put on a good show, maybe down the road sometime in the future, Africa could host the Games. "So we're really trying to commit to the Games right across the Commonwealth, to be able to show the whole mosaic of the culture and beautiful tapestry that we have of all our 74 territories." – APP

Briefs

Gold price falls
by Rs1,800 per
tola

ISLAMABAD: The prices of gold witnessed a decline in the local market on Thursday, with the price of 24-karat gold per tola falling by Rs1,800 to settle at Rs435,636, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold decreased by Rs1,543 to Rs373,487, whereas 10 grams of 22-karat gold dropped by Rs1,414 to Rs342,375. In the international market, the price of gold declined by \$18 to \$4,096 per ounce. Meanwhile, the price of silver per tola decreased by Rs33 to Rs6,370, while the price of 10 grams of silver fell by Rs28 to Rs5,461. The price of silver in the international market also declined by \$0.33 to \$58.91 per ounce, the association reported.—APP

Food
commodities
worth of
\$5.017b
exported

ISLAMABAD: Food commodities worth \$5.017 billion were exported during the financial year ended on June 30, 2026, as compared to the exports of \$7.116 billion of the corresponding period of the last year. During the period from July-June, 2025-26, the food group exports from the country decreased by 29.49 percent as compared to the exports of the same period of the last year, according to the data of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. Over 4.282 million metric tons of rice valued at \$2.291 billion, 215, 170 metric tons of fish and fish products worth of \$482.017 million, 533,382 metric tons of fruit \$308.130 million and 594,104 metric tons of vegetables worth of \$162.770 million were exported during the period under review. The country also earned \$142.527 million by exporting about 46,669 metric tons of tobacco, and \$260.519 million by exporting about 243,019 metric tons of oilseeds and nuts, respectively. During the last financial year, about 114,046 metric tons of meat and meat preparations worth of \$530.245 million were also exported, as against the exports of 114,157 metric tons valued at \$495.109 million of the same period of the financial year 2024-25.—APP

Jordan wel-
comes UNES-
CO's decision
to maintain
Jerusalem

AMMAN: Jordan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates welcomed on Wednesday the decision of UNESCO's World Heritage Committee to maintain the Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls on the List of World Heritage in Danger. The Ministry's official spokesperson, Ambassador Fouad Majali, said the decision affirms the illegality and lack of legitimacy of Israeli violations against Islamic and Christian holy sites, worshippers' rights, freedom of worship, unrestricted access to holy places, interference in the authority of the Jerusalem Awqaf Administration and the affairs of Al-Aqsa Mosque, as well as projects and excavations that affect the cultural heritage.—APP

Japan upgrades 20 girls' schools in rural Sindh

The ambassador AKAMATSU reaffirmed Japan's commitment to supporting Pakistan's education sector, particularly by promoting opportunities for girls in undeserved areas

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The inauguration and handover ceremony of the "Project for Upgrading Primary Girls' schools into Elementary Schools in Rural Areas of Sindh" was held at Government Elementary School Radho Jokhio, UC Gadap, Karachi. The ceremony was attended by H.E. Mr. AKAMATSU Shuichi, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan; Honorable Syed Sardar Ali Shah, Minister for Education & Literacy, the Government of Sindh; representatives of the School Education & Literacy Department, the Government of Sindh; and Mr. SHINOZAKI Yusuke, Chief Representative of JICA Pakistan Office, along with teachers, students, parents, colleagues of this project and other stakeholders. Through this project, the Government of Japan provided grant assistance of 1,686 million Japanese Yen to upgrade 20 primary girls' schools into elementary schools in rural areas of Sindh. The project improved and expanded 60 classrooms, creating a safer and more conducive learning environment for girls. The upgraded schools benefit approximately 2,400 girls annually by enabling them to continue their studies within their local communities. In the ceremony, Ambassador AKAMATSU, reaffirmed Japan's commitment to supporting Pakistan's education sector, particularly by promoting opportunities for girls in undeserved areas. Ambassador AKAMATSU expressed hope that improved



educational facilities would encourage more girls to contribute to their education and contribute positively to their communities. Mr. SHINOZAKI Yusuke, Chief Representative of JICA Pakistan Office, appreciated the strong collabora-

tion among the Government of Sindh, colleagues of this project, local community, and all stakeholders that contributed to the successful completion of the project. Mr. SHINOZAKI noted that the upgraded schools would provide female students

with improved facilities and a better environment for learning and growth. Japan and JICA remain committed to strengthening cooperation with Pakistan and supporting inclusive and sustainable development through education.

Hundreds
hospitalized
in Japan
heatwave
disaster

TOKYO: More than 450 people received hospital treatment for heat-related issues in a single day in Tokyo — the highest number since records began 16 years ago, emergency services said Thursday. The figure was released as Japan sweltered in a heatwave that has killed at least 14 people over the past week. A total 453 people had hospital treatment for heat-related issues on Wednesday, the most since records began in 2010, the Tokyo Fire Department said. Emergency callouts were also at the highest level since at least 1963. "We are urging people to stay hydrated and use air conditioners," a fire brigade spokesman told AFP. The number of patients appeared to rise as temperatures climbed, with notable increases on Tuesday and Wednes-

day, the spokesman said. In Tokyo prefecture — home to around 14 million people — one person had died in the current heatwave with four others in a critical condition and 18 in a serious state, he said. Nick Estes, 35, an American tourist visiting the Asakusa area of Tokyo with his family, said Thursday the weather was "extremely hot." "We've been planning our trips around trying to make sure we can spend time in the metro to cool off, finding little shops to pop into to maybe buy a little souvenir that has air conditioning, doing everything we can to stay cool," Estes told AFP. "But especially with younger kids, it's been absolutely brutal ... I was here last summer, actually, and somehow it actually feels even hotter this year than it did a year ago." The Fire and Disaster Management Agency has dubbed the heatwave a "disaster," reporting on Wednesday at least 14 deaths across the country over the previous week and 11,000 people seeking emergency medical care. In the central region of Aichi, which includes Nagoya and is experiencing some of the most intense heat, 116 people were taken to hospital on Wednesday, officials said. Heatstroke alerts have been issued for almost the whole country of around 125 million people. "Temperatures have been rising since mid-July, and severe heat is expected to continue nationwide," the disaster agency said. "It is no exaggeration to call this extreme heat a 'disaster' with many people being rushed to hospitals or even dying as a result of heatstroke," it said. On Thursday, at least six places experienced 40°C temperatures or hotter by early afternoon, while the mercury rose to 39.9°C in three other locations. The hottest place was Hamamatsu in the central Shizuoka region at 41.1°C.—APP

Iraq insists weapon
control is sovereign matter

BAGHDAD :Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi will travel to Tehran on Thursday at the head of a senior government delegation for talks with top Iranian officials on energy, trade, transportation and agriculture. The Iraqi government said the issue of bringing all weapons under state control would not be on the agenda, calling it "an Iraqi sovereign matter." The visit comes less than a week after al-Zaidi traveled to the United States, as Baghdad steps up diplomacy with regional and international partners while trying to balance its ties with Washington and Tehran amid mounting regional tensions. Government spokesperson Haider al-Aboudi said on Wednesday that the visit followed an official invitation from the Iranian president and that al-Zaidi would be accompanied by a senior delegation. Talks will cover energy, trade, transportation and agriculture, he said, adding that gas would also be discussed "in line with Iraq's interests." Al-Aboudi did not mention any security or military issues on the agenda. Instead, he said, "bringing weapons under state control is an Iraqi sovereign matter that is not discussed in other capitals." He described the issue as "a national decision" and a priority in al-Zaidi's government program. Local reports had cited informed sources as saying al-Zaidi might ask Iran to pressure armed factions to hand over missiles and drones and close what the government calls the file of "uncontrolled weapons" before a Baghdad deadline at the end of September. But the government's comments on Wednesday ruled out discussing the issue with Iranian officials. Al-Aboudi said bringing weapons under state control remained an internal Iraqi matter and would not be discussed with any country. The issue has been one of al-Zaidi's main pledges since his government took office. Baghdad says all weapons must come under the authority of the state and its official institutions, while the matter should be handled through legal channels and dialogue to preserve domestic stability. Observers remain skeptical that the government can bring the factions' weapons under its control. Researcher Saif al-Saadi told Ashraq Al-Awsat that some factions had agreed to the move as "a temporary tactic to avoid confrontation with the US administration." "Bringing weapons under state control cannot be achieved through an announcement by one faction or another," he said. "It requires taking control of the weapons, cataloging them and then restructuring the brigades and regiments so they do not remain a single unified body." Academic Abbas Abboud told Ashraq Al-Awsat that it was difficult to foresee armed clashes between the state and the factions over the dismantling of their weapons networks. He said the government would continue to rely on "dialogue as a possible means of bringing weapons under state control." In a related development, al-Aboudi said Iraq was carrying a diplomatic initiative in its foreign engagements to address rapidly unfolding regional developments as the war between the United States and Iran widens again. Al-Zaidi said in an interview with The Atlantic that he had proposed to US President Donald Trump that he delay retaliation against Iran over the killing of US soldiers in Iraq and Jordan.—APP

Venice Biennale
chief calls EU
funding cut 'political'

ROME: The Venice Biennale would undermine its autonomy and freedom of expression if it bowed to European Union pressure to shut Russia out of its events, the foundation's chairman said on Thursday, criticizing the EU's recent decision to cut funding. Earlier this week, the EU said it had decided to withdraw a 2 million (\$2.3 million) grant in response to the return of Russia to the Biennale's arts exhibition this year for the first time since the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. "The EU was a fellow traveler with whom we shared part of a journey, and who is now leaving us for reasons that are entirely political, certainly not legal, and still less cultural," chairman Pietrangelo Buttafuoco said at the presentation of the 2026 Venice Film Festival. The European Commission said the grant was withdrawn because EU taxpayers' money should support initiatives that uphold the values of democracy and freedom, which it said Russia does not currently embody. The Biennale, an international cultural exhibition hosted by Venice every two years, rejected that argument, saying art should remain a neutral space for dialogue. It also said the EU funding co-financed projects run by its cinema division that were unrelated to Russia's participation in the art exhibition. "We are called here to pursue international research in the arts and to respond to their demands. Otherwise we would betray the principles of autonomy, freedom of expression, research, creativity, and imagination that have defined this institution for 131 years," Buttafuoco added. After learning of the EU decision on Wednesday, the Biennale said it would challenge the move, while stressing that the loss of funding would have no significant impact on its finances.—APP

India urges
caution
for ships
entering
Black Sea

NEW DELHI: India issued a security warning Thursday for ships venturing into the Black Sea that are locally flagged or employ its seafarers. The advisory follows a Russian attack Sunday on a cargo ship leaving Ukraine's port of Odesa that killed four Indian nationals. The "highest degree of caution" should be exercised while operating in the Black Sea, India's Directorate General of Maritime Administration said. "Voyage-specific security risk assessments" should be undertaken before entering the region, it said. The maritime authority said there had been 10 attacks in the region since April this year involving Indian seafarers aboard foreign-flagged ships. They included Sunday's fatal attack on the MV Golden Leo, which New Delhi protested by calling in Russia's top envoy to convey its "unequivocal condemnation." Others included attacks on foreign-flagged tankers MT Asia, MT Louise-1 and MT Nelsa near Novorossiysk that resulted in damage to vessels and forced Indian seafarers to leave the ships. The security advisory comes a week after the Indian maritime authority asked local and foreign shipowners not to deploy Indian seafarers on vessels transiting the Strait of Hormuz. India is one of the largest contributors of sailors to merchant shipping worldwide, with more than 320,000 active seafarers in 2025, according to the country's shipping ministry.—APP

EU slams
Houthi Red
Sea tanker
attack

BRUSSELS: The European Union's top diplomat demanded on Thursday that the Houthis "cease" attacks on ships in the Red Sea, after a Saudi vessel was hit by the Iran-backed militants. "The attack on an oil tanker in the Red Sea is unacceptable, illegal and further inflames an already volatile situation in the region," EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said in a statement. "The Houthis must cease all actions that endanger international shipping and the lives of seafarers," she added. The attack on Saudi shipping in the Red Sea brought the war rolling the Middle East to a new front and sent oil prices surging. Earlier this week, the Houthis said they had struck two Saudi oil tankers after declaring a blockade of Saudi ports. Kallas said an EU naval mission deployed in the Red Sea to help ships pass through the vital waterway "remains firmly committed to protecting freedom of navigation for all.—APP

How AI transforming
India's largest film industry

NEW DELHI: When Arfi Lamba's recent film had a scene with a family stranded in a cable car high in the Canadian mountains, a tight budget prevented travel. But the shots were still made, as he turned to a new filmmaking partner: artificial intelligence. The only part of the film that was shot abroad ended up being the mountains. And even those were filmed in a cheaper location — the Italian Alps. "The footage was treated like American mountains and Canadian mountains. If we had no AI, the footage would not have worked. We had to fill the mountains with more ice," Lamba said. "We shot the entire film in a studio in Mumbai." Visual effects cost much less with AI. When Lamba's friend was engaged in a project to make a street in Budapest look like it did in the 1930s, using AI cost a fraction of employing a visual effects team. It also saved the producer the time of obtaining shooting permits. "In VFX to do that thing would have cost a minimum 15,000 (\$17,000) to 40,000 euros to clean that set ... With AI-powered VFX, they ac-

tually did it for 1,500 euros. This is the amount of work that has gone down. The cost that has gone," he said. At his Bombay Berlin Film Production studio, Lamba was already observing how this part of the film industry was gradually becoming redundant. As he expands his studio's portfolio, he is focusing on AI-enabled options. "We are not looking at cost-heavy artist-driven VFX, because we know that's not the way we will invest — we'll never be able to make profit out of that," he said. "The VFX industry is struggling ... So many VFX artists who have done that job earlier and taken that money, are out of business." AI can also do dubbing in every language, streamline processes for assistant directors, and help in those where machines are used, which will result in further job losses. But Lamba was certain that the key aspects of cinematography could not be replaced because of human unpredictability, emotions and flaws. "There are a couple of films being made totally by AI characters. Their trailers

look excellent, but when you watch the film, you get bored within 10 minutes ... They start looking the same, they start sounding the same," he said. "If people get more dependent on AI, they will lose business. People will move away from them. People are trying to detox a lot from Instagram ... All of that is happening because humans crave authenticity." The use of AI by the Indian film industry, and especially Bollywood — the world's largest — is not a surprise, as filmmakers and big production houses have been moving in this direction for years. Two of the biggest Bollywood studios, Eros International and Jio Studios, have been preparing for AI for at least a decade, according to Ranjit Kumar, who started in Bollywood as an editor some 15 years ago. "They were well advanced, they were doing their own research, or they were basically prepared for it," he said. "Eros International has wrapped up their traditional business from conventional filmmaking and they have shifted to AI wholly.—DNA

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Briefs

Spain,
France battle
wildfires
as intense
heat grips
S. Europe

NEWS DESK

MADRID: Firefighters battling wildfires in Spain and France said the risk of more blazes over the coming days was very high, even as a major fire raging in Spain's central Guadalajara province receded, allowing some residents to return home. Wildfires have burnt more land in Europe this year than the annual average in the past two decades, data shows, as the world's fastest-warming continent has endured three stifling, virtually back-to-back heatwaves this year. In France, where two firefighters died on Tuesday as their truck was engulfed in flames in the southwest region of Gironde, authorities urged people to avoid using barbecues in areas hit by heatwaves, stressing that nine out of 10 wildfires start, accidentally or not, as a result of human activity. In the Western Balkans, the danger has shifted from heatwaves to hailstorms, with several people injured in North Macedonia and eastern Kosovo. Scientists say human-driven climate change is increasing the intensity of heatwaves, droughts and wildfires, while also creating conditions for sudden, destructive storms. The Reuters Climate Monitor, an interactive tool providing real-time data, showed the average high temperature across Western Europe is forecast to be 26.6 degrees Celsius (79.8 degrees Fahrenheit), which is 3 degrees above the normal high for July 22 in the period from 1961 to 1990.

Floods in
northeast
India kill at
least 41

NEW DELHI: Floods triggered by torrential monsoon rains have killed at least 41 people in India's northeast Assam state, officials said Thursday, as authorities pursued rescue and relief operations. Flood-related disasters are an annual occurrence across India during the monsoon months after the region's long summers, with many parts of the country facing water scarcity and drought. "We have lost 41 precious lives till date and thousands of livestock has been washed away," Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said in a social media update on the toll from monsoon rains that began in June. "Cloudbursts upstream, coupled with localized heavy rainfall, 436 percent above normal, have led to flooding in villages that have not seen such devastation in recent history," Sarma said all agencies, including India's airforce and personnel from the State Disaster Response Force and National Disaster Response Force were "working round the clock" on relief and rescue operations in Assam. — APP

Five Thai
soldiers killed

BANGKOK: Five Thai soldiers were killed in an attack at a checkpoint in the country's insurgency-hit south, the army said, one of the deadliest such incidents in years. Six civilians were also wounded in the Wednesday evening attack in Narathiwat province, one of three Muslim-majority provinces gripped by a decades-long separatist insurgency, local officials said. Members of Task Force Ranger Regiment 45 "were killed when assailants opened fire and threw pipe bombs at the Bukeh Sami checkpoint ... while they were on duty protecting local residents," the army said in a statement late on Wednesday. The public relations department of Narathiwat province said six civilians were hurt, adding that no group has yet claimed responsibility and no arrests have been made. A low-level conflict has simmered in Thailand's southernmost provinces since 2004, killing more than 7,000 people, as rebels in the Muslim-majority region battle for greater autonomy. — APP

Pakistan, UK move to
strengthen trade ties

Ms. Jane Marriott appreciated Pakistan's economic reforms and said the UK was examining the possibility of transforming the Trade Dialogue into a stronger institutional mechanism, with clearly defined sectors, working groups and implementation timelines



SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan and the United Kingdom here on Thursday agreed to intensify bilateral trade engagement, strengthen

business-to-business cooperation and explore upgrading the existing Trade Dialogue into a more structured economic and trade framework. The understanding was reached during a meeting between Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan and British

High Commissioner Ms. Jane Marriott at the Ministry of Commerce. Secretary Commerce Javad Paul and senior officials from both sides attended the meeting. Jam Kamal Khan said Pakistan was advancing tariff rationalisation, digitalisation and

regulatory reforms to improve competitiveness and facilitate businesses, according to press release issued by commerce ministry. He said predictable tariffs, better access to finance and affordable industrial inputs would help SMEs, e-commerce ventures and export-oriented enterprises expand into new markets. The minister highlighted Africa and Central Asia as promising destinations for Pakistani exports and called for greater cooperation in standards, certification, traceability, environmental compliance and value addition. Ms. Jane Marriott appreciated Pakistan's economic reforms and said the UK was examining the possibility of transforming the Trade Dialogue into a stronger institutional mechanism, with clearly defined sectors, working groups and implementation timelines. The Secretary Commerce said two Pakistan-UK working groups were already operational, while additional groups had been proposed to broaden cooperation. He also called for a stronger role for the UK-Pakistan Business Council in facilitating businesses, promoting investment and generating commercially viable projects. Javad Paul said Pakistan was strengthening its intellectual property enforcement regime and informed the meeting that the appointment of a new Chairman of the Intellectual Property Organization of Pakistan was expected shortly. Both sides agreed to maintain close coordination and work towards holding the next Pakistan-UK Trade Dialogue in Islamabad in autumn this year, the statement added.

Ishaq Dar to
attend SCO
meeting in
Bishkek

DNA

ISLAMABAD: At the invitation of the Foreign Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic, Mr. Zheenbek Kulubaev, the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, will lead the Pakistan delegation to the meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM), scheduled to take place in Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyz Republic, from July 23-24, 2026. The meeting will bring together Foreign Ministers from all ten SCO member states, including Pakistan, China, Belarus, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Serving as the third-highest forum in the SCO operational hierarchy, the Council of Foreign Ministers primarily focuses on international relations, as well as the foreign policy and security matters of the regional organization. During his official visit, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar will call on the President of the Kyrgyz Republic. He is also scheduled to hold several bilateral meetings with his counterparts from other SCO member states on the sidelines of the CFM meeting to discuss key mutual interests and regional cooperation.

Indian students press
on with education
minister's resignation

Cockroach Janta Party spokesperson questions punishment after papers leaked, calls for focus on future prevention

DNA

NEW DELHI: The Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) has rejected Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government's response to the ongoing paper leak controversy, announcing that it will continue its protest until the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. In a statement, CJP spokesperson Ashutosh Ranka said it was a positive development that the prime minister had finally taken notice after nearly one and a half months of protests. "Perhaps his foreign visits are over, and he has returned to India, which is a good thing," Press Trust of India quoted Ranka as saying. Reiterating the party's stand, Ranka demanded Pradhan's resignation and said the protests would continue until accountability was established. "We will not leave this place until Dharmendra Pradhan resigns," he said. He questioned the effectiveness of imposing punishments after examination papers have already been leaked. "What punishment are you imposing after the paper leak has already taken place? That is not going to solve the problem of paper leaks. The real question is why paper leaks are happening in the first place. That question must be answered," Ranka said. The CJP spokesperson was responding to Modi — who in his first direct comments tied to major protests

challenging his government — vowed "stringent punishment" for those involved in exam fraud. Ranka said that treating the damage after it happens is not enough and that the focus should be on preventing such incidents. "Applying ointment after an injury is one thing, but the real fight is about preventing the injury from happening in the first place," he added. The CJP spokesperson alleged that repeated paper leaks were a result of a lack of accountability and competence among those responsible for running the system. "The injury keeps happening because the people running the system are neither accountable nor competent. Therefore, these measures are not sufficient by any means," he said. Earlier in his social media post, Modi said, "Nothing is more important than the welfare and future of our youth," promising to set up fast-track courts to punish those involved in question paper leaks. Meanwhile, leader of the main opposition Congress party, Rahul Gandhi, also responded by quoting Modi's post and saying that it was the prime minister who had harmed the future of our youth the most. "You allowed and encouraged the total capture and destruction of our education system - and protected every person responsible for it," Gandhi said and reiterated that Pradhan should be sacked, Modi should apologise to students, and those who assaulted them should be punished.

At Asean moot

Dar highlights Kashmir
dispute, Gulf crisis as core
threats to regional peace

Deputy PM says attempting to weaponise water resources violated int'l obligations and threatened 250 million lives

DNA

MANILA: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar called upon the international community and the Asean Regional Forum (ARF) to support a peaceful resolution of core regional conflicts, emphasising that the unresolved Jammu and Kashmir dispute and India's unilateral decision to hold Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance remained at the heart of South Asian instability. The deputy prime minister, addressing the 33rd ARF Ministerial Meeting on Thursday, outlined eight key challenges threatening global and regional security, highlighting South Asian stability, the Gulf situation, Gaza, counter-terrorism, Afghanistan, Ukraine, the South China Sea, and climate change. He told the meeting that the failure to resolve long-standing disputes, particularly the Jammu and Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan, accelerated serious regional stability issues. He reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to advocating for a just and peaceful settlement in accordance with the UN Charter, relevant Security Council resolutions, and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. Expressing deep concern over India's unilateral decision to hold the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance, Dar

warned that attempting to weaponise water resources violated international obligations and threatened the lives and livelihoods of 250 million people in Pakistan. "We simply cannot afford to let this serious, provocative development remain unaddressed. Let us all be the architects of peace and stability and work together to address the challenges posed by arbitrary, illegal, unilateral actions," he commented. He urged the international community, particularly ARF members, to address these arbitrary, illegal, and unilateral actions and uphold international law. Turning to the situation in the Gulf, the deputy prime minister noted that regional developments have impacted nations globally. Reaffirming Pakistan's role in facilitating peace and de-escalation, he highlighted Islamabad's diplomatic efforts, including facilitating a ceasefire and convening leadership-level talks that led to the signing of the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding. Dar expressed gratitude for the trust reposed in Pakistan by the United States, Iran, Gulf nations, and international partners, urging all parties to uphold their commitments, exercise restraint, and support dialogue to ensure regional stability, the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, and the unconditioned resumption of international shipping. Addressing the humanitarian crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory, DPM Dar condemned the atrocities in Gaza and reiterated Pakistan's steadfast support for an independent, sovereign, and contiguous State of Palestine based on pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. On global counter-terrorism, he highlighted Pakistan's immense sacrifices—losing over 90,000 lives and incurring over \$150 billion in economic losses.

Aurangzeb reviews
reform progress with
IMF senior management

Meetings review Pakistan's performance under EFF, RSF and the broader IMF reform programme

NEW YORK: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb reviewed Pakistan's macroeconomic performance and reform progress with senior IMF officials. The meetings come as Islamabad seeks to maintain programme credibility, strengthen foreign exchange reserves and return to international capital markets, the finance ministry said on Thursday. According to a statement issued by the Ministry of Finance, Aurangzeb held a series of meetings with IMF senior management, including First Deputy Managing Director Dan Katz, Deputy Managing Director Nigel Clarke, Middle East and Central Asia Department Director Jihad Azour and Pakistan Mission Chief Iva Petrova. The meetings reviewed Pakistan's progress under the

Extended Fund Facility (EFF), Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF) and the broader IMF-supported reform programme. Aurangzeb highlighted Pakistan's "improved fiscal and external balances", "stronger foreign exchange reserves", "record remittances" and "an improved current account position", the ministry said. The ministry said discussions also covered "tax and energy reforms", "tariff rationalisation", debt management, diversification of financing sources and Pakistan's return to international capital markets. Both sides exchanged views on human capital development, women's economic participation, demographic challenges, technology-led growth and private sector-led, export-oriented development. — Agencies

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