



Islamabad POST

Tuesday, July 28, 2026

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

Aurangzeb talks about the reform agenda of Pakistan

Detailed News On Page-08

Murad takes up water issues with WB

Detailed News On Page-02



Pakistan greatly values relations with the ASEAN

Detailed News On Page-08



Iron Brothers

PM Shehbaz reaffirms strong Pak-China ties

Chinese Envoy meets Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif; thanks the Prime Minister for his hospitality, reiterating that China regards Pakistan as an “iron brother

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, H.E. Mr. Jiang Zaidong, called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at the Prime Minister's House today. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Federal Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal, Advisor to the Prime Minister Dr. Syed Tauqir Shah, and Foreign Secretary Ambassador Amna Baloch also attended the meeting. The Prime Minister conveyed warm greetings to President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang, reaffirming the Pakistan-China All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership. He fondly recalled his visit to China in May and emphasized continued collaboration to implement key decisions and agreements for the mutual benefit of both nations. Regional developments in the Middle East, Afghanistan, and South Asia were also discussed. Ambassador Jiang Zaidong thanked the Prime Minister for his hospitality, reiterating that

Continued on Page 06

President reviews progress on Sindh-China cooperation

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: President Asif Ali Zardari chaired a meeting to review progress of various Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) and other cooperation initiatives between the Government of Sindh and Chinese companies, directing that the agreed projects be advanced expeditiously and any remaining procedural and technical requirements completed at the earliest. The President said this during a meeting with Chinese delegations of Anhui Nengtong New Energy Technology Co., Ltd. and Luoyang Modern Biology Group at CM House here today. Facilitated by the China-Pakistan-Africa Economic and Trade Cooperation Promotion Association, the meeting reviewed the implementation status of previously agreed areas of cooperation and discussed steps to advance their execution. The President was briefed on the progress made on cooperation in areas including electric vehicle charging infrastructure, veterinary biological vaccines, animal identification and traceability, agricultural technology, healthcare,

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Mr. Jiang Zaidong, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at the Prime Minister House in Islamabad on 27 July 2026. – DNA

Middle East issue

Iran says no current talks with the US

Baqaei criticized the United States, saying its conduct in recent years has “resembled that of a mafia gang that adheres to no rules or laws”

CENTRELINE REPORT

TEHRAN: Iran's foreign ministry on Monday said it was not currently involved in negotiations with the United States, despite a halt in recent fighting between the two sides. “Mediators may convey messages from the American side to us regarding current developments in the region. But at present, we are not engaged in any negotiations with the United States,” ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said at a weekly press briefing. “Claims that Iran has requested negotiations are fabrications that the other side circulates from time to time,” he added. Hostilities resumed between Iran and the United States earlier this month after diplomatic efforts collapsed amid an impasse regarding the Strait of Hormuz. Baqaei criticized the United States, saying its conduct in recent years has “resembled that of a mafia gang that adheres to no rules or laws.” “So long as such behavior by the United States continues, we cannot be hopeful about the emergence of a reasonable process,” he added. The United States and Iran paused their attacks for a second straight day on Sunday, as efforts continued to bring them back to negotiations on an interim ceasefire deal largely undermined by recent exchanges of fire, as Donald Trump's UN envoy said the president was “giving

Pak condemns drone attacks against Saudi Arabia

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan strongly condemns the drone attacks carried out against the brotherly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Such provocative attacks pose a grave threat to peace and stability across the entire region. Pakistan stands in solidarity with the brotherly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and reaffirms its strong and unwavering support for the Kingdom's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and peace and prosperity. Pakistan has taken, and will continue to take, all possible steps to support efforts aimed at achieving lasting peace, security and stability in the region.

talks some space.” Iran said it had halted retaliatory attacks against Washington's allies in the Middle East, and US ambassador to the United Nations Mike Waltz told

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Rigging allegations mar AJK elections

STAFF REPORT

MUZZAFFARABAD: Scuffles and rigging allegations marred the first phase of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) elections as polling concluded in the 13 constituencies of Mirpur division on Monday. Polling began at 8am and concluded at 6pm across all three districts – Bhimber, Mirpur, and Kotli – of the division after a one-hour extension. While minor skirmishes and scuffles between PPP and PML-N workers in Kotli district were reported earlier in the day, the electoral process took a violent turn in the afternoon in LA-9 Kotli-II (Nakyal). In a statement on X, the PPP claimed that party worker Mukhtar Younus “died during incidents of display of arms and public harassment by PML-N candidate Sardar Umair Naeem”. Mirpur Commissioner Raja Tahir Mumtaz confirmed that a man was killed and two others, including the deceased's father, were injured in an incident. On the other hand, the PML-N claimed that Younus had been involved in its election campaign activities. PPP AJK Election Cell Incharge Sardar Abdul Shakoor demanded that all those involved in the incident be immediately arrested, law and order be restored, and the safety of voters' lives and property be ensured. PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari expressed his grief over the death, saying he received reports that Younus has been killed “in firing by” PML-N's Naeem. “My worker has been martyred in Mirpur's Nakyal. Where are the relevant authorities? What is the Election Commission doing?” he asked in a statement. He said a video had emerged two days ago of Naeem and his companions “firing in public”.

Kashmir a disputed area: FO

FO slams Indian Defence Minister's provocative remarks

On Sunday, Singh declared there would be “no talks with Pakistan,” adding that if dialogue were to occur, it would only concern Azad Jammu and Kashmir, which he claimed was “illegally occupied by Pakistan”

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Foreign Office (FO) has strongly condemned Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's “highly provocative and irresponsible comments” regarding the Kashmir dispute, warning that New Delhi must not underestimate Islamabad's resolve to thwart any adventurism. On Sunday, Singh declared there would be “no talks with Pakistan,” adding that if dialogue were to occur, it would only concern Azad Jammu and Kashmir, which he claimed was “illegally occupied by Pakistan.” He further threatened that any “misadventure” would invite a response “beyond imagination,” according to the Times of India. In a statement issued Monday, the FO rejected Singh's remarks, saying they distort facts about the UN-recognised Jammu and

Kashmir dispute, which remains on the agenda of the UN Security Council. “His statement not only distorts facts but also reflects the Indian government's deliberate policy to threaten regional and international peace and security,” the FO said. The statement added that such rhetoric was an attempt to divert attention from India's “continued occupation of Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, its sponsorship of terrorism across the region, as well as its domestic instability.” The FO stressed that India must not underestimate Pakistan's determination to defend itself. “While resorting to misplaced rhetoric of aggression and belligerence, India must not underestimate the people and government of Pakistan's unwavering resolve and determination to thwart any Indian adventurism,” the statement read.

Continued on Page 06

SBP keeps policy rate unchanged at 11.5%

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) kept its policy rate unchanged at 11.5% on Monday as policymakers weighed elevated inflation, uncertain oil prices and the economic impact of the ongoing Middle East conflict. The decision was in line with market expectations. Ismail Iqbal Securities had said earlier that market participants widely expected the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) to keep the policy rate unchanged. An Ismail Iqbal Securities client survey showed that 87% of participants expected the SBP to keep the policy rate unchanged, while the remaining 13% anticipated a 50-basis-point hike.

Continued on Page 06

Evening shift for consular services at FO

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar has announced the launch of an Evening Shift for Consular Services at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, aimed at improving public service delivery and accessibility. Under the new schedule, citizens can now avail consular services from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Monday to Friday, ensuring greater convenience and efficiency. Dar said the initiative reflects the government's commitment to modernizing operations and serving the public more effectively. Details of the revised

Continued on Page 06

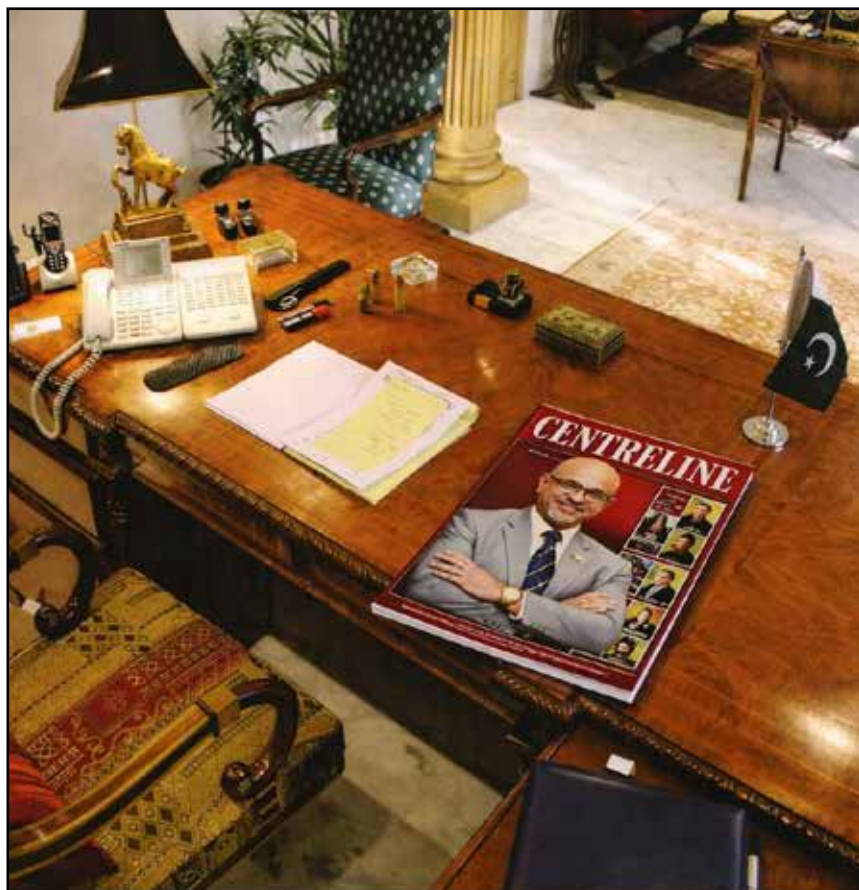
CDF Munir, US lawmakers discuss regional security

ISPR says US congressional delegation acknowledged Pakistan's critical role in regional stability, economic resilience



ISLAMABAD: A US congressional delegation called on Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir at GHQ, where both sides discussed regional security, defence ties and avenues for enhanced economic collaboration, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said on Monday.

The delegation comprised Ryan Keith Zinke, Member House of Representatives (State of Montana) and Michael James, Member House of Representatives (State of Washington), the military's media wing said. During the meeting, discussions focused on matters of mutual interest, regional security, bilateral defence cooperation and avenues for enhancing economic collaboration and prosperity. Field Marshal Munir highlighted Pakistan's vast economic potential, emphasising that sustainable regional stability was deeply anchored in economic growth, trade expansion and connectivity. He underscored Pakistan's ongoing structural reforms aimed at fostering a business-friendly environment and attracting foreign investment. The visiting dignitaries acknowledged Pakistan's critical role in regional stability and economic resilience. Recognising the professional backgrounds and insights of the delegation, both sides discussed potential opportunities for bilateral economic engagement, private sector partnerships and enhancing bilateral trade ties. The visiting delegation thanked the military leadership for the warm hospitality and expressed a shared commitment to promoting deeper economic, commercial and institutional linkages between the United States and Pakistan. – DNA



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Call for leading consensus on ending child marriage

DNA

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women (KPCSW) has formally requested Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly to take lead in building a broad-based political consensus on raising the minimum legal age of marriage to 18 years in the province, describing the issue as a critical child protection and human rights priority. The request follows a high-level Ministerial Briefing on Child Marriage held on 22 July 2026, jointly organized by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women (KPCSW), UN Women, and Blue Veins. The briefing brought together parliamentarians, finance advisor, senior government officials, development partners, legal experts, civil society organizations, and youth representatives to discuss practical measures to end child marriage and strengthen legal protections for children in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Participants unanimously agreed that meaningful legislative reform requires broad political ownership and recommended that the Office of the Speaker of the Provincial Assembly facilitate an inclusive dialogue among all parliamentary parties and key stakeholders to build consensus on the proposed reforms. Acting on this rec-

ommendation, KPCSW Chairperson, Sumera Shams has formally written a letter to Speaker Babar Saleem Swati, requesting him to convene a closed-door multi-stakeholder consultation within the Provincial Assembly. The proposed consultation would bring together parliamentary leaders, relevant government departments, religious scholars, legal experts, development partners, civil society organizations and youth representatives to discuss the proposed amendments and identify a shared way forward for protecting children from child marriage. The Commission emphasized that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is currently one of the two provinces in Pakistan where the minimum legal age of marriage for girls remains 16 years, whereas Sindh, Punjab, Balochistan and the Islamabad Capital Territory have already established 18 years as the minimum legal age of marriage for both girls and boys. Bringing provincial legislation in line with the national standard would strengthen child protection, improve girls' access to education, reduce harmful practices and reinforce Pakistan's constitutional and international commitments to the rights of children. The Commission further noted that the Speaker's Office is uniquely positioned to provide a neutral parlia-

mentary platform where legislators from across the political spectrum can engage in constructive dialogue, consider evidence, hear diverse perspectives and work towards a consensus-based legislative solution that places the best interests of children at its centre. Sumera Shams, Chairperson of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women, said, "We appreciate the leadership of the Honourable Speaker and the support of the Secretary Provincial Assembly in facilitating dialogue on this important issue. Their leadership can help build the consensus needed to strengthen child protection and advance this important legislative reform." The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women reaffirmed its commitment to ending child marriage and promoting the rights, dignity and well-being of every child in the province. Through its dedicated Sub-Committee on Child Marriage, the Commission will continue to engage with legislators, government institutions, development partners, religious scholars, civil society organizations and communities to promote evidence-based legal and policy reforms, strengthen public awareness and build lasting consensus for ending child marriage in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.



ISLAMABAD: General Syed Aamer Raza, HI (M), S Bt called on the Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HI, Chief of Army Staff & Chief of Defence Forces at General Headquarters.

Punjab CM okays expansion of Ration Card

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif has announced an additional allocation of Rs 43.2 billion this year for registered workers under the Maryam Nawaz Ration Card programme after Rs28 billion had already been disbursed to 1.2 million registered workers through the scheme. Official statement said her on Monday, the number of registered workers in Punjab had reached a record 1,403,063. So far, 1,244,130 registered workers had received Maryam Nawaz Ration Cards, while the printing of another 4,984 cards was underway. The registered workers were obtaining essential commodities worth Rs3,000 per month from 62,000 shops across the province through the ration card programme. The chief minister also approved the Ration Card Programme for the financial year 2026-27. More than 100,000 workers associated with the Suthra Punjab programme were also benefiting from the initiative. Presiding over a meeting, the CM Punjab directed the authorities to further increase the number of registered workers in the province. Labour Minister Manshaullah Butt and Secretary Labour Danish Afzal gave a detailed briefing on the programme. The chief minister said ensuring the financial protection of every labourer and worker was her responsibility and directed that the number of beneficiaries under the ration card project be further expanded.—APP

ISSI hosts talks with US Congressional delegation

‘DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organized an in-house discussion with the U.S. Congressional delegation. The U.S. delegation included Rep. Ryan Zinke, Rep. Michael Baumgartner, along with Mr. Graham Gunter, Legislative Assistant to Rep. Ryan Zinke and Mr. Harris Cull, Legislative Aide to Rep. Baumgartner. The delegation was received by Chairman BoG, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood and Director

General ISSI, Ambassador Moin Ul Haque. This was the first ever visit of a U.S. Congressional delegation to ISSI. Director General briefed the delegation about ISSI and its work and expressed desire to establish more institutional linkages between ISSI and U.S. Congress and American think tanks. The participants held an exchange of views on issues of mutual interest, including Pakistan-U.S. relations, focusing on economic cooperation, educational and cultural exchanges, and the broader geopolit-

ical developments in the region. The meeting was also joined by Ambassador Masood Khalid, Pakistan's former Ambassador to China; Ambassador Masood Khan, Pakistan's former Ambassador to the U.S.; Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan and also Pakistan's former Ambassador to the U.S.; and Ambassador Asif Durani, Pakistan's former Special Representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan's former Ambassador to Iran.

Kundi for promotion of wheelchair cricket, Asia Cup

ISLAMABAD: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Monday reaffirmed his full support for the promotion of wheelchair cricket and assured all possible cooperation for the successful holding of the 3rd T20 Wheelchair Cricket Asia Cup 2026. He said this during a meeting with a delegation of the Pakistan Wheelchair Cricket Council, led by Chairperson Rukhsana Rajput, included Pakistan Wheelchair Cricket Team Captain Muhammad Zeeshan, who has led the national side to two Asian championship titles. During the meeting, both sides discussed measures to promote wheelchair cricket in Pakistan, arrangements for international sporting events and preparations for the 3rd T20 Wheelchair Cricket Asia Cup 2026. The delegation informed the Governor that the tournament would be held in Karachi and Hyderabad from September 29 to October 8, 2026, with participation from teams across South Asia. Congratulating the players and management on Pakistan's achievements, Governor Kundi said the special athletes had brought international recognition to the country through their talent, hard work and determination, making the entire nation proud. The delegation told the Governor that, as patron of wheelchair cricket, he had always played a leading role in promoting the sport. The delegation requested Governor Kundi to write a special letter to the Chief Minister of Sindh, urging the provincial government to provide administrative support and necessary facilities for the successful organisation of the Asia Cup. The Governor assured the delegation that he would continue extending full support for the promotion of sports for persons with disabilities and would make every possible effort in the national interest and for the development.—APP

Final preparations of 200-Bed emergency center reviewed

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, Mustafa Kamal, visited the near completion 200-bed New Emergency Center at Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS), where he was briefed by the hospital administration on the project's progress, available medical facilities, and various stages of completion. During the briefing, officials informed the Minister that the state-of-the-art emergency facility is in its final phase of becoming operational. The Minister directed the concerned authorities to ensure that all cleaning, finishing, and technical work is completed in accordance with the highest quality standards. Highlighting the increasing patient load at PIMS, Mustafa Kamal emphasized that the early operationalization of the new emergency center is an urgent necessity. He instructed

the relevant authorities to expedite the completion of the project and make the facility available to the public at the earliest. He also directed that the process for completing the project's PC-4 documentation be accelerated to avoid any delays. The Minister was informed that the new emergency center will feature a 30-bed Surgical Intensive Care Unit (SICU), a 10-bed Medical Intensive Care Unit (MICU), two state-of-the-art operation theatres, and two minor operation theatres, significantly enhancing the hospital's emergency and critical care capacity. Speaking on the occasion, Mustafa Kamal stated that the Government is taking practical steps to ensure the provision of timely, high-quality emergency healthcare services to the public. He said the establishment of this modern emergency center at PIMS would mark a significant milestone in strengthening Pa-

kistan's public healthcare system and improving emergency medical services. Later, the Federal Health Minister also visited the Pediatric Emergency Center established at PIMS with the support of the Child Life Foundation, where he reviewed the healthcare services being provided to children. The Minister reaffirmed that providing children with timely, high-quality, and safe healthcare services remains one of the Government's highest priorities. He stressed that no negligence or shortcomings in pediatric healthcare would be tolerated and assured that every possible resource would be utilized to provide children with the best available medical treatment. Mustafa Kamal further reiterated the Ministry of National Health Services' commitment to improving the performance of public sector hospitals and ensuring better healthcare services for all citizens.—DNA

14000 litres of adulterated milk seized

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority (KPFSA&HFA) has intensified its province-wide crackdown against adulterated milk and substandard food products and has seized and destroyed more than 14,000 liters of substandard milk and 3,000 kilograms of adulterated ketchup during operations in Mardan, Swabi, Kohat and Peshawar. The enforcement drive has been launched on the directives of Special Assistant to the Chief Minister for Food Dr Muhammad Israr Khan, who said that no compromise would be made on public health and that strict legal action would continue against those involved in the production and sale of unsafe food. According to the Food Authority spokesperson, in Mardan, food safety teams, assisted by a Mobile Food Testing Laboratory, intercepted milk tankers at Rashakai and Wali Khan Interchange during a late-night operation. Laboratory testing found 10,000 liters of adulterated and unsafe milk, which was destroyed on the spot, while the milk tankers were taken into official custody for further legal proceedings. In Kohat, the food safety officials established a checkpoint on the Indus Highway and inspected milk transport vehicles as well as milk distribution units. During the operation, 680 liters of artificial and substandard milk were recovered from a distributor and destroyed, with legal action initiated against those responsible. Meanwhile, in Swabi, food safety team conducted a late-night checking operation at Colonel Sher Khan Interchange, where milk tankers entering the province from Punjab were tested. A tanker carrying 3,400 liters of skimmed milk in violation of food safety regulations was confiscated and destroyed. The individuals concerned were fined and further legal proceedings were initiated. Separately, in Peshawar, inspection teams raided ketchup manufacturing units and seized 3,000 kilograms of substandard ketchup from one production facility. The entire stock was destroyed and legal action was launched against the factory owner. Commending the enforcement teams, Dr Muhammad Israr Khan reiterated that the provincial government would continue its zero-tolerance policy against food adulteration. "Those endangering public health through the production or sale of adulterated and unsafe food will face strict legal action without discrimination," Israr said.—APP

CM, World Bank review Karachi water reforms

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah and World Bank Country Director Ms Bolormaa Amgaabazar on Monday reviewed the progress of the Karachi Water and Sewerage Services Improvement Project (KWSSIP), assessed key implementation challenges and agreed on an accelerated roadmap to strengthen Karachi's water supply and sanitation infrastructure. The meeting, held at the CM House, was attended by Local Government Minister Saeed Ghani, Mayor Karachi Barister Murtaza Wahab, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, Principal Secretary to CM Agha Wasif, Acting Chairman P&D Bilal Memon, ACS Local Government Waseem

Shamshad, CEO Karachi Water & Sewerage Corporation (KW&SC) Ahmed Siddiqui, Chief Foreign Aid P&D Sajda Ayaz Kazi, Project Director KWSSIP Ayesha Hameed Safia and other senior officials. The World Bank delegation included Operations Officer Hina Salim Lotia, Senior Water Specialist Tiziana Smith, Senior Water Supply and Sanitation Specialist Mohammad Farhanullah Sami, Senior Disaster Risk Management Specialist Kamran Akbar (virtual), Senior Procurement Specialist A.N.M. Mustafizur Rahman, Procurement Specialist Syed Wajahat Ali Shah, Environmental Specialist Nida Asif, Social Development Specialist Sarah Khokhar, Environmental Specialist Ibad-ur-Re-

hman and other experts. The Chief Minister emphasised that improving access to safe drinking water and modernising Karachi's water and sewerage network remained among the Sindh government's highest priorities. The Chief Minister Murad Shah said that one of the principal development objectives of KWSSIP is to provide safe drinking water access to nearly two million Karachi residents. Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab reported that chlorination stations have been shifted to designated locations and commissioning is underway. Water quality testing is expected to commence by July 30, 2026. The Chief Minister directed the KW&SC and project management teams

to complete commissioning and testing activities without delay and ensure that water quality standards are strictly maintained. "The ultimate success of this project will be measured by its impact on citizens. Every household must receive clean, safe and reliable water. Timelines should be treated as commitments to the people of Karachi," Murad Shah said. The meeting was further informed that KW&SC has successfully achieved full coverage of its operation and maintenance costs, a major institutional milestone under the reform programme. Mayor Murtaza Wahab briefed the meeting that compensation payments had been disbursed to 186 out of 203 Project Affected Persons (PAPs), while efforts were continuing to complete

payments to the remaining beneficiaries. Notices have already been issued and the remaining process is expected to be completed after approval of the revised resettlement plan. The Chief Minister directed the Mayor to ensure that all outstanding compensation cases are resolved transparently and expeditiously. "No affected family should face unnecessary delays. Social safeguards and community confidence are essential components of infrastructure development," he said. The meeting was informed that an Independent Monitoring Consultant for environmental and social compliance had joined the project on July 13, strengthening oversight of safeguards and resettlement measures.—DNA

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Branch Offices

Karachi
Room No.14 B/15, 3rd Floor, Kalkaji Road, Main Tariq Road, 17D Block-2, P.E.C.H.S. Karachi. Tel: (+92-21) 3403028, 34019478. Fax: (+92-21) 34031747. E-mail: karachi@freelinemovers.com

Lahore
P-4 Gulberg Centre, Main Boulevard, Lahore. Tel: (+92-42) 3579891, 35791085. Fax: (+92-42) 35791623. E-mail: lahore@freelinemovers.com

Peshawar
Office No. C-6, 2nd Floor, Zuhra Plaza, Left Road, Ring Road, Peshawar. Tel: (+92-91) 2582778. Fax: (+92-91) 2582698. E-mail: peshawar@freelinemovers.com

Kabul
House #4, Street #4, Chahar Asar Road, Shahr-e-Naw, Kabul - Afghanistan. Tel: (+92-902) 172, 92 779585. Fax: 92 77969 208. E-mail: kabul@freelinemovers.com

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.....9218300-09

Hospitals

CMH.....5611111

MH.....561116

Cantt Hospital...9270907-11

DHQT.....5556311-4

RGH.....9290301-7

Holy Family.....9290322-7

PIMS.....9261170-79

Polyclinic.....9218300-09

Shifa International 4603666

Departments

CDA.....9221334-43

CDA.....9208301-04

Met Office.....9250360-6

RDA.....5555864

TMA.....5770886

Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....9209224

Potohar Town.....9290224

Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

ICCI hosts Chinese delegation to boost healthcare coop

Pakistan-China pharmaceutical cooperation holds immense potential: Sardar Tahir

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A high-level delegation of Yuzhonghe (Hubei) Supply Chain Co., Ltd., China, led by its CEO Vince Ma, visited the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) here on Monday to explore business opportunities and forge strategic partnerships in Pakistan's pharmaceutical, healthcare, and supply chain sectors. Speaking on the occasion, Vince Ma said the purpose of the delegation's visit was to identify reliable Pakistani partners and explore long-term collaboration in pharmaceutical manufacturing, healthcare products, medical technologies, and integrated supply chain solutions. He said his company sees Pakistan as a promising market with strong growth potential and is keen to promote investment, technology transfer, and mutually beneficial joint ventures. He emphasized that stronger collaboration between Chinese and Pakistani enterprises would help improve healthcare services, strengthen pharmaceutical supply chains, facilitate knowledge sharing, and create new avenues for bilateral trade and investment. He expressed confidence that today's B2B interactions would lay the foundation for sustainable commercial partnerships between the business communities of the two countries. Welcoming the delegation, Sardar Tahir Mehmood, President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said the



visit reflects the growing momentum in Pakistan-China economic cooperation and opens a new chapter of collaboration in high-potential sectors. He highlighted that Islamabad and its surrounding region have emerged as one of Pakistan's leading pharmaceutical and healthcare hubs, offering excellent opportunities for investment, joint ventures, technology transfer, and industrial collaboration. He assured the delegation that ICCI would

continue to facilitate business-to-business linkages and extend every possible support to Chinese investors seeking credible partners in Pakistan. ICCI Senior Vice President Tahir Ayub said that China's global leadership in pharmaceutical manufacturing, biotechnology, healthcare innovation, and modern supply chain systems, combined with Pakistan's strategic location and expanding market, provides a strong foundation for mutually beneficial cooperation. Vice

President Mohammad Irfan Chaudhry in his vote of thanks expressed confidence that the interaction will definitely yield fruit and the bilateral partnership between the two countries will strengthen further in the days to come. Those present on the occasion included Ms.Ly Ye, Executive Members Zulqurnain Abbasi, Waseem Chaudhry, Imran Minhas, Rohail Anwar Butt, former Senior Vice President Khalid Chaudhry, ICCI member Israr Mishwani, Ms.Uzma Sheraz, and many other.

AI geospatial intelligence game changer for climate resilience

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's increasing exposure to devastating floods, prolonged heatwaves, droughts, deteriorating air quality and mounting water stress has underscored the urgent need for smarter tools and accurate, location-specific data to strengthen disaster preparedness, water-resource management and climate adaptation. Experts say artificial intelligence (AI), combined with geospatial technologies, could bridge this gap by analysing vast volumes of weather, hydrological and satellite data to generate early warnings, hazard assessments and climate intelligence for governments, businesses and communities. By integrating predictive analytics with geospatial intelligence, AI could identify vulnerable areas, forecast the impacts of extreme weather events, monitor water resources and support evidence-based planning. Such technologies enable authorities, emergency responders, water managers, farmers and businesses to take timely preventive measures, minimise losses and build resilience against climate change. Chief Executive Officer (CEO) AI Geonavigators, Asim Javid, said AI-driven geospatial intelligence has

the potential to transform and manage climate risks and water resources by converting complex environmental data into actionable insights, he told APP. "Climate-related disasters are becoming more frequent and severe, making timely and location-specific intelligence essential for protecting lives, water resources, infrastructure and livelihoods," he said. Javid said AI-powered geospatial systems could significantly strengthen early warning mechanisms, disaster preparedness, agricultural planning, water-resource management and climate adaptation while supporting informed decision-making across multiple sectors. Keeping this objective in view, he said, the company had developed an indigenous AI-powered geospatial intelligence platform integrating meteorological, hydrological and geospatial datasets into a centralised intelligence system for climate-risk assessment and operational planning. The platform currently operated through a network of 104 weather stations across Pakistan, delivering real-time information on temperature, humidity, rainfall, wind speed, ultraviolet (UV) index, air quality, elevation

and other meteorological parameters. "It enables users to monitor weather conditions, heat stress, rainfall, air quality and water resources at provincial, district and location-specific levels," he said. Javid said the platform combined Digital Elevation Models (DEMs), the Normalised Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI), the Normalised Difference Moisture Index (NDMI), land surface temperature and open-water monitoring to provide a comprehensive picture of environmental conditions. It also maps floods, heatwaves, droughts, strong winds and air pollution at varying intensity levels while providing 48-hour weather trends, AI-assisted forecasts and risk alerts. He said the platform integrated global forecasting models, including the Global Forecast System (GFS) and the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF), while AI algorithms determine which model performs best across Pakistan's diverse terrain. It also analyses historical climate patterns and generates flood return-period assessments to strengthen disaster preparedness and long-term water-resource planning.—DNA

NUST Business School joins world's leading institutions

ISLAMABAD: NUST Business School (NBS) has achieved a landmark milestone by securing accreditation from the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), one of the world's most prestigious and globally recognized accrediting bodies for business education. With this distinction, NBS joins fewer than six percent of business schools worldwide that hold AACSB accreditation. Extending his felicitations to the NUST community and the nation, Rector NUST, Dr. Muhammad Zahid Latif, termed the accreditation a landmark achievement not only for NUST but also for Pakistan's higher education landscape. He

further said, "AACSB accreditation is a testament to NUST's pursuit of quality, innovation and global engagement. This distinction reinforces our resolve to develop ethical, globally competitive and future-ready leaders who will create lasting value for business and society." Commenting on the achievement, Dr. Naukhez Sarwar, Principal and Dean NBS, said,"AACSB accreditation marks a defining moment in the School's journey towards global eminence. It will further strengthen NBS's global standing by expanding opportunities for international partnerships, student and faculty

mobility, collaborative research and enhancing employer confidence in our graduates." Established in 1916, AACSB evaluates business schools against rigorous international standards encompassing strategic direction, academic quality, faculty credentials, research impact, learner success and industry engagement. Recognized globally as the benchmark for quality in business education, AACSB accreditation signifies an institution's commitment to continuous improvement, innovation and meaningful impact, reinforcing NBS's position amongst the world's foremost business schools.—APP

Pakistan, USA vow to strengthening educational coop

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui received Congressman Michael James Baumgartner, U.S. Representative for Washington's 5th Congressional District, and Congressman Ryan Keith Zinke, U.S. Representative for Montana's 1st Congressional District and former U.S. Secretary of the Interior, for a bilateral meeting. The meeting was also attended by the Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training, Ms. Wajiha Qamar, the Chairman of the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTC), Mr. Qamar-ul-Islam Raja, the Secretary of the Ministry, and senior officials of the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, said a press release on Monday. The two sides discussed opportunities to strengthen cooperation in the field of cybersecurity education and capacity building. The Federal Minister highlighted the importance of

developing specialised cybersecurity courses and certification programmes to equip students and professionals with the knowledge and skills required to address emerging digital security challenges. Both sides also expressed interest in promoting partnerships between Pakistani and United States universities and institutions for curriculum development, faculty collaboration, research, and knowledge sharing in cybersecurity and other emerging technologies. Federal Minister warmly welcomed the visiting United States Congressional Delegation to Pakistan and expressed confidence that the visit would further strengthen the longstanding partnership between Pakistan and the United States. The Government of Pakistan reaffirmed that its relationship with the United States remains an important pillar of its foreign policy and noted with satisfaction that bilateral relations continue to move on a positive trajectory. Both sides underscored the importance of sustained

high-level engagement to maintain this momentum and expand cooperation in areas of mutual interest, including trade, investment, energy, minerals, health, education, and agriculture. Federal Minister also welcomed the resumption of Congressional Delegation (CODEL) visits and expressed the hope that such exchanges would become a regular feature of bilateral engagement. The meeting highlighted the importance of educational cooperation as a cornerstone of the bilateral relationship. The Federal Minister appreciated the continued success of the Fulbright Program and other United States-sponsored academic exchange initiatives, which remain fully funded, merit-based, and accessible to students and scholars across Pakistan through the United States Educational Foundation in Pakistan (USEFP). He encouraged wider participation from all provinces and academic disciplines, particularly in the fields of energy, water, agriculture, health, education, and climate-related studies.—APP

Mohtasib declares JPMC employees eligible for FGEHA plots

ISLAMABAD: In a landmark decision, the Wafaqi Mohtasib (Federal Ombudsman), Naveed Kamran Baloch has declared the employees of Jinnah Post Graduate Medical Centre (JPMC), Karachi eligible for allotment of plots under the Federal Government employees quota. He directed the Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) to consider JPMC employees as Federal Government servants and to include their names in the allotment process w.e.f. filing of their respective applications. According to the details, the JPMC doctor S.M. Tariq Rafi along with certain other employees had approached the Wafaqi Mohtasib's Office with the plea that their organization i.e. JPMC was transferred to the government of Sindh, following the passage of the 18th Constitutional amendment. However, this step was declared unconstitutional by the Sindh High Court as well as the Supreme Court of Pakistan, restoring its federal status. This development automatically restored their federal government employees status. The FGEHA, however, continued to exclude them from the housing schemes meant for the federal government employees. The JPMC employees argued that this step was discriminatory and constituted a serious violation of their fundamental rights. They said that the organization's employees had been allotted plots of land and flats from time to time in the past. The Wafaqi Mohtasib called for a detailed report from the FGEHA. It opined that when the petitioners applied for allotment of plots their organization was under the administrative control of the Sindh government and, therefore, they were not entitled to allotment of plots under the Federal employees quota. The Wafaqi Mohtasib after listening to both sides and minutely reviewing the available record, dismissed the plea taken by the FGEHA and termed the JPMC employees eligible for allotment of plots under the federal government employee's quota.—APP

PPP slams govt as rain exposes ‘Suthra Punjab’ failures

He alleged that in Punjab, contracts for wheat procurement were given to 11 companies using public funds, and that police were being used in the process. He further claimed that wheat supplies from Kashmir were being blocked, while the people of Kashmir were in need of flour

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party Central Information Secretary Nadeem Afzal Chan, Central Information Secretary Nadeem Afzal Chan said that even ordinary rains had caused excessive water accumulation across Punjab and exposed the failures of the "Suthra Punjab" initiative. He said this while addressing press conference along with Sindh Provincial Minister Saeed Ghani, MNA Mehreen Bhutto and Spokesperson Sindh Govt Sadia Javed at PPP Central Secretariat held press conference. He stated that the damage was not due to heavy rainfall but due to the collapse of the sewerage system and poor planning, which resulted in losses worth billions of rupees for the people. Criticizing the Punjab Government's priorities, he said irrigation was not on the government's agenda. He added that the irrigation system developed during the British era was superior to the current system, and it had deteriorated due to lack of funding. On food security, Nadeem Chan said the PPP had repeatedly warned of a wheat shortage. He noted that Pakistan had achieved a wheat surplus only once, during a PPP government. "Check the price of bread in this country," he said, adding that while the Federal Government had announced the purchase of 1 million tons of wheat, procurement from farmers was being ignored. He alleged that in Punjab, contracts for wheat procurement were given to 11 companies using public funds, and that police were being used in the process. He further claimed that wheat supplies from Kashmir were being blocked, while the people of Kashmir were in need of flour. Nadeem Afzal Chan challenged the government to review the condition of public schools in Punjab. He accused the government of failing to ensure transparent elections and good governance, and of copying policies without implementation. He questioned the ownership of the 11 companies awarded government contracts and said those who speak about the elite are correct. Speaking on Azad Kashmir, he alleged that PML-N candidates were involved in ballot stuffing in Kotli. He said the PPP Chairman's statement regarding representation for the people of Kashmir in Parliament was made in this context. "If there is any other solution for the right to self-determination and ownership, present it. We have come out to save the state. Do not wound the state further just to run your buses and planes," he said. He added that if the administration was not used, people would not vote for a particular party. Referring to the PPP Chairman's statement on Maulana's remarks, he said "martyrs gave their lives, the elite consumed the benefits." He alleged that administrative machinery had been used in these constituencies in the past. Sindh Provincial Minister Saeed Ghani said that firing was carried out by PML-N candidates during the AJK election campaign, in which some PPP workers were injured. He said the Election Commission's role was not visible and alleged that sending buses before elections was an attempt to gain attention and votes. He criticized remarks naming two cities of one province, saying it had hurt the sentiments of the people of Sindh. —DNA

IESCO notifies power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Monday issued a power suspension programme for Tuesday in various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to an IESCO spokesperson, in Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, power supply will remain suspended from 6 am to 10 am, Jarar Camp, Bhall, Jatha Hathial, Basali, Kambeli Sadiq, feeders. In Chakwal Circle, electricity supply will remain suspended from 6 am to 10 am, Abdullah Pur, Jalal Pur, Saghar Pur, CWO, feeders. In GSO Circle, power supply will remain suspended from 08:00 am to 05:00 pm, 132KV GSS RAWATI-II power Transformer T-1, from 09:00 am to 04:00 pm, 132kv AWC HMC Taxila and 132KV Sangiani-Burhan, from 08:00 am to 06:00 pm, 132KV Kahuta City- Palandri, 132KV New Wah-Bahtermore along with related earth switch, and surrounding areas. IESCO apologized to consumers for the temporary inconvenience and said electricity supply would be restored before the scheduled time if the maintenance work was completed earlier than expected.—APP

FUUAUAST convocation 2026 for all campuses

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science and Technology (FUUAUAST) has announced that its Convocation 2026 will be held in October to honour graduating students from its Islamabad and Karachi campuses. Announcing the convocation in a statement, Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr Zabta Khan Shinwari said the event was being organised with the support of Allied Bank Limited (ABL), one of the major sponsors. He thanked the bank for its valuable support and also acknowledged the contribution of Saeed Allahwala, saying their encouragement and co-operation helped make the event possible. Professor Shinwari said the upcoming ceremonies would mark the university's 4th and 5th convocations in the last two years, including the third convocation in Karachi and the second in the capital. He described the achievement as the successful revival of the university's convocation tradition after a gap of nearly 15 years.—APP

Briefs

ITP delivers
over 437,000
licensing
services

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has provided more than 437,000 driving licence-related services to citizens so far this year, reflecting its continued efforts to ensure timely, transparent, paperless and cashless service delivery. An ITP official told APP on Monday that more than 82,000 learner driving permits had been issued during the period, while over 48,000 driving licences were renewed. The official said ITP also issued more than 75,000 fresh driving licences, over 4,300 duplicate licences, and processed the conversion and endorsement of more than 7,000 driving licences. He said the licensing system is being further strengthened through the adoption of modern technology to make services faster, more efficient and convenient for the public. Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Kainat Azhar Khan said Islamabad Traffic Police remained committed to providing transparent, high-quality and citizen-friendly services through practical reforms and digital initiatives. She said modern reforms in the licensing system had significantly improved service standards and made the process easier and more accessible for citizens. The CTO Kainat urged every eligible citizen to obtain a valid driving licence, carry it while driving and strictly follow traffic laws to ensure safe travel for all road users. She said Islamabad Traffic Police would continue promoting a safe, well-organised and law-abiding traffic culture through modern service centres, digital facilities and public-friendly initiatives. /APP-rzr-mkz.—APP

Khidmat
Centres
deliver over
82,000 citizen
services

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police have released the performance data of their 12 state-of-the-art Police Khidmat Centres, highlighting the wide range of citizen services provided across the federal capital during the current year. An ICT Police spokesperson told APP on Monday that the service centres, located at F-6, G-9, Diplomatic Enclave, H-11, Bani Gala, Chamber of Commerce, Sawan Garden, Khanna, G-14, Gulberg Greens, the DC Office and mobile facilitation vans, continued to provide efficient and citizen-friendly services under one roof. He said the centres issued 21,160 character certificates, conducted 29,355 general police verifications and 977 vehicle verifications during the year. The spokesperson said 13,321 tenants were registered, while 6,163 missing reports were lodged on citizens' requests. He said the centres also registered 727 domestic workers, 5,597 foreigners, and issued 4,911 exit certificates to foreign nationals. Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi said the F-6 Police Khidmat Centre had been further upgraded to provide improved facilities to citizens under one roof. He said providing quality public services and ensuring prompt redressal of citizens' complaints remained the foremost priority of Islamabad Police.



A group of students from Jinnah law college, Jehlum Punjab visiting senate museum at Parliament House

Commerce Minister
assures support for SMEs

The Minister reaffirmed that the Ministry of Commerce would continue engaging with the business community to identify practical solutions, promote investment, strengthen SMEs and create a more competitive and export-oriented economy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan has reaffirmed the Government's commitment to creating a business-friendly environment by simplifying regulations, promoting industrial development, facilitating small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and expanding Pakistan's manufacturing base. The Minister expressed these views during a meeting with a delegation of the Islamabad Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industries (ICSTSI), which called on him to discuss issues relating to SMEs, taxation, industrial infrastructure, ease of doing business and export promotion. The delegation welcomed the recent revision in the State Bank of Pakistan's SME definition, describing it as a positive step that would enable more businesses to qualify for financial support and formal sector incentives, said a release issued here on Monday. Jam Kamal Khan said the Government was committed to reducing unnecessary regulatory hurdles and modernising business processes through digitalisation and institutional reforms. He stressed that outdated procedures and overlapping regulations should be gradually removed to improve the ease of doing business and encourage entrepreneurship. The Minister said efforts were underway to simplify business registration through a more integrated and facilitative approach so that entrepreneurs could complete regulatory requirements before commencing commercial operations. He noted that bringing more businesses into the formal economy required facilitation rather than additional compliance burdens. The delegation highlighted that a large segment of Pakistan's small business community remained self-financed and often avoided formal registration due to complicated procedures, repeated audits and compliance costs. The Minister observed that expanding the tax base by encouraging voluntary documentation, instead of placing greater pressure on existing taxpayers, remained an important policy objective. Participants also called for the establishment of dedicated small industrial zones, particularly in Islamabad, equipped with essential in-



frastructure such as electricity, gas, water and road access. They said many small manufacturers currently operated from residential areas and informal workshops due to the high cost of setting up formal industrial units. Jam Kamal Khan agreed that organised industrial estates for SMEs would improve productivity, product quality, environmental compliance and employment opportunities while supporting the growth of local manufacturing. The meeting also discussed Pakistan's expanding food industry and the increasing role of e-commerce,

digital platforms and delivery services in creating new business opportunities. The Minister noted that the food and hospitality sectors had emerged as important contributors to employment and economic activity and possessed significant growth potential. The delegation urged the Government to establish a modern slaughterhouse in Islamabad, noting that an 8-hectare site had already been identified and planning work completed, but the project remained delayed due to administrative and environmental issues.

Govt releases Rs
820b uplift funds

Among the federal ministries and divisions, the highest authorisation was made for Provinces and Special Areas, amounting to Rs195.37 billion, followed by the Water Resources Division with Rs101.64 billion and the Cabinet Division with Rs63.24 billion

ISLAMABAD: The government authorised utilisation of development funds amounting to Rs820.495 billion during the fiscal year 2025-26 under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP), against a total federal allocation of Rs820.513 billion. According to the latest Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives data, the federal PSDP allocation comprised Rs565.13 billion for federal ministries and divisions and Rs255.37 billion for corporations. Authorisations amounted to Rs565.12 billion and Rs255.37 billion, respectively, during the fiscal year. Among the federal ministries and divisions, the highest authorisation was made for Provinces and Special Areas, amounting to Rs195.37 billion, followed by the Water Resources Division with Rs101.64 billion and the Cabinet Division with Rs63.24 billion. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) was authorised Rs34.91 billion, Federal Education and Professional Training Division Rs26.81 billion, Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Division Rs19.30 billion, Railways Division Rs18.56 billion, Interior Division Rs15.52 billion, Housing and Works Division Rs14.24 billion, National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Division Rs13.14 billion, Revenue Division Rs12.21 billion and Information Technology and Telecommunication Division Rs10.12 billion. Other notable authorisations included Rs8.32 billion for the Defence Division, Rs5.78 billion for the Industries and Production Division, Rs3.33 billion each for the Information and Broadcasting Division and the Science and Technological Research Division, Rs2.30 billion for the Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Division, Rs1.88 billion for the Finance Division, Rs1.63 billion for the National Food Security and Research Division, Rs1.39 billion for the Law and Justice Division, Rs1.22 billion for the Maritime Affairs Division, Rs1.03 billion for the Inter-Provincial Coordination Division, Rs814.93 million for the Defence Production Division, Rs568.58 million for the Petroleum Division, Rs495.36 million for the Establishment Division, Rs276.91 million for the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) Division, Rs200.25 million for the Board of Investment, Rs190 million for the Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan and SAFRON Division, Rs79.47 million for the Communications Division (other than NHA), Rs61.05 million for the National Heritage and Culture Division, Rs50 million for the Commerce Division, Rs49.62 million for the Religious Affairs and Inter-Faith Harmony Division and Rs23 million for the Human Rights Division. Among corporations, the National Highway Authority (NHA) was authorised Rs182.23 billion, while Power Division entities (NTDC/PEPCO) received Rs73.14 billion during FY2025-26. —DNA

President, PM pay
tribute to Captain
Sarwar Shaheed

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday paid tribute to Captain Muhammad Sarwar Shaheed, Nishan-e-Haider, on his 78th martyrdom anniversary, commending his sacrifice, unwavering bravery, and selfless devotion to the motherland. In their separately issued statements, the president and the prime minister expressed homage on behalf of the entire nation, highlighting that the martyr set an everlasting benchmark of duty, valor, and patriotism by rendering his life for the freedom of Kashmir during the First Kashmir War on July 27, 1948. Highlighting his distinction as Pakistan's first Nishan-e-Haider recipient, they said that his unique honor and unforgettable sacrifice for the nation would endure forever. President Zardari said that the Captain Sarwar Shaheed's ultimate sacrifice for Kashmir's liberation remained a timeless symbol of bravery, duty, and patriotism. He emphasized that the brave officer created

a legacy that coming generations would always recall with deep respect and pride. The martyrs who laid down their lives for the defense of Pakistan remain a precious national asset, he added. He said that the martyr etched his name in history through exceptional devotion to duty, courage, valor, and professional strategy and that brave soldiers like him were the pride of the nation and the guarantee of Pakistan's invincible defense. Prime Minister Shehbaz said that through his steadfastness and bravery, Captain Sarwar Shaheed demonstrated that the entire nation stood as an iron wall when it comes to defending the motherland. His patriotic spirit, sense of duty, and timeless sacrifice on the battlefield will continue to serve as a guiding light for future generations, he added. Prime Minister Shehbaz reaffirmed that the nation remained immensely proud of Captain Sarwar Shaheed and all the martyrs who laid down their lives in defense of Pakistan. —APP

Khawaja dismisses
Indian defence
minister's remarks

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif strongly dismissed recent irresponsible remarks by the Indian defence minister on the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, calling them irresponsible and misleading. Asif said the comments were another attempt to distort internationally recognised legal realities through political rhetoric and coercive posturing, he wrote on his social media platform X. He said that such statements do not change the status of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, nor do they help promote regional peace, stability, or meaningful dialogue. He said Jammu and Kashmir remains an internationally recognised disputed territory, the final disposition of which is to be determined in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and the freely expressed will of the Kashmiri people. Asif said India's repeated attempts to malign Pakistan lack credibility in light of its own well-documented record of state-sponsored terrorism and criminal activities. In fact, India remains the biggest sponsor of terrorism and perpetrator of instability in South Asia, holding the region hostage to its aggressively revisionist designs. The Minister said equally alarming is India's irresponsible rhetoric which risks lowering the threshold for interstate conflict in the region. He said Pakistan remains committed to peace and dialogue, but its resolve to safeguard its sovereignty, territorial integrity and national security is absolute and must never be tested. Asif said the Indian Defence Minister's rhetoric is an attempt to deflect attention from internal turmoil and increasing unrest and discontent against Modi's autocratic and divisive style of governance. —DNA

Masterpieces
by senior
artists on
display

RAWALPINDI: A diverse array of artworks depicting Pakistan's cultural richness, social values and natural landscapes took center stage at the Punjab Council of the Arts (PCA) Rawalpindi where masterpieces by senior artists were displayed during a painting exhibition. The concluding session drew to a vibrant close. The exhibition attracted a large gathering of artists, writers, intellectuals, academics, students and art enthusiasts from across the region, who praised the creative depth and technical excellence of the displayed pieces as a significant contribution to the city's artistic heritage. Speaking as the Chief Guest at the closing ceremony, Parliamentary Secretary for Information and Culture, Punjab, Shazia Rizwan emphasized that visual arts serve as a vital reflection of a nation's cultural identity. She highlighted that the government, under CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif and Minister for Information and Culture Azma Bukhari, is committed to promoting the arts, preserving heritage, and creating platforms for artists to showcase their talent. Director PCA Rawalpindi Muhammad Shakoor reaffirmed the council's dedication to backing local creators and strengthening regional cultural activities. He extended gratitude to exhibition organizer Azeem Iqbal, acknowledging his efforts and planning in bringing senior artists together on a single platform. —APP

IG Islamabad
orders faster
crackdown on
illegal weapons

ISLAMABAD: A high-level meeting chaired by Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi on Monday reviewed progress on key policing tasks and directed officers to intensify operations against criminal elements, with a renewed focus on the ongoing Weapons-Free Islamabad Campaign. An ICT Police spokesperson told APP that the meeting was attended by DIG Islamabad Muhammad Jawad Tariq, SSP Investigation Muhammad Usman Tariq Butt, SSP Operations Qazi Ali Raza, and other senior police officers. The participants reviewed progress on previously assigned tasks, ongoing operations against criminal elements and measures to improve the quality of investigations across the federal capital. The IGP directed officers to further accelerate the crackdown against individuals involved in illegal possession of weapons under the "Weapons-Free Islamabad Campaign" to ensure effective enforcement. —APP

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EXPORTERS OF
MARTIAL ARTS UNIFORMS
IN
PAKISTAN**

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Sialkot-51340, Pakistan
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Israeli election will be the most toxic in its history

YOSSI MEKELBERG

FROM the moment the sixth Benjamin Netanyahu government – and, one hopes, the last – was formed, the only question given its personalities, ideological platform, and overall competence was how much worse things could get. To be honest, it exceeded even the darkest expectations, and in the worst possible way. Hence, when an election was finally scheduled for Oct. 27, the announcement was welcomed by most Israelis, who have consistently expressed in opinion polls their support for parties currently in opposition. What appears straightforward in a “normal” democracy does not necessarily apply to Israel, especially after the extraordinary years since this most right-wing, extremist, and disastrous government came to power. Two defining events have profoundly transformed and polarized Israeli society, while severely damaging the country’s international image and reputation, perhaps for generations. The first originated with Netanyahu’s criminal indictments on charges of fraud, bribery, and breach of trust. Desperate to remain in power, after almost two decades as prime minister, he appears to regard the office as his entitlement, and motivated by the prospect of delaying, if not entirely derailing, his trial, Netanyahu legitimized the ultra-nationalist, messianic, and Kahanist elements of Israeli politics to assemble a governing coalition. At the same time, Netanyahu eliminated almost all internal dissent within the Likud Party, surrounding himself with loyalists whose principal, if not only, qualification was their personal loyalty to the Israeli leader and his family. Alongside them stood coalition partners who espouse a deeply distorted understanding of liberal democracy, believing that an elected executive should govern with few meaningful constitutional constraints. They reject effective parliamentary oversight by the Knesset, dismiss judicial review, and routinely ignore the advice of the government’s own legal advisers. Weakening independent institutions and intimidating the media have likewise become essential tools for avoiding scrutiny. Electoral deadlock could send voters back to the polls. This agenda prompted hundreds of thousands of Israelis to take to the streets in weekly demonstrations against the government’s judicial overhaul and broader assault on democratic institutions – until disaster struck. The second defining event was Hamas’ cross-border attack from Gaza on Oct. 7, 2023, which killed nearly 1,200 people, saw 251 others taken hostage, and devastated several Israeli communities bordering the enclave. The attack traumatized the nation and ushered Israel into a prolonged period of almost uninterrupted warfare. By the time Israelis go to the polls, the country will have endured three years of conflict that spread from Gaza across much of the Middle East. Israel’s military response, widely viewed as becoming as much a war of revenge as a campaign to defeat Hamas, has resulted in the deaths of more than 75,000 Palestinians in Gaza, the vast majority civilians according

Pakistan’s First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 06 Issue: 444

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-8488394 / 051-2261960

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



to many estimates. Large parts of the territory have been destroyed, most of its population has been displaced multiple times, a humanitarian catastrophe has unfolded, and Israel now occupies most of the Gaza Strip. Moreover, Israel has fought on seven fronts and, for the first time in its history, engaged in direct warfare with its principal regional adversary, Iran. Despite significant Israeli tactical military successes, Iranian missile attacks reached deep inside Israel. At the same time, the Israeli military continued operations against Hezbollah, while maintaining a presence in parts of Lebanon. Following the collapse of Bashar Assad’s regime, Israel also expanded its control over territory in Syria. This is only a partial account of the “achievements” of a government that has also left Israel facing genocide proceedings before the International Court of Justice, while Netanyahu remains the subject of an arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court. At the same time, Israel is more internationally isolated than at any point in its history, with relations even with Washington becoming increasingly strained – to the political, security, and economic detriment of the Jewish state. Despite this record, Netanyahu is asking the electorate to entrust him and his government with another four years in office, a prospect that Israel cannot afford and which he definitely does not deserve. Logically and rationally, all the parties comprising the current governing coalition should face severe electoral punishment. They first abused their parliamentary majority in an attempt to undermine Israel’s democratic institutions, then presided over the country’s worst single-day loss of life, and subsequently failed for many months to secure the release of the many Israelis held hostage by Hamas. The government has also entrenched profound inequalities in military service. While most Israeli citizens are legally required to serve as conscripts or reservists, and many have accumulated hundreds of days of reserve duty over the past three years, large numbers of ultra-Orthodox men continue to receive exemptions from military service. This arrangement exists largely to preserve Netanyahu’s coalition agreement with the two ultra-Orthodox parties, which have been rewarded with substantial public funding financed by taxpayers who both perform military service and sustain the economy, unlike many beneficiaries who remain in full-time religious study. Yet this is also an Israel that has lived under Netanyahu’s political dominance since 2009; a country still struggling to recover from the collective trauma of Oct. 7; and a society shaped by an age of populism amplified through social media, where the government has the audacity to blame the opposition for its own failures while promoting conspiracy theories against its political rivals. Israel is also an intensely partisan society. Certain voting blocs, notably the ultra-Orthodox and many settlers, display exceptionally high electoral discipline, functioning almost as permanent political constituencies rather than supporters of broad-based catch-all parties. Meanwhile, much of the opposition, particularly on the Palestinian issue and on broader questions of national security, has been reluctant to offer a genuinely alternative vision. Instead, it largely promises to govern more competently, more honestly, and with greater respect for democratic institutions. While these are undoubtedly necessary conditions for effective government, they are far from sufficient to persuade enough voters that a fundamentally different course is available.

The Trump–Netanyahu Axis: Power, War, and the Politics of Escalation

Qamar Bashir



The war’s narrative, however, is colored by the leaders’ need for theatrical dominance. Trump has threatened a “massive attack” on Iran to “finish them off,” while Netanyahu has claimed he is reshaping the Middle East to his will. Their strategy has backfired; Iran has proven resilient and willing to absorb conflict, using the war to assert greater control over the strait and attack U.S. allies, further disrupting global energy markets and proving the limits of US...

IN the annals of political psychology, few figures have been as openly scrutinized for their personality traits as Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu. Both leaders have been characterized by observers and analysts as exhibiting profound narcissism—an excessive preoccupation with self, a sense of entitlement, and a lack of empathy. This psychological profile, when fused with immense political power, has not merely shaped domestic policy but has been a driving force in what some analysts have termed a “dangerous duet of self-promotion and delusion,” culminating in a catastrophic war with Iran and the devastation of Gaza. The personal dynamic between Trump and Netanyahu is often described as a meeting of “two leading pathological narcissists”. Their relationship is transactional, built on mutual admiration and the reinforcement of each other’s grandiose self-images. During a White House meeting, Netanyahu presented Trump with a letter nominating him for the Nobel Peace Prize, a gesture that perfectly encapsulates the currency of their bond: validation. Trump, in turn, has publicly praised Netanyahu as a “war hero,” adding, “I guess I am, too... I sent those planes,” despite having never served in combat. This assertion of shared glory reveals a fundamental inability to distinguish between the actions of others and their own perceived achievements. Their narcissism manifests in a shared worldview of zero-sum competition and personal indispensability. Both men frame themselves as singular saviors uniquely capable of navigating existential threats. Netanyahu portrays himself as the sole guardian of Israel against Iran and regional enemies, while Trump’s “I alone can fix it” rhetoric since his 2016 campaign till date has been a consistent theme. This belief places them “above correction,” leading them to view independent judiciaries, a free press, and international law as illegitimate constraints on their will. This is starkly illustrated by their contempt for the International Criminal Court (ICC), which Trump has actively worked to sanction and Netanyahu has dismissed as “absurd” after it issued arrest warrants for him for war crimes. Trump and Netanyahu’s convergence—two embattled leaders seeking validation through conflict—reveals less a grand strategy than a dangerous duet of self promotion and delusion”. The war’s narrative, however, is colored by the leaders’ need for theatrical dominance. Trump has threatened a “massive attack” on Iran to “finish them off,” while Netanyahu has claimed he is reshaping the Middle East to his will. Their strategy has backfired; Iran has proven resilient and willing to absorb conflict, using the war to assert greater control over the strait and attack U.S. allies, further

disrupting global energy markets and proving the limits of U.S. power. Nowhere is the lack of empathy associated with their leadership more apparent than in Gaza. The ICC Pre-Trial Chamber has issued arrest warrants for Netanyahu for the war crime of starvation as a method of warfare and crimes against humanity including murder and persecution. But both Donald Trump and Bibi in almost all their speeches blame Iran for targeting civilians. The charge is familiar, a rhythmic chorus in the war drums of the Middle East: Iran is indiscriminately targeting civilians. It is a narrative of moral clarity, painting the Islamic Republic as a rogue actor indifferent to human life. Yet, when examined through the cold calculus of civilian casualties, the claim rings hollow. To compare this to the American and Israeli record of civilian killing is to compare a house fire to a forest fire. The United States has perfected the art of industrial-scale civilian slaughter across generations. In Korea, an estimated 3 million civilians perished, and the number of refugees reached 3 million. In Vietnam, the civilian death toll reached 2 million, with millions more refugees and victims of chemical defoliants. The Iraq War (2003) claimed between 200,000 and 250,000 civilian lives, creating 3.25 million refugees. The “War on Terror” has, by conservative estimates, killed over 940,000 people, with 432,000 being civilians, in at least 85 countries since 9/11. The list is a macabre roll call of modern history: Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, Somalia, Yugoslavia, and more. These are not accidents; they are the predictable consequences of a foreign policy driven by hegemony and a view of foreign lives as expendable. Israel’s record in its immediate neighborhood is equally damning. Since October 2023, more than 73,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza. According to Hamas, nearly 65,000 of those are civilians, and Israel continues to carry out near-daily strikes in Gaza that have killed over 1,180 Palestinians since a ceasefire, with the UN reporting continuing attacks on civilians and infrastructure. This is not merely combat; it is a systematic destruction of life. The violence extends to Lebanon, where 3,558 have been killed, and to the West Bank, where settler violence and arrests of civilians are routine. When the architects of this systematic destruction—the United States and Israel—accuse Iran of “indiscriminately targeting civilians,” they perform a grotesque act of psychological projection. It is the pot calling the kettle black, while the pot itself is a blackened cauldron of human suffering. Trump, who threatened Iran with “unconditional surrender,” and Netanyahu, who has dismissed international law as “absurd,” have no moral authority to condemn anyone

for civilian deaths. Their hands are steeped in the blood of a thousand conflicts. The hypocrisy is not merely cynical; it is pathological. To ask whether these leaders have the “right” to blame Iran is to miss the point entirely. Their “right” is not a moral one but a claim rooted in power and propaganda. They have shown, through their actions, that they do not value civilian life—not the lives of Palestinians, not the lives of Iranians, and not the lives of the millions of others who have perished in American and Israeli wars. They view civilian casualties as a necessary cost, a statistic to be managed, or a tool for leverage. Both Israel and the USA cite chanting of the death of America and Death of Israel by Iranians as one of the most important reasons to attack Iran. Knowing very well that these slogans are not a genocidal manifesto or a declaration of capability, but rather a visceral, symbolic expression of rage against two nations that have systematically subjected their country to decades of covert sabotage, assassinations of nuclear scientists, cyberattacks on infrastructure, and overt military threats—all while Iran possessed no nuclear weapon. Despite the rhetoric, Iran does not possess the capacity to “destroy” America by any stretch of imagination, nor can it annihilate Israel, a nuclear-armed state with superior military technology. However, Iran has demonstrated a formidable capability in asymmetrical warfare—precision missiles, drone strikes, and regional proxies—to repulse aggression and inflict significant pain. Therefore, these chants should be viewed not as a credible existential threat, but as the desperate, cathartic outcry of a besieged nation responding to relentless assault, which the United States and Israel conveniently weaponize to justify their own aggression while conveniently ignoring their own role in provoking this animosity. Ultimately, the “reality created by themselves” that Trump and Netanyahu inhabit is one where their personal survival and political ambitions are prioritized over the lives of millions. Their policy of narcissism has led to a fractured Middle East, an energized and emboldened Iran, a horrific humanitarian disaster in Gaza, and a significant erosion of international norms and legal institutions. Their legacy is one of “moral rot,” leaving behind battered societies struggling to recover from the narcissistic tyranny of men who crowned themselves as saviors but instead became the “sculptors of their nations’ destruction”.
– Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)
Former Press Minister,
Embassy of Pakistan to France
Former Press Attaché to Malaysia
Former MD, SRBC | Michigan, USA

Monsoon is an Invitation to Build Green Pakistan

Dr. Muhammd Akram Zaheer



Yet tree plantation must not become a numbers game. Public campaigns often celebrate the distribution of millions of saplings, but far less attention is paid to whether those plants survive beyond the first season. Plantation without maintenance produces little lasting benefit. A single mature tree contributes more to the environment than hundreds of neglected saplings that fail to take root

EACH summer brings fresh warnings from climate scientists and each year those warnings become more difficult to ignore. Rising temperatures are no longer distant projections confined to scientific journals; they have become part of daily life. Across the world, heatwaves are lasting longer, forests are burning more frequently, glaciers are shrinking and weather patterns are becoming increasingly unpredictable. Pakistan stands among the countries most vulnerable to these changes. From prolonged droughts to devastating floods and increasingly severe heatwaves, the country has already begun to experience the consequences of a warming planet. The challenge before us is immense, but nature continues to offer opportunities for meaningful action. One of the greatest of these arrives every year with the monsoon. For most people, the rainy season evokes memories of cool evenings, the fragrance of wet soil and relief from the scorching heat. Yet the monsoon represents far more than a welcome change in weather. It is nature’s annual invitation to restore what has been lost. Rainfall creates ideal conditions for tree plantation. The softened soil allows roots to spread quickly, while the increased moisture reduces the stress that young saplings often experience after transplantation. Natural rainfall also lessens the need for constant irrigation, improving survival rates and reducing maintenance costs. These are precisely the reasons why many countries organise their largest afforestation campaigns during the rainy season. Trees remain among the most effective allies in the struggle against climate change. They quietly perform services upon which human civilisation depends. By absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen, they help moderate the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Their shade lowers surface temperatures, reducing the urban heat island effect that makes cities significantly warmer than surrounding rural areas. Their roots hold soil together, limit erosion, recharge groundwater and lessen the destructive impact of heavy rainfall. Their branches provide shelter for birds, insects and countless other forms of life that sustain healthy ecosystems. Pakistan has every reason to embrace this natural solution with renewed determination. The country has witnessed an alarming decline in tree cover over several decades. Rapid urbanisation, expanding road networks, commercial development and unchecked construction

have steadily replaced green spaces with concrete. While economic growth demands infrastructure, development that ignores ecological balance eventually imposes far greater costs through declining air quality, water shortages and extreme weather. Lahore illustrates this transformation with painful clarity. Once celebrated for its gardens, tree-lined avenues and canals, the city now struggles with dense smog during winter and intense heat during summer. Expanding residential schemes, shrinking open spaces and increasing traffic have altered both the landscape and the climate. Similar trends are visible in many other urban centres where green belts continue to disappear. Unless this trajectory is reversed, future generations may know these cities only through photographs and nostalgic descriptions. The value of trees extends beyond environmental protection. Green surroundings contribute significantly to public health and social well-being. Parks and shaded streets encourage outdoor activity, reduce stress and improve mental health. Children benefit from safe places to play, while elderly citizens find relief from harsh summer temperatures. Research across the world has consistently shown that neighbourhoods with greater tree cover enjoy healthier living conditions and stronger community interaction. A greener city is often a more liveable and humane city. Yet tree plantation must not become a numbers game. Public campaigns often celebrate the distribution of millions of saplings, but far less attention is paid to whether those plants survive beyond the first season. Plantation without maintenance produces little lasting benefit. A single mature tree contributes more to the environment than hundreds of neglected saplings that fail to take root. The emphasis, therefore, should be on quality rather than publicity. Indigenous species adapted to local climatic conditions deserve priority because they require less water, support native biodiversity and generally survive better than imported varieties. Species such as banyan, peepal, neem, shisham, kikar, jamun, beri, moringa and dharek have long flourished in Pakistan’s environment and continue to provide valuable ecological services. Their restoration should become an essential component of both public policy and community participation. Government institutions undoubtedly have an important role to play through urban planning, forest conservation and effective enforcement against illegal tree cutting. However, environmental responsibility cannot remain the ex-

clusive domain of the state. Schools, universities, religious institutions, businesses, industries and neighbourhood organisations all possess the capacity to transform local landscapes. Every available space, whether within educational campuses, public parks, roadside corridors or residential communities, offers an opportunity to expand tree cover. Families also have an important responsibility. Environmental awareness begins at home and children who grow up planting and caring for trees are more likely to value conservation throughout their lives. A tree planted to celebrate a birthday, graduation, marriage or other family milestone carries a meaning that extends far beyond the occasion itself. It becomes a living reminder that personal happiness can also contribute to the common good. Islamic tradition further strengthens this sense of responsibility. Caring for the earth, protecting living creatures and planting trees are regarded as virtuous acts that continue to benefit others long after the planter is gone. Every traveller who rests beneath a tree, every bird that builds a nest among its branches and every child who enjoys its shade becomes part of a continuing legacy of service. Environmental stewardship is therefore not only a civic obligation but also a moral one. The urgency of the moment cannot be overstated. Climate change is accelerating and each passing year narrows the window for effective action. Delaying meaningful environmental restoration will only increase the burden placed upon future generations. They will inherit hotter cities, scarcer water resources and more frequent natural disasters if present trends continue unchecked. The monsoon offers a practical opportunity to change this course. Instead of treating the rains merely as seasonal relief, they should be regarded as the beginning of a national effort to restore ecological balance. Every citizen who plants a tree this season contributes, in however modest a way, to cleaner air, healthier communities and a more resilient Pakistan. The question facing us is no longer whether climate change is real. It is whether society is prepared to respond before the consequences become irreversible. The answer need not begin with grand declarations or expensive technologies. It can begin with a single sapling placed carefully into rain-soaked soil, protected through its early years and allowed to grow into a source of shade, life and hope. That small act, repeated across thousands of homes and communities, may ultimately prove to be one of the most valuable investments we make in Pakistan’s future.

Briefs

President reviews progress on Sindh-China cooperation

FROM PAGE 01

fire safety equipment and other sectors. The briefing also covered the steps taken by the Government of Sindh to coordinate with Chinese companies and facilitate the implementation of these initiatives. The President said the government is fully facilitating Chinese businesses and investors. He said Pakistan highly values its All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership with China and remains committed to further strengthening economic cooperation under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), with CPEC 2.0 now underway. The President said his regular visits to China reflect Pakistan's commitment to deepening bilateral relations and promoting mutually beneficial economic cooperation. During the briefing on cooperation with Anhui Nengtong New Energy Technology Co., Ltd., the President was informed about the company's interest in manufacturing and supplying EV charging stations and developing related infrastructure in Sindh. The discussions covered the development of EV charging stations, solar-storage-charging facilities, energy storage solutions, smart charging networks, technology transfer and training. The President said Karachi and Hyderabad offer significant potential for the development of EV infrastructure, while the Karachi-Hyderabad M-9 corridor could serve as an important starting point for intercity charging facilities. He expressed the confidence that cooperation in this area will support Pakistan's transition towards green mobility and contribute to the development of the new energy sector. The President was also briefed on progress in cooperation between the Government of Sindh and Luoyang Modern Biology Group on veterinary biological vaccines and animal identification and traceability. The briefing covered the roadmap for cooperation, including the ongoing visit of the Chinese delegation, the planned visit of a Sindh Institute of Animal Husbandry delegation to China in August and technical work relating to the Sindh-08 strain of the foot and mouth disease. The President was informed that vaccine trials in China and Pakistan are expected to be concluded by November 2026, following which the cost and timelines would be finalised.

FO slams Indian Defence Minister's...

FROM PAGE 01

It recalled the events of Operation Bunyanum Marsoos last year, when Pakistan's armed forces and citizens stood united against Indian aggression. The FO also referenced the May 2025 conflict, which erupted after an attack on tourists in occupied Kashmir. India, without evidence, blamed Pakistan, sparking a four-day exchange of strikes between the two countries. Islamabad denied involvement and called for a neutral investigation. The crisis ended only after U.S. intervention on May 10 led to a ceasefire. Pakistan urged the international community, particularly the United Nations, to take note of India's "rogue behaviour" and hold it accountable for failing to uphold UNSC resolutions guaranteeing the right to self-determination for the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

PM Shehbaz reaffirms strong Pak-China ties

FROM PAGE 01

China regards Pakistan as an "iron brother" and will always support Pakistan's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and socio-economic progress.

Pakistani Archers embark on Cultural Journey at Qinghai Archery Tournament

Qinghai province is widely regarded as one of the best preserved regions in China for traditional archery

BEIJING: The 11th China Qinghai International Ethnic Traditional Archery Elite Tournament concluded in Gangcha county of Qinghai province, bringing together nearly 1,000 archers from 88 teams representing nine countries. Among the participants was the Crescent Archery Club (TCAC) from Pakistan, competing alongside archers from China, Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco and other nations, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday. The tournament was guided by the Chinese Archery Association and organized by the Qinghai Provincial Sports Bureau, the Haibei Zang Autonomous Prefecture government and the Qinghai Provincial Sports Federation. The event featured eight com-

petitive categories, with participants ranging in age from 10 to 60. Qinghai province is widely regarded as one of the best preserved regions in China for traditional archery. The region's diverse ethnic groups, including Han, Zang, Mongol, Hui and Tu communities, have long maintained archery traditions spanning centuries. Gangcha County, located on the northern shore of Qinghai Lake, has hosted the international tournament for 4 consecutive years, making it the highest-profile international brand event in China's ethnic traditional archery circle. This year's tournament introduced dedicated youth competition categories to nurture the next generation of traditional archers.

The opening ceremony featured horse parades, traditional Zang costume shows and folk music performances, celebrating the region's rich cultural heritage. Representing Pakistan in the tournament were Syed Khaliq Shah and Zakir Ali from the Crescent Archery Club. Both archers are students at Southeast University in China, pursuing their academic studies alongside their passion for traditional archery. Pakistan itself has a rich archery heritage - the centuries-old traditional Pashtun archery sport known as "Mukha" has been played for generations, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Syed Khaliq Shah was playing in his third tournament. "The tournament is not only

about competition; it is a celebration of heritage," he said. "Each time I return to Gangcha, I discover something new: my growth extends beyond techniques to encompass the warmth of the people, the beauty of Qinghai Lake, and the vibrant traditions that surround this event." The tournament exemplifies China's respect for ethnic minority cultural traditions and its commitment to international sports exchanges. "Archery, a sport with rich historical traditions in both China and Pakistan, provides a natural bridge for mutual understanding and friendship," said the two athletes who expressed pride in their performances and reaffirmed their commitment to participating in future editions.

Chinese hospital partners with Gomal Medical College

The partnership is expected to facilitate the transfer of advanced Chinese medical expertise to Pakistan while creating opportunities for collaborative research, professional exchanges and improved patient care

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and China have taken another significant step towards expanding bilateral cooperation in the healthcare sector as Gomal Medical College (GMC), Dera Ismail Khan, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Third People's Hospital of Henan Province to establish long-term academic, clinical and research collaboration in minimally invasive spinal surgery, further reinforcing growing medical ties between the two countries. The agreement reflects the increasing momentum of Pakistan-China cooperation beyond traditional areas such as infrastructure, trade and investment, extending into medical education, specialized healthcare, clinical innovation and capacity building, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday. The partnership is expected to facilitate the transfer of advanced Chinese medical expertise to Pakistan while creating opportunities for collaborative research, professional exchanges and improved patient care.

According to officials, the MoU provides a comprehensive framework for cooperation in minimally invasive spinal surgery, with both institutions agreeing to work closely on academic exchanges, faculty development, joint research initiatives, advanced surgical training and the adoption of modern clinical practices. The collaboration is also aimed at strengthening institutional linkages between the two medical establishments and promoting knowledge-sharing in one of the most rapidly evolving fields of neurosurgery. Medical experts believe the partnership has the potential to significantly improve Pakistan's capacity in minimally invasive spinal surgery, an area that has witnessed remarkable technological advancement in China over the past decade. Chinese hospitals have emerged among the world's leading centres for advanced neurosurgical procedures, robotics-assisted operations and minimally invasive techniques, making such collaborations increasingly valuable for developing countries seeking to modernize healthcare services. Officials said the collaboration is expected to provide Pakistani neurosurgeons with exposure to cutting-edge surgical technologies, advanced operating protocols and modern treatment methodologies that have been successfully implemented in China's leading medical institutions. The partnership is also likely to facilitate reciprocal academic visits, specialized workshops, training programmes and collaborative publications in internationally recognized medical journals. – APP

Lando Norris grabs first race win

The Ferraris of Charles Leclerc and seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton ended up fourth and fifth ahead of Isack Hadjar in the second Red Bull, George Russell in the second Mercedes and Racing Bulls' Liam Lawson

BUDAPEST: World champion Lando Norris claimed his first win of the season and 12th of his career with a resounding triumph for McLaren ahead of Red Bull's Max Verstappen in Sunday's helter-skelter Hungarian Grand Prix. The 26-year-old Briton, who started from pole position but had to recover after a poor opening lap, came home 15 seconds clear of four-time world champion Verstappen with world championship leader Kimi Antonelli finishing third for Mercedes. The Ferraris of Charles Leclerc and seven-time cham-

pion Lewis Hamilton ended up fourth and fifth ahead of Isack Hadjar in the second Red Bull, George Russell in the second Mercedes and Racing Bulls' Liam Lawson. Nico Huelkenberg scored his first points of the season in ninth place for Audi ahead of rookie Arvid Lindblad in the second Racing Bulls. Norris repeated his success last season at the Hungaroring where McLaren have won for the last three years. Antonelli's determined drive, in a frantic race of divergent tire strategies, lifted him 50 points clear of Hamilton

in the championship. "Beautiful," said Norris on team radio. "The car was unbelievable today! Flying! "It's probably the best pace I've ever had," he said "This track is good for us." Verstappen was critical of his car, but happy to claim another podium finish. "I didn't expect it today – we had to work very hard for this," he said. Antonelli said it had been a hard race. "It was so tough to overtake, but it is the best result for me to go into the break and now we can keep pushing." The race began in scorching heat with the highest temperatures of

the weekend – 31 Celsius (air) and 51 (track). Ferrari gambling on soft tires for the start while all the started on mediums. Oscar Piastri made a fast start to pass Leclerc. When Norris went wide at Turn Two and Piastri took the lead while Hamilton passed Leclerc for fourth behind Verstappen. Behind them, the luckless Russell's Mercedes went into anti-stall on the grid. He fell from from sixth to 20th while team-mate Antonelli advanced to sixth. Hamilton attacked Verstappen without success and by lap 10 was losing grip. – APP

Bishkek hosts 2026 SCO Media and Think Tank Summit

ASTANA: The 2026 Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Media and Think Tank Summit, marking the organization's 25th anniversary, has opened in Bishkek. Co-organized by Kyrgyzstan's Kabar National News Agency and China's Xinhua News Agency, the event has brought together nearly 200 representatives from 25 countries. Representatives of AZERTAC, the Media Development Agency of Azerbaijan, and Trend News Agency are representing Azerbaijan at the forum. Mederbek Shermetaliyev, Director General of the Kabar National News Agency, said the forum aims to facilitate the exchange of experience among leaders and experts from leading media organizations. He noted that no official documents are expected to be signed during the forum, adding that its primary objective is to promote professional dialogue and the sharing of best practices. Participants are discussing the key challenges facing today's media environment, the development of digital technologies, cybersecurity, the application of artificial intelligence, combating disinformation and fake news, and ensuring information security within the SCO.

Pak juniors beat Switzerland 3-0 to finish top of group

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan completed its group stage campaign in style at the World Squash Junior Championships 2026, topping Group 7 with a convincing 3-0 victory over Switzerland in the Niagara-on-the-Lake, Canada. In the decisive group match, Nauman Khan defeated Nick Greter 3-1 (11-4, 11-9, 15-17, 11-5) in 58 minutes. Abdullah Nawaz followed with a straight-games 3-0 win over Leandro Vogel (11-3, 11-7, 11-5) in 26 minutes, while Muhammad Umair Arif sealed the team triumph by beating Morris Frey 3-0 (11-6, 11-4, 11-2) in just 23 minutes. With this result, Pakistan advanced at the top of Group 7 and finished at the knockout stage. The Pakistani juniors will now play their Top 16 match on Wednesday. – APP

Shan, Imam lead Pakistan's fightback in opening Test

Imam-ul-Haq and Shan Masood stitched together a fluent 155-run partnership for the second wicket

TAROUBA: Shan Masood and Imam-ul-Haq shared a crucial 155-run partnership as Pakistan recovered from an early setback to reach 199-3 at the close on day two of the first Test against the West Indies, putting the tourists in a strong position despite trailing by 112 runs at the Brian Lara Cricket Academy on Sunday. The visitors will resume their first innings on day three, trailing by 112 runs, with Shan unbeaten on 88 from 137 deliveries, including 11 fours. Salman Ali Agha was at the other end on nought from nine balls. Pakistan's reply got off to the worst possible start when opener Azan Awaiz was

clean bowled by Kemar Roach for a nine-ball duck. Roach produced a superb delivery that crashed into the stumps to hand the hosts an early breakthrough. The visitors responded impressively as Imam-ul-Haq and Shan Masood stitched together a fluent 155-run partnership for the second wicket. Masood eased the pressure by finding the boundary regularly, while Imam provided solid support at the other end as the pair helped Pakistan regain control of the innings. The left-handed Masood played a pivotal role in Pakistan's fightback, frustrating the West Indies attack alongside Imam while

bringing up his 15th Test half-century. Resuming after the tea interval, Imam and Shan continued to pile on the runs, extending their partnership beyond 100 as Imam reached his 11th Test half-century. The pair continued to dominate the bowlers, taking Pakistan's total and their second-wicket stand past the 150-run mark with a series of well-timed boundaries to put the West Indies under sustained pressure. However, the 155-run stand was finally broken when Shamar Joseph dismissed Imam for a gritty 63 off 102 deliveries, an innings featuring seven fours, leaving Pakistan

on 156-2 in 33.3 overs. Returning captain Babar Azam then joined Shan at the crease and settled in confidently as the pair added 41 runs, keeping the scoreboard ticking while Pakistan looked to erase the first-innings deficit. The stand was eventually ended by Jayden Seales, who dismissed Babar for a composed 23 off 38 deliveries, including three fours, reducing Pakistan to 197-3 in 46 overs. Earlier, after electing to bat first, West Indies were bowled out for 311 in 98.5 overs in their first innings, thanks to fighting half-centuries from Kevlon Hodge and wicketkeeper-batter Shai Hope. – APP

Iran says no current talks with the US

FROM PAGE 01

"Fox News Sunday" that, while forces remained "locked and loaded," Trump would give negotiations "a little bit of room." Oil prices fell on Asian markets early Monday as investors breathed cautious sighs of relief at the pause in combat. Prior to Friday, the US military had carried out strikes on Iran for 13 consecutive nights, in the largest rekindling of the almost five-month-old war since an April ceasefire. Friday and Saturday nights passed without bombing. "These attacks continued until two nights ago, but over the past two nights the Americans have stopped their attacks," said Iran's army spokesman Mohammad Akraminia. "Since ... our strategy has essentially been retaliatory, we have also halted our retaliatory operations." Fighting over the strategic Strait of Hormuz derailed diplomatic efforts between Washington and Tehran, but the conflict then expanded beyond the vital energy corridor to include attacks on US bases, regional shipping and Gulf allies. Unconfirmed Iranian media reports on Sunday said an oil tanker had been damaged by a sea mine. Tehran in recent days has counterattacked against countries in the region hosting US military forces, killing at least three service members at a base in Jordan and one in Iraq. The 60-day period that began when the interim deal was signed by both countries in mid-June is now well into its second half, and major issues that were meant to be negotiated – notably Iran's nuclear program at the heart of tensions – remain set aside as mediators try to keep both sides talking. A regional official involved in mediation efforts said diplomacy was underway and that a pause in US and Iranian strikes was a "positive signal that helps their efforts to de-escalate." The official said both countries want to return to the interim ceasefire deal and that a compromise being negotiated centers on having Iran run vessel transit through the Strait of Hormuz with fewer restrictions on ships. The official was not authorized to discuss the matter and spoke on condition of anonymity. Iran on Sunday said it continued to speak with Oman about managing the safe passage of ships on the Strait of Hormuz, which passes between the countries. Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Esmail Baghaei, said talks had made progress and continued. Baghaei, however, accused Washington of destroying the basis for dialogue by violating a 14-point Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding, saying the United States had "betrayed diplomacy" for the third time in a year. He said Iran had fulfilled its commitments to facilitate safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz, but accused the US of launching "massive military aggression" and imposing restrictions on shipping shortly after the agreement was signed. Baghaei also said the strait's status remained unchanged. Tehran has asserted that the interim deal with the US allows it to manage shipping on the waterway for now, and it has objected to US efforts to support a route through the strait that passes close to Oman instead. The strait was considered an international waterway before the war. The US military on Saturday said its recently reimposed naval blockade against Iran continued, with a dozen commercial ships redirected, two disabled and two boarded. US forces "remain highly vigilant, focused, lethal, and ready," it added. Concerns continued about shipping on the strait and now on another crucial waterway in the region, the Bab El-Mandeb strait to the Red Sea. Iranian-backed Houthis rebels in Yemen last week threatened a blockade of Saudi shipping there.

Evening shift for consular services at FO

FROM PAGE 01

timings have been shared in the official public notice issued by the ministry.

Briefs

Gold prices
jump by
Rs4,000 per
tola

ISLAMABAD: The prices of gold witnessed a sharp increase in the local market on Monday, with the price of 24-karat gold per tola surging by Rs4,000 to settle at Rs431,736, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association. Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold increased by Rs3,430 to Rs370,144, whereas 10 grams of 22-karat gold rose by Rs3,145 to Rs339,311. In the international market, the price of gold increased by \$40 to \$4,093 per ounce, the association reported. Meanwhile, the price of silver per tola increased by Rs100 to Rs6,397, while the price of 10 grams of silver rose by Rs86 to Rs5,484. The price of silver in the international market also increased by \$1.00 to \$59.18 per ounce, the association added.—APP

Rupee gains
01 paisa
against Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Monday appreciated by 01 paisa against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 277.86, compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 277.87. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 278.85 and Rs 278.90, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee increased by Rs 0.29 and closed at Rs 316.66 against the previous day's closing of Rs316.37, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen remained unchanged to close at Rs 1.69, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed an increase of Rs 0.07 and closed at Rs 370.51 compared to the previous day's Rs 370.44. The exchange rate of the Emirate Dirham declined by 01 paisa, and the Saudi Riyal stood stagnant, closing at Rs 75.64 and Rs 74.02, respectively.—APP

Fresh review
of polluting
industries
ordered

FAISALABAD: Divisional Commissioner Imran Hamid Sheikh on Monday ordered a fresh assessment of industries causing air pollution and discharging chemical-contaminated wastewater in urban areas. Chairing a meeting of District Industrial Relocation Committee, the Divisional Commissioner reviewed progress on the industrial relocation programme. He also directed the departments concerned to prepare comprehensive mapping and data for the phased relocation of hazardous industrial units. He directed the Environmental Protection Agency, Labor Department and Industries Department to conduct a fresh evaluation of industrial units operating in urban areas that contribute to air pollution or release chemically contaminated wastewater and submit a detailed report. He stressed that industries declared hazardous to human health should be relocated in phases after proper mapping. He directed the departments concerned to compile complete data and prepare a comprehensive map identifying all polluting industrial units to facilitate informed decision-making. He said that safeguarding public health and protecting the environment remain the administration's foremost priorities, adding that effective action would be taken against industries found to be posing serious environmental and health risks. To monitor progress on the relocation program, the Divisional Commissioner convened another review meeting to be held after 15 days. Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA) Director General Muhammad Asif Chaudhry, Deputy Director Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Usman Azhar, Director Labor Welfare Rai Yasin, Assistant Commissioner (General) Atiya Inayat and District Officer Industries Muhammad Irfan were also present in the meeting.—APP



Islamabad: Federal Minister for Petroleum, Ali Pervaiz Malik held a successful meeting with a delegation of the Oil Tanker Contractors Association (OTCA).

FPCCI denounces SBP's status quo on policy rate

Mr. Saquib Fayyaz Magoon, Acting President FPCCI, stressed that we cannot run our industries or compete in global markets under such punishing financial burdens. A single-digit interest rate is absolutely critical right now to lower production costs, make goods and services more affordable, and effectively kickstart the economy

DNA

KARACHI: Mr. Saquib Fayyaz Magoon, Acting President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), has expressed his profound disappointment that the State Bank of Pakistan's (SBP) decision to maintain the status quo on its key policy rate following today's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting.

The apex trade body termed the decision as "contractionary," warning that holding the benchmark interest rate at an elevated level will continue to stifle economic activity, ham-

per access to finance, and severely undermine industrial revival efforts across the country. Mr. Saquib Fayyaz Magoon categorically denounced the central bank's cautious approach; emphasizing that the business community had anticipated some reduction to help bring down the exorbitant cost of doing business – and, facilitate trade & industry to cope with the economic challenges. Acting FPCCI Chief maintained that, in the current economic scenario, maintaining the status quo on the policy rate is a setback to the business community's expectations as Pakistani industry and exporters are already bat-

tlng an existential crisis due to elevated energy tariffs and sky-high financing costs. Mr. Saquib Fayyaz Magoon, Acting President FPCCI, stressed that we cannot run our industries or compete in global markets under such punishing financial burdens. A single-digit interest rate is absolutely critical right now to lower production costs, make goods and services more affordable, and effectively kickstart the economy. Mr. Abdul Mohamin Khan, VP & Regional Chairman Sindh, FPCCI, highlighted that with core inflation stabilizing, keeping the interest rate persistently high reflects an unjustified premium that makes no economic

sense. The continued high cost of capital remains the primary driver of industrial closures and the inability of Pakistani exporters to remain globally competitive. Mr. Abdul Mohamin Khan warned of the immediate negative impacts the MPC's decision will have on commercial hubs and overall economic stability. Keeping the interest rate unchanged will undermine the business environment, discourage essential investment, and hinder any hopes of a swift economic recovery, he added. The FPCCI maintains that the business community is the backbone of Pakistan's economy – and, conducive monetary policy with a

reduced, single-digit interest rate is essential to boost industrial output, create jobs, and stabilize prices. The FPCCI urges the SBP to urgently reconsider its stance and adopt measures that genuinely support business continuity and growth. The FPCCI leadership demands a clear and immediate roadmap from the SBP to aggressively correct the monetary stance. The apex body warned that without an immediate transition to single-digit interest rates aligned with ground realities, the national targets for export growth and industrial expansion for the current fiscal year will remain elusive.

Fresh review of polluting industries ordered

FAISALABAD: Divisional Commissioner Imran Hamid Sheikh on Monday ordered a fresh assessment of industries causing air pollution and discharging chemical-contaminated wastewater in urban areas. Chairing a meeting of District Industrial Relocation Committee, the Divisional Commissioner reviewed progress on the industrial relocation programme. He also directed the departments concerned to prepare comprehensive mapping and data for the phased relocation of hazardous industrial units. He directed the Environmental Protection Agency, Labor Department and Industries Department to conduct a fresh evaluation of industrial units operating in urban areas that contribute to air pollution or release chemically contaminated wastewater and submit a detailed report. He stressed that industries declared hazardous to human health should be relocated in phases after proper mapping. He directed the departments concerned to compile complete data and prepare a comprehensive map identifying all polluting industrial units to facilitate informed decision-making. He said that safeguarding public health and protecting the environment remain the administration's foremost priorities, adding that effective action would be taken against industries found to be posing serious environmental and health risks. To monitor progress on the relocation program, the Divisional Commissioner convened another review meeting to be held after 15 days. Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA) Director General Muhammad Asif Chaudhry, Deputy Director Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Usman Azhar, Director Labor Welfare Rai Yasin, Assistant Commissioner (General) Atiya Inayat and District Officer Industries Muhammad Irfan were also present in the meeting.—APP

Govt targets 34 lakh tonnes food grain storage capacity

DHAKA: The BNP government is aiming to upgrade the country's food grain reserve capacity to 34 lakh metric tons although Bangladesh currently holds an adequate satisfactory official reserve of food grains. Bangladesh still holds a total stock of food grains reaching 23, 74,763 metric tons including floating reserves as of July 23, according to latest data from the Ministry of Food. The current stock exceeds the country's standard safe food reserve threshold of 13, 50,000 metric tons by approximately 10, 24,000 metric tons, reflecting a robust food security system. Meanwhile, the BNP government has decided to expand the overall food storage capacity across public warehouses to 34 lakh metric tons over the next five years. The Ministry of Food has already started making the moves to achieve this target. According to an updated report from the Directorate General of Food, public granaries currently store 19, 60,746 metric tons of rice and 2,95,689 metric tons of wheat. Additionally, 1, 68,605 metric tons of paddy are in stock, which has been converted and factored into the total rice inventory while floating reserves of rice stand at 8,735 metric tons. Under the ongoing domestic Boro procurement drive for the 2025-2026 fiscal year, a total of 13, 65,431 metric tons of paddy and rice were collected till July 23. This comprises 4,59,498 metric tons of paddy, 9,89,420 metric tons of parboiled rice, and 76,814 metric tons of sun-dried (Atap) rice. A total of 523 metric tons of wheat was also procured during this period. In the first 23 days of the current 2026-27 fiscal year (July 1 to July 23, 2026), 3,20,800 metric tons of food grains were imported into the country. Of this, public sector imports amounted to 11, 65,000 metric tons; consisting of 7,83,000 metric tons of rice and 3,82,000 metric tons of wheat. Private sector imports totalled 3,09,150 metric tons, including 2,94,000 metric tons of rice and 15,150 metric tons of wheat. However, no imports were required under food assistance during this period. Offices under the Ministry of Food reported that food grain reserves and procurement operations are being closely monitored to maintain adequate market supply, stabilize prices, and ensure smooth public distribution. Talking to BSS, Mohammad Kamrul Islam Chowdhury, Joint Secretary of the Procurement Branch of the Ministry of Food, said this year's food grain procurement drive has been implemented successfully. "Our domestic food grain procurement drive for the current season is being implemented successfully and satisfactorily," he said thanking farmers and other stakeholders involved in the procurement drive. "Public warehouses currently maintain adequate and safe stocks of rice and wheat and this inventory provides a strong foundation to navigate any situation and ensure national food security," he said. He added that the government is fully prepared to stabilize rice prices in the market and ensure uninterrupted food distribution under social safety net programs. Firoz Al Mahmud, Research Director of the Food Planning and Monitoring Unit (FPMU) under the Ministry of Food, told BSS that the government is continuously working to align reserves and storage capacity with growing national demand. Addressing overall procurement and supply management, Md. Jamal Hossain, Additional Director General of the Directorate General of Food, said current food security situation is extremely satisfactory. "Besides ensuring sufficient grain stocks in public warehouses, we place maximum emphasis on proper storage and quality preservation," he noted. He noted that Boro paddy and rice procurement from marginal farmers is being conducted through a transparent.—DNA

Philippines' Marcos puts anti-graft campaign

MANILA: Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said on Monday he was "not the president of my family" and "not the president of my friends" as he vowed to press ahead with an anti-corruption drive that could see multiple charges filed against his cousin, former House Speaker Martin Romualdez. Last year, Marcos disclosed allegations of widespread irregularities in a series of flood-control projects worth billions of pesos. The case involved accusations of kickbacks to officials and several politicians, and implicated Romualdez, who was forced to step down as speaker. But accountability questions have lingered, adding to public discontent at a time when many Filipinos are grappling with the soaring cost of living and inflation, which has exceeded the government's target. "This pains me, but we have to do what is right," Marcos said in his penultimate address to Congress before stepping down as president in 2028. Marcos faces a fraught political and economic situation as he grapples with the fallout from the collapse of his alliance with

Vice President Sara Duterte, who is facing an impeachment trial, as well as mounting public discontent. "I am not the president of my family. I am not the president of my friends. I am the president of the Philippines, and my duty is to the Filipino people," he said. Romualdez said in a statement that he has done nothing wrong and that he was prepared to face any charges. Pulse Asia polling has already reflected the erosion in public confidence in the government, with Marcos' trust rating falling to 28 percent and 51 percent of respondents expressing distrust. Jean Encinas-Franco, a political science professor at the University of the Philippines, said Marcos' remarks were politically significant because they suggested he was willing to pursue accountability even if it affected members of his own family. But she added that the administration would ultimately be judged on whether cases were actually filed and pursued. "Rhetoric is fine, but actions are better," she said. Outside Congress, hundreds of protesters car-

ried placards and banners demanding not only accountability for corruption, but also lower consumer prices and higher wages. Marcos' single six-year term ends in 2028, but his succession plans remain unclear. Despite the ongoing impeachment trial, Duterte remains the leading choice in early surveys for the 2028 presidential election. To help ease the impact of rising consumer prices, Marcos asked Congress to approve tax relief measures, including broader income tax exemptions for workers, as well as the removal of the minimum corporate income tax for small businesses. Without mentioning China by name, Marcos also alluded to ongoing tensions in the South China Sea, declaring that Filipinos "do not yield" and citing the 10th anniversary of a 2016 international arbitration ruling that found China's sweeping claims in the South China Sea had no legal basis, handing Manila a landmark legal victory. China rejects the ruling and continues to assert its claims in the strategic waterway. "This is not a claim that we advance alone, nor one that we will abandon," Marcos said.—DNA

KSrelief aid to reach Mindanao earthquake survivors

MANILA: Tens of thousands of survivors of the recent earthquake in Mindanao will receive assistance from the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center, officials said, as KSrelief teams are set to visit the affected areas this week. The magnitude 7.8 offshore Sarangani earthquake, which affected a large part of southern Mindanao, was one of the most destructive earthquakes to hit the Philippines in recent years. At least 81 people were killed and 1,300 injured. More than 100,000 homes were destroyed or damaged, rendering hundreds of thousands of people homeless. Roads, bridges, schools, hospitals and other public infrastructure were also severely damaged resulting in multimillion-dollar losses.

The aid from KSrelief aims to address the priority needs indicated by the Philippine Department of Social Welfare and Development, including shelter and rice, a member of the center's team, Waheed Al-Ruthaya, told Arab News. We worked on providing support in this area," he said. "The aid will be delivered in scheduled installments, in coordination with the ministry, which will oversee its distribution." KSrelief's delegation met with representatives of the DSWD in Manila last week and committed to providing hygiene kits, and sleeping kits to support more than 10,000 families, according to the ministry's estimates. "This will be for the immediate needs of the disaster-affected families... Most of these families are located in tent cities. They are displaced and are occupying family tents in open spaces," said DSWD Assistant Secretary Irene Dumalo. APP

Efforts afoot to procure two rigs

DHAKA: The process is underway to procure two rigs for the Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration and Production Company Limited (BAPEX) to expedite gas exploration activities. "We've finalized a proposal to purchase two modern exploration drilling rigs," Petrobangla Chairman Md Abdul Mannan told BSS. BAPEX currently has five rigs—Bijoy-10, Bijoy-11, Bijoy-12, Bijoy-18 and IPS-1, he said, adding, "After procuring the two proposed rigs, the total number of rigs will stand at seven." A Petrobangla official said the evaluation process is underway for the procurement of a 2,000-horsepower rig, while a Detail Project Proposal (DPP) is being prepared for the procurement of another rig with a capacity of 1,500 horsepower. He said that after the DPP is finalized, it will be sent to the Planning Commission for approval. Meanwhile, the government has planned to strengthen the state-owned BAPEX and accelerate domestic gas exploration as part of broader efforts, as BAPEX has a success story. The gas exploration company has been working to drill various wells including development wells and workover to boost up gas production from domestic sources.—APP

Qatar launches diamond exchange

RIYADH: Qatar has launched a diamond exchange in a bid to position Doha as a regional hub for the global trade in rough and polished diamonds. The Qatar Diamond Exchange, launched by the Qatar Free Zones Authority, will operate from the Ras Bufontas Free Zone and offer trading, vaulting, certification, membership and other industry services through a single regulated platform. The exchange aims to establish a new gateway for global diamond trade in the country, connecting Doha to international diamond markets and supporting economic diversification under the National Vision 2030 initiative, according to Qatar News Agency. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Hamad Bin Faisal Al-Thani, QFZ's CEO and QDE's chairman, said: "The Qatar Diamond Exchange represents an important step in Qatar's efforts to further diversify its economy.—APP

Briefs

Australia's
Hanson D
loses appeal
in discrimi-
nation case

DNA

SYDNEY: An Australian court on Monday rejected an appeal from right-wing leader Pauline Hanson to overturn a ruling that she racially discriminated against a Muslim senator by telling her to "piss off back to Pakistan." The three-judge panel of the Full Federal Court of Australia unanimously upheld a 2024 ruling that the comment, addressed to Greens Senator Mehreen Faruqi on social media, was unlawful and unprotected by free speech defenses. "Today, justice has prevailed," Faruqi told reporters outside court in Sydney. "Today's win is for every single person out there who has been told to go back to where you came from." Hanson said in a statement she was disappointed in the outcome, and that public discussion in Australia had become "almost totally silenced by laws and rules which prevent ordinary people expressing their personal views." "My legal team and I will now closely review the decision in the coming days, with a view to commencing an appeal in the High Court of Australia," she added. The High Court of Australia is the country's final court of appeal. Hanson, who leads the hard-right One Nation party, made the remarks in September 2022 after Faruqi posted on Twitter, now known as X, following the death of Queen Elizabeth II. Faruqi wrote that she could not "mourn the leader of a racist empire built on stolen lives, land and wealth of colonized peoples."

Three killed in
US shooting
incident

WASHINGTON: Three people were killed and four others, including a toddler, were wounded on Sunday in a shooting at a downtown Seattle food festival, police said, adding that a suspect had been taken into custody. A second suspect was also believed to be involved, and officers were searching for that person, Seattle Police Department Assistant Chief Tyrone Davis said in a media briefing late on Sunday. Davis said the police believed two people were shooting at each other. The incident took place at the Bite of Seattle food festival at Seattle Center. "What happened here today at the Seattle Center was an unbelievable tragedy, and a horrific act of violence," Seattle Mayor Katie Wilson said during the joint media briefing with the other officials. "We have far too much gun violence in this city and in this country, and we're coming off of a week in Seattle where we've had three major incidents of gun violence in just a few days," she added. - APP

Fire erupts
near Tehran
hotel

TEHRAN: Smoke billowed over northern Tehran on Monday, journalists witnessed, after a building adjacent to the capital's Hotel Esteghlal caught fire. Thick black and white columns of smoke engulfed the towering hotel on Monday, while flames in the nearby building were visible from surrounding rooftops. According to a state television correspondent at the site, "guests inside the hotel were being evacuated to ensure their safety." There were no immediate reports of casualties, and it was not immediately clear what kind of building the fire erupted in. Footage on state television showed firetrucks on site, as onlookers watched efforts to bring the fire under control. Fires are common in Iran, especially during the hotter months, and mostly erupt in older buildings due to technical failures. According to state news agency IRNA, the hotel, formerly the Royal Hilton, was built in the 1960s. - APP

Pakistan strengthens diplomatic ties
with ASEAN amid global challenges

Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik says "We look forward to building close and strong partnerships with ASEAN states," he said, adding that such alliances are vital for peace and prosperity

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: In a significant diplomatic development, Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik expressed deep gratitude to the ambassadors of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for their unwavering support to Pakistan during testing times. Speaking at a gathering that underscored the spirit of collaboration, Malik highlighted the importance of learning from one another and building stronger partnerships to overcome shared challenges. Minister Malik expressed these remarks while speaking on the occasion of handing over of ASEAN Islamabad Committee chairmanship from Indonesia to the Philippines, for the next six months. The minister noted that this sentiment of cooperation was also echoed by Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar during his recent visit to Manila, where he conveyed Pakistan's commitment to fostering regional unity. Malik emphasized that Pakistan's diplomatic efforts have played a crucial role in bringing "sanity" to conflicts that have engulfed the wider region, stressing that economic pain has been felt globally, including in the United States. Minister Malik underscored that Pakistan's role in stabilizing the region has been a source of pride for its people. He firmly rejected any notion that Pakistan supports terrorism, clarifying instead that the country has been a victim of it. "We look forward to building close and strong partnerships with ASEAN states," he said, adding that such alliances are vital for peace and prosperity. On the economic front, Malik candidly admitted that Pakistan's exports have declined from 15 percent to around 8-9 percent, a trend that poses serious challenges to growth. "No country can grow without increasing exports," he remarked, urging policymakers and business leaders to prioritize trade expansion as a cornerstone of economic revival. The Indonesian Ambassador and the outgoing Chair of ACI Chandra Warsenanto Sukotjo reaffirmed ASEAN's commitment to supporting Pakistan, noting that the bloc values Islamabad's participation in regional dialogues. He thanked Pakistan for ensuring that Finance Minister Dar took part in the ASEAN meeting in Manila, describing Pakistan as holding an "important place" in ASEAN's engagement strategy. The ambassador stressed that ASEAN's efforts are geared toward improving bilateral relations and ensuring that Pakistan remains an integral partner in the region's economic and diplomatic landscape. The discussions highlighted a shared recognition that collaboration between Pakistan and ASEAN is not only desirable but essential. Both sides acknowledged the pressing need to address economic challenges, strengthen trade ties, and work collectively to counter terrorism and instability. Minister Malik's remarks, coupled with ASEAN's assurances, signal a renewed chapter in Pakistan's diplomatic outreach. The emphasis on mutual learning, economic cooperation, and regional stability reflects a pragmatic approach to international relations, one that seeks to transform adversity into opportunity. As Pakistan continues to navigate global uncertainties, its engagement with ASEAN offers a pathway to resilience and growth. The spirit of solidarity expressed in Manila and echoed in Islamabad underscores that in today's interconnected world, no nation can thrive in isolation.

India activists demand
release of detained
'cockroach' protesters

Tens of thousands of protesters, mainly students, rallied last week in New Delhi and other cities, demanding Pradhan's resignation and broader reforms of examination system

NEW DELHI: India's youth-led "cockroach" movement, whose protests have forced the education minister's resignation, urged authorities on Monday to release all demonstrators detained in weeks of rallies nationwide. The online Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), which organised protests over exam paper leaks and other irregularities, said they had received reports of students held in detention, particularly in the states of Assam, West Bengal and Bihar. "Any failure to release those detained or withdraw criminal cases would amount to a breach of public trust," the protest group said in a statement, adding they would take "further necessary steps" if their demand was not met. The statement comes two days after Dharmendra Pradhan resigned as education minister over repeated failures in the conduct of competitive exams that have fuelled anger among millions of young Indians. Supporters of India's Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) celebrate after India's Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan resigned following days of protests demanding his resignation over National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) examination paper leaks, in New Delhi, India, July 25, 2026. The CJP accused the government of backtracking after authorities had assured them that no punitive action would be taken against protesters. The movement has won millions of followers on social media since it was launched in May by 30-year-old public relations graduate Abhishek Dipke. Tens of thousands of protesters, mainly students, rallied last week in New Delhi and other cities, demanding Pradhan's resignation and broader reforms of the examination system. Demonstrations in the Indian capital turned violent on July 20 when a crowd attempted to march towards parliament from the Jantar Mantar protest site. Police fired tear gas and used batons to disperse the rotest, triggering clashes and a wave of detentions. The issue reverberated in parliament on Monday, with repeated disruptions as opposition lawmakers demanded a response from the government over last week's police crackdown. Despite the disruptions, the government introduced legislation in the lower house seeking tougher penalties for examination paper leaks. - APP

Finance Minister
highlights Pakistan's
reform agenda

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, today held an interactive session with participants of the URAAN Overseas Pakistanis Summer Scholars Programme, a six-week internship initiative organized by the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives. The programme brings together overseas Pakistani students and young scholars from leading international universities, providing them an opportunity to engage with public institutions and contribute their education, research, and international exposure towards Pakistan's development and prosperity. Welcoming the participants to the Finance Division, the Finance Minister appreciated the initiative for strengthening engagement with Pakistan's young global talent. He encouraged the scholars to remain connected with the country and leverage their knowledge, innovation, and international experience to contribute towards Pakistan's long-term economic development. During the interaction, the Finance Minister shared an overview of Pakistan's economic outlook and the Government's reform agenda. He highlighted the progress made over the past two and a half years in strengthening macroeconomic stability and noted that the Government's focus is now on achieving sustainable economic growth through higher exports, increased investment, fiscal discipline, and continued structural reforms. He emphasized that creating an enabling environment for private sector-led growth remains central to the Government's economic strategy. The Finance Minister also highlighted recent improvements in Pakistan's sovereign credit profile and shared the Government's efforts to strengthen engagement with international capital markets. He referred to Pakistan's successful return to global capital markets, including the inaugural Panda Bond issuance, and outlined ongoing initiatives to diversify financing sources through innovative financial instruments. He also noted that these developments reflect growing international confidence in Pakistan's economic direction and reform agenda.

PSX rebounds as oil falls
on US-Iran strike pause

Reversal in market primarily due to cooling of tensions and potential restart of ceasefire talks, says expert

KARACHI: Stocks staged a sharp rebound during Monday's session as oil prices tumbled after a pause in US-Iran strikes revived hopes of renewed ceasefire talks and relief for global energy markets. The Pakistan Stock Exchange's benchmark KSE-100 Index closed at 178,262.33, up 7,241.13 points, or 4.23%. The index rose as much as 7,567.13 points, or 4.42%, to hit an intraday high of 178,588.33. It touched a low of 175,153.16, still higher by 4,131.96 points, or 2.42%, during the session. "The reversal in the market is primarily due to cooling of tensions and the potential restart of the ceasefire talks," Ismail Iqbal Securities Chief Executive Officer Ahfaz Mustafa told Geo.tv. He said the development had caused oil to reverse by up to 5%, giving relief to equity markets as well. Oil prices tumbled more than 5% on Monday after the United States and Iran paused strikes over the weekend following two weeks of attacks, raising hopes of a diplomatic solution that could de-escalate the conflict and allow shipping to resume through the Strait of Hormuz. - DNA

Oil prices drop after US, Iran
pause fighting over weekend

LONDON: Oil prices tumbled more than 5% on Monday after the US and Iran paused strikes over the weekend following two weeks of attacks, raising hopes of a diplomatic solution that would de-escalate the conflict and allow shipping to resume in the Strait of Hormuz. Brent crude futures fell \$5.70, or around 5.9%, to \$91.08 a barrel by 0804 GMT after briefly slipping under the key support level of \$90 earlier in the session. US West Texas Intermediate crude was at \$84.51 a barrel, down \$4.80, or around 5.4%. Both contracts are trading at their lowest levels in nearly a week after rising for the past three weeks. Brent had reached \$100 per barrel as the conflict, which reduced oil shipments via the Strait of Hormuz, spilled over to the Red Sea, hindering exports from the world's top exporter, Saudi Arabia, via the Bab el-Mandeb strait to Asia. The US ambassador to the United Nations, Mike Waltz, told "Fox News Sunday" and other US media that President Donald Trump had decided to pause US attacks to allow more time for diplomacy. "The market seems to be forever seeking good news from an arena that really is not providing any," said PVM analyst John Evans. "A stay of military strikes might seem an improvement, but it does not come with any guarantees that oil will soon flow from the area... prices will only continue lower if high prices

once again dent demand, not questionable mini-ceasefires." Fewer than 10 commodity vessels passed through the Strait of Hormuz daily during the weekend, shipping data from Kpler showed. "Any rebound in flows through the Strait of Hormuz is likely to prove slow and partial, as many shippers remain wary and will want greater confidence in their safety before they bring more empty ships into the Strait," MST Marquee analyst Saul Kavonic said. In addition, ship traffic through the Bab el-Mandeb strait fell on Sunday after Yemeni Houthis attacked Saudi oil installations along the Red Sea coast, although a third Chinese supertanker exited via the Bab el-Mandeb strait. Societe Generale analysts estimate that each month without a resolution in the Red Sea would add at least \$10 a barrel to the oil price. Some analysts expect markets will remain supported if crude supplies continue to be disrupted by ongoing shipping risks in the Middle East and Russia's war on Ukraine. "As the Middle East conflict widened to the Red Sea and Ukrainian drones struck Russian ships and refineries ... sustained (supply) disruption would likely keep oil prices elevated and continue to pose upside risks to global inflation," UOB analysts said in a note. Ukraine said it hit several Russian oil sites over the weekend. - APP

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