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Bosnian Ambassador honors victims of Srebrenica genocide

Detailed News On Page-08

Lindsey Graham Trump ally dies age 71

Detailed News On Page-08



Daily monitoring of dams a must, says Maryam

Detailed News On Page-02



Middle East heats up again

US launches new strikes against Iran

Centcom says fresh strikes carried out after attack on Cyprus-flagged container ship by IRGC forces in Hormuz

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: The US military said Saturday it has launched a new round of strikes against Iran, after Tehran "blatantly attacked" a container ship in the Strait of Hormuz. The latest strikes, which began at 7:15 pm in Washington (2315 GMT), came "after Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps forces blatantly attacked" a Cyprus-flagged container ship transiting the Strait of Hormuz, US Central Command said in a statement. "The United States is imposing a heavy cost by continuing to degrade Iran's ability to attack civilian mariners and commercial ships freely transiting the strait," Centcom said, adding that the strikes were being carried out at the direction of President Donald Trump. US defence secretary Pete Hegseth said simply: "Iran made a poor choice. Now they pay."

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Hormuz 'more important' than nuclear bombs: Iran

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: The statement by Mo-hsen Rezaee underscores Tehran's current strategic doctrine: operational control over the Strait of Hormuz is viewed as its ultimate geopolitical leverage, far exceeding the immediate deterrent value of a nuclear arsenal. By framing the waterway as more vital than "dozens of atomic bombs," the Iranian leadership is signaling that it considers the ability to disrupt global energy traffic as its primary defense mechanism against foreign pressure.

This rhetoric directly follows a severe escalation along the maritime corridor. Following targeted strikes on commercial vessels—including a Cyprus-flagged container ship that was left burning—and subsequent retaliatory U.S. airstrikes on dozens of Iranian military targets, Iran announced the formal closure of the Strait of Hormuz. The IRGC also confirmed that a second merchant vessel was disabled within the corridor. By prioritizing the shipping lane over nuclear weapons, the regime is emphasizing that its choking hold on

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Saudi envoy calls on FM Ishaq Dar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister (DPM)/ Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar and Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malkiy, on Sunday exchanged views on the latest regional developments and underscored the need to strengthen collective efforts aimed at promoting dialogue and diplomacy. The Saudi ambassador called on the DPM/FM, the Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press release issued here. "They reaffirmed their commitment to further deepening Pakistan-Saudi Arabia relations across all areas of mutual interest for the benefit of both nations," it was further added.

Pak, Turkiye exchange views on women rights

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Turkiye's Minister for Family and Social Services Mahinur Özdemir Göka called on Minister for Human Rights Azam Nazeer Tarar in Islamabad today. During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views in detail on women's rights, strengthening of the family system and promotion of social security. They also agreed to enhance cooperation on protecting the family system, promoting children's and women's rights and joint policy initiatives in the digital space. During the meeting, Pakistan and Turkiye agreed to further consolidate family welfare, women's

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Ukraine president sacks his PM

NEWS DESK

KIYV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Sunday he planned to replace Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko after only a year in office, triggering the resignation of the government. Zelenskyy did not specify who he would ask to lead the government or what Svyrydenko's new position would be, but added that there would also be changes among the heads of law enforcement agencies. He said the changes were needed to "ensure the implementation of an updated political strategy", but gave no further details.

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ISLAMABAD: Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malkiy, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan @AmbassadorNawaf, called on the Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar. – DNA

Calls for restraint

Mediator Pakistan expresses concern over ME tensions

FO urges all sides to uphold their respective commitments under Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding; PM Shehbaz flying to Qatar

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Sunday expressed deep concern over the recent escalation in Mideast tensions and urged all sides to exercise restraint and honour their commitments under the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). US and Iranian forces have exchanged heavy missile and drone assaults, with Tehran targeting US facilities in states across the Gulf on Sunday and saying it had again closed the vital Strait of Hormuz. The renewed violence casts further doubt on the future of an interim US-Iran Islamabad MoU signed last month that aimed to reopen the strait and end the war after a further 60 days of negotiations. In the past week, US President Donald Trump has said he considers the ceasefire over, while leaving the door open to more talks. In a statement issued, the Foreign Office reiterated Pakistan's strong support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all brotherly countries in the region.

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In call with Iran's Araghchi, Dar for 'dialogue, diplomacy'

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar told his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi that dialogue and diplomacy remained the only viable path to resolving disputes and ensuring lasting peace during a telephone conversation on Sunday. The two leaders exchanged views on the evolving regional situation, according to a statement issued by the Foreign Office. Dar urged all parties to pursue de-escalation and exercise restraint in line with the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding agreed in June.

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Briefs

Rains kill 50 in Bangladesh

NEWS DESK

DHAKA: Flash floods and landslides triggered by monsoon rains have killed at least 50 people in Bangladesh in the past week, officials said on Sunday, with tens of thousands displaced from their homes. Bangladesh, a low-lying delta nation criss-crossed by rivers, is highly vulnerable to floods and landslides during the monsoon season, but scientists say climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events. For the last few days, army and border guard personnel have been ferrying food, drinking water and other essential supplies by boat to communities cut off because of heavy flooding in the country's southeastern districts.

Fifa to consider 64-team World Cup for 2030

SPORTS DESK

NEW YORK: Fifa officials will look at the possibility of expanding the World Cup by another 16 teams before the 2030 event, President Gianni Infantino said in an interview. Infantino told Bluewin, a Swiss media outlet, that growing from 48 to 64 teams could make sense. "That's definitely an issue that will be examined and discussed in the relevant committees after this World Cup," he told Bluewin. "When organising a World Cup, it's important to organise it for the whole world – not just Europe and South America – but effectively the entire world. Every nation should be allowed to dream of participating in the World Cup. You can see that the quality of the teams is extremely high - and it's getting higher and higher, all over the world."

In Strait of Hormuz

Oman says 23 rescued, after vessel attacked

British maritime agency UKMTO said the crew had abandoned ship and were on a lifeboat, around 17 kilometres (10 miles) east of Oman

NEWS DESK

MUSCAT: Oman said Sunday it had rescued 23 crew members from a commercial ship while one was missing after the vessel was struck off the Gulf sultanate's eastern coast. "Twenty-three crew members were rescued and provided with necessary medical care. Search operations are continuing for one crew member who remains missing," Oman's Maritime Security Center said in a statement. The agency said it had received a distress call from the Cypriot-flagged GFS Galaxy 4.4 nautical miles off the coast of Musandam Governorate. The signal came after the vessel was struck during the latest exchanges of fire between Iran and the United States. US Central Command said the ship had been disabled by fire and damage to its engine room, accusing Tehran of attacking it. Earlier, India's foreign ministry said of 11 Indian nationals on board, 10 had been rescued, adding that one was missing.

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Iran attacks, Qatar, Bharain, UAE

NEWS DESK

DUBAI: Iran launched missile and drone attacks against Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates on Sunday, widening its military campaign across the Gulf only hours after the United States carried out a third round of airstrikes against Iranian targets in retaliation for attacks on commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz. Qatar's military said in a statement it intercepted incoming Iranian fire, with explosions heard in neighboring United Arab Emirates. Three people, including a child, were wounded as a result of falling shrapnel from the interception of Iranian attacks, Qatar's Interior Ministry said.

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Forces gun down more than 70 terrorists in ongoing ops

Total number of terrorists killed since July 5 reaches 105, say security sources

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Security forces eliminated seven more terrorists belonging to India's proxy Fitna al-Khawarij during the ongoing Operation Shaban in Balochistan, security sources said on Sunday. The sources told that the total number of terrorists killed has risen to 70 in the current operation, while overall, 105 have been gunned down since June 5. The operation was launched in the aftermath of the attack on the Mangi Dam police station in Ziarat and is being carried out jointly by the Pakistan Army, Frontier Corps (FC), and Balochistan Police, the sources had said earlier. While security forces inflicted heavy losses on terrorists in ongoing operations, 42 people, including security personnel and civilians, were martyred in three recent terrorist attacks in Balochistan. The operation in Balochistan will continue until the last militant is eliminated, the security sources had said. Speaking on the terrorist attack in Ziarat, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry had on Wednesday said that India-backed terrorists attacked the checkpoint, but police

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Five labourers shot dead by terrorists

BUREAU REPORT

QUETTA: Five labourers were shot dead after Fitna al-Hindustan terrorists opened fire on workers at a shop in the Mashkel area of Balochistan's Washuk district, security sources said on Sunday. The victims included Mohammad Bilal, Mohammad Hussain, Muhammad Qadeer, Mohsin and Bilal, they added. Security forces cordoned off the area and launched a search operation to track down the terrorists, security sources said. Police said all five victims had travelled from outside the province, adding that the bodies were being shifted to their native areas after completion of legal formalities. According to police, an investigation into the incident had been launched. Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti condemned

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Bottled Drinking Water

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Punjab CM orders continuous monitoring of drains, canals

She directed the authorities to make special arrangements to keep traffic moving on major roads and highways, while instructing the Punjab Safe Cities Authority and the City Traffic Police to remain on high alert and maintain public guidance and coordination throughout the monsoon period

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Sunday directed all departments concerned to remain on high alert as the monsoon season commenced across the province, ordering field officers to ensure timely emergency response and effective rainwater management. The CM directed all commissioners, deputy commissioners and field officers to stay fully vigilant, saying there was no room for negligence or irresponsibility during the monsoon spell. She also directed the authorities to ensure the immediate drainage of rainwater from urban and low-lying areas and ordered continuous monitoring of Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) operations

to prevent urban flooding. CM Maryam Nawaz also directed the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Control Room and District Emergency Operation Centres (DEOCs) across Punjab to remain fully operational and alert. She instructed Rescue 1122, WASA and other emergency agencies to keep their personnel and machinery ready to respond to any emergency. The CM ordered continuous monitoring of storm-water drains, nullahs and canal water flows, while directing the Irrigation Department to keep its teams fully prepared to deal with any flood-related situation. She directed the authorities to ensure that all manholes in urban and rural areas remain properly covered and also directed immediate removal of water from iden-

tified choking points to maintain normal traffic flow. CM Maryam Nawaz also ordered strict implementation of safety measures at construction sites to prevent accidents during heavy rains and called for special monitoring of dilapidated and structurally vulnerable buildings. She directed the authorities to make special arrangements to keep traffic moving on major roads and highways, while instructing the Punjab Safe Cities Authority and the City Traffic Police to remain on high alert and maintain public guidance and coordination throughout the monsoon period. The CM said that all field teams should remain fully prepared and proactive to safeguard the lives and property of citizens during the ongoing monsoon season.

G-13, G-14 commercial plots auction date yet to finalize

ISLAMABAD : Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) has yet to finalize the auction date for commercial plots in Sectors G-13 and G-14, an official spokesperson said on Sunday. Talking to APP, the spokesperson said the Authority's Auction Committee, in a recent meeting chaired by Joint Secretary (Estate), Ministry of Housing and Works, Fayyaz-ul-Haq, reviewed arrangements for the upcoming auction of commercial plots. He said the committee discussed the auction of commercial plots located in the Class-III Shopping Centres of Sectors G-13 and G-14/4, as well as commercial plots in Markaz G-14. The meeting also reviewed key arrangements, including the preparation of the auction brochure, advertising and publicity strategy, the auction schedule.—APP

LPG prices soar in Peshawar as sellers ignore official rates

PESHAWAR: Residents of Peshawar have expressed growing concern over the sharp increase in liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) prices, claiming that the official rate of Rs240 per kilogram is not being enforced. According to some consumers on Sunday, LPG is being sold for as much as Rs400 per kilogram in several parts of the city, placing an additional financial burden on households already struggling with inflation. Citizens say repeated complaints have yielded little action from the district administration alleging that only temporary inspections and symbolic measures have been undertaken. They have urged the Deputy Commissioner and other relevant authorities to ensure strict implementation of official prices, take decisive action against profiteers and provide immediate relief to consumers.—APP

Regional peace can unlock investment gains

LAHORE: Former President Iftikhar Ali Malik, SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry on Sunday said the real dividend of regional peace lies in expanding trade, attracting productive investment, and acquiring modern technology to enhance Pakistan's global competitiveness. In a statement issued here, he said Pakistan could transform its improved international standing into sustainable economic growth and deeper regional integration by pursuing these opportunities alongside effective implementation of domestic reforms. He said Iran, Türkiye and Saudi Arabia offered immediate opportunities for expanding economic cooperation, while China, the United States and Gulf countries would continue to remain key economic partners. The ongoing geopolitical transition, he added, had created exceptional prospects for strengthening ties with these countries. Iftikhar Malik stressed that Pakistan should not measure diplomatic success solely by the amount of financial assistance it receives. Instead, he said, the country should gradually replace reliance on nearly \$12 billion in friendly-country deposits supporting its foreign exchange reserves with partnerships based on trade expansion, productive investment in agriculture and industry, and the transfer of technology and managerial expertise. He said all bilateral agreements should be backed by measurable milestones, regular monitoring and effective inter-agency coordination, with the prime minister personally reviewing implementation

to ensure timely progress. Referring to the recent visit of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, he said both countries had agreed to increase bilateral trade from around \$3 billion to \$10 billion by 2028. Achieving this target, he said, would require close coordination between the Ministry of Commerce and the private sector to identify products in which Pakistan enjoys a comparative advantage. He said Pakistan could significantly increase exports of rice, meat, textiles, surgical instruments, fruits and processed foods to Iran while importing raw materials and intermediate goods at competitive prices, paving the way for stronger bilateral economic cooperation.—APP

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Call to replace harmful plastic bags with green alternatives

ISLAMABAD: SEPA Director Imran Sabir advocated strict limits on plastic shopping bags, urging communities to embrace reusable alternatives and cooperate with government efforts to tackle plastic pollution, warning that Pakistan's annual use of more than 60 billion plastic bags could lead to a future where plastic waste exceeds fish in oceans by 2050, threatening ecosystems and public health. While speaking to a local media outlet, Director of the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) Imran Sabir said Sindh and Punjab are taking various measures to control plastic pollution, including action against wholesalers and sellers of plastic bags, along with awareness campaigns in educational institutions and through social media platforms. He highlighted that around five trillion plastic bags are used worldwide every year, with most being used for only a few minutes before disposal. Despite their short usage period, plastic bags can take hundreds of years to break down, causing long-term pollution of land, rivers and oceans while threatening wildlife and marine ecosystems. The SEPA Director urged public cooperation with government efforts to reduce plastic waste, calling for wider adoption of reusable and eco-friendly alternatives. He stressed that collective action by citizens, businesses and institutions is essential to protect the environment and public health from the growing plastic pollution challenge. Responding to a query about brands introducing cloth bags as alternatives to plastic bags while charging customers an additional Rs30 to Rs40 after shopping, Director Imran Sabir said promoting reusable bags is a positive step toward reducing plastic waste. However, he discouraged extra charges on customers and urged shopping malls and brands to adopt environmentally friendly practices without creating barriers for public participation. He emphasized that businesses and consumers should work together to promote sustainable solutions and reduce plastic pollution. Responding to another query regarding the ban on plastic bags, Sabir said that many industrial owners approached legal forums and raised concerns over shutting down a business that has existed for decades. He said authorities are engaging with stakeholders and encouraging industries to move toward environmentally friendly alternatives. He added that courts have also directed relevant stakeholders to explore alternative solutions and all parties are working together while seeking suggestions to ensure a practical transition away from plastic bags without compromising environmental protection. Responding to another question, SEPA Director Imran Sabir said plastic bags are highly harmful to the environment as they do not easily degrade and remain in ecosystems for long periods. He warned that plastic waste can contaminate land and water, pose risks to human health and endanger marine animals by damaging their habitats and food chains. SEPA Director urged media outlets to play their role in promoting awareness programs and educating the public about the harmful impacts of plastic pollution. He called for public cooperation and encouraged the business community to adopt sustainable alternatives, including cloth-based bags and other environmentally friendly options to reduce dependence on plastic bags.—DNA



SAHIWAL: Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Syed Imran Ahmad Shah offering dua after inauguration of a solarized water filtration plant at village Daad Baloch, Union Council Karyal-1, Sahiwal.

Raja Bazar transformed into modern commercial hub

RAWALPINDI: The historic Raja Bazar has undergone a complete infrastructure transformation under the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, turning the city's oldest and busiest commercial center into a modern and organized trade hub. The development project, under the vision of CM Maryam Nawaz, has upgraded roads, footpaths, pedestrian walkways, and drainage systems, significantly resolving long awaited issues of traffic congestion, encroachments and overcrowding to boost local economic activities. Not only modernization, the beautification and cleanliness under CM's Suthra Punjab, have collectively changed Raja Bazar outlook. The business community and local citizens welcomed the development, noting that the clean environment and wider passages have restored consumer confidence and facilitated smoother movement for thousands of daily visitors. Talking to APP, shoppers and local stakeholders expressed satisfaction over the upgraded facilities. Bilal, a frequent buyer at the market, said that the newly widened walkways and organized pathways have made the shopping experience much less stressful for families compared to the previous chaotic conditions.—APP

Minister vows to climate-resilient rural development

SAHIWAL: Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Syed Imran Ahmad Shah Sunday reaffirmed the government's commitment to expanding access to safe drinking water and strengthening climate-resilient communities. He stated this at inauguration of a solarized water filtration plant at village Daad Baloch, Union Council Karyal-1, Sahiwal under the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund's (PPAF) Building Resilient Communities for Sustainable Development (BRCS) Project. Addressing the inauguration ceremony as chief guest, the minister said ensuring safe drinking water for rural and climate-vulnerable communities remained a key priority of the government, as

climate change was placing increasing pressure on the country's water resources. He stressed that investment in climate-resilient infrastructure was essential to protect public health, strengthen livelihoods and improve community resilience. The solarized water filtration plant has been established by PPAF through its partner organization, Comprehensive Health and Education Forum (CHEF). The ceremony was attended by Member Provincial Assembly Pir Wilayat Shah Khagga, PPAF Chief Executive Officer Nadir Gul Barech, CHEF International CEO Sohail Ayaz Khan, Dr. Ahmad Khawar Shahzad, senior officials and members of the local community. The minister appreciated PPAF's role in

poverty alleviation and inclusive development, noting that the organization had reached nearly 18 million people across 150 districts through sustainable community-based initiatives. He also commended PPAF's relief and rehabilitation efforts in Sahiwal, including flood response, healthcare services and livestock support. Highlighting the significance of the newly inaugurated facility, Syed Imran Ahmad Shah said it would provide safe drinking water to around 550 households, benefiting more than 6,000 people in Village Daad Baloch. He reiterated the government's resolve to expand access to essential services through collaboration with PPAF and development partners.—APP

SECP enables digital KYC thru IBAN-based verification

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has introduced IBAN-based digital verification to enable faster and easier onboarding of customers, allowing investors to access financial services without unnecessary documentation a repeated verification requirements. To facilitate this digital transformation, the SECP has amended the AML/CFT/CPF Regulations, 2020, allowing Regulated Persons, including Securities Brokers, Futures Brokers, Insurers, Takaful Operators, NBFCs and Modarabas, to verify customers using their IBAN details for completion of KYC requirements, said a release issued here. The initiative is part of SECP's efforts to leverage technology for modernizing Pakistan's financial ecosystem, promoting digital access, improving ease of doing business, and ensuring secure and reliable customer verification. The amended framework recognizes digital verification methods as an alternative to traditional processes, enabling quicker access to regulated financial services while maintaining strong regulatory safeguards. To strengthen investor protection and minimize the risk of unauthorized financial activity, all future transactions would be restricted to verified bank accounts held in the customer's own name, ensuring greater transparency and traceability across the market. In line with the initiatives of the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), the amended regulations also introduce advanced biometric verification options, including facial recognition. Customer accounts linked with NADRA-blocked or impounded CNICs will be subject to immediate blocking under the revised framework. The amendments further recognize digital logs as valid records for AML/CFT compliance and data retention purposes, while prescribed forms have also been updated in line with the Companies Regulations, 2024.—APP

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Solar power transforms lives in KP amid soaring temperature

PESHAWAR: Every evening, as temperatures soared and electricity disappeared for hours, 64-year-old Riazul Haq would watch his family struggle through another sweltering night in Nowshera district. The fans would stop, the air conditioners would fall silent, and the oppressive summer heat would turn their home into an oven. Like hundreds of thousands of Pakistanis, he had grown accustomed to spending up to 18 hours a day without electricity. But this summer, everything changed for former PST teacher. Unable to bear the hardship any longer, Riazul Haq took out a loan and installed a 10-kilowatt solar power system on the roof of his house. "We were suffering from prolonged load shedding. I had no choice but to install solar panels to give my family relief during the intense heat," he told APP. Today, his rooftop tells a different story in his hometown Mohib Banda located on River Kabul's south. The family now runs air conditioners, refrigerators and other household appliances without interruption. Even more remarkably, the excess electricity generated by the system is sold to neighbors, creating an additional source of income. "My monthly electricity bill has dropped from nearly Rs40,000 to almost zero," he said with a smile.

"It's peace of mind. I feel like we've finally taken control of our own power." His story reflected a quiet but powerful transformation unfolding across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the rest of Pakistan, where thousands of households are turning to solar energy not only to escape crippling electricity bills but also to regain a sense of security and independence. According to the Global Electricity Review 2025, Pakistan imported 17 gigawatts of solar panels in 2024 which is double the volume imported in 2023 making it the world's largest importer of solar panels. The rapid shift has been fuelled by rising electricity tariffs, unreliable grid supplies, falling prices of solar technology and increasing awareness of clean energy. Prof. Dr. Zilakat Malik, former Chairman of the Economics Department at the University of Peshawar, said Pakistan's growing electricity demand has made diversification of energy sources essential to cater electricity demands of agriculture and industrial sectors.

Under the National Electricity Policy 2021 and National Electricity Plan 2023-27, Pakistan aimed to generate 60 percent of its electricity from indigenous clean energy sources by 2030. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was playing a leading role in this transition. Former adviser to the Chief Minister on Energy Engr. Tariq Sadozai said two mega solarisation projects were under implementation. The initiatives included the solarisation of 13,000 public buildings and distribution of solar systems to 130,000 low-income households, with half of the beneficiaries receiving the systems free of cost. Waheed Khan, former Minister said the federal government under Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has created a favourable policy environment through incentives, tax relief and support for promoting solar energy. The net metering made solar investment more accessible for households and businesses. However, experts believed the country's solar revolution must be matched with reforms in energy planning and execution. A study titled, "the great solar rush in Pakistan by renewables first" noted that large-scale solar adoption has already reduced demand for grid electricity by more than 10 percent, highlighting the urgent need to modernise transmission infrastructure and improve demand forecasting. He further emphasised the importance of developing a skilled workforce through technical education, certified installers and specialised training programmes to sustain the rapid expansion of the solar sector.—DNA

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Briefs

SP Tahir reviews Serena Hotel security

ISLAMABAD: Superintendent of Police (SP) Aiwan-e-Sadr/Parliament House Tahir Mehmood Khan on Sunday visited Serena Hotel to review security arrangements for the 9th OIC Ministerial Conference on Women, as Islamabad hosts delegates from across the Muslim world. An official told APP that Pakistan is hosting the conference at the Jinnah Convention Centre on July 12-13, bringing together more than 190 delegates from 57 OIC member states to discuss the theme, "Socio-Economic and Political Empowerment of Women in OIC Countries." SP Tahir met officers and personnel deployed on security duty at Serena Hotel and reviewed the overall security arrangements. Tahir briefed officers on the nature and sensitivity of their duties and issued necessary instructions to ensure fool-proof security throughout the event. He directed all personnel to remain vigilant, maintain strict monitoring and perform their duties with professionalism and a strong sense of responsibility. SP Tahir also stressed effective coordination among all security personnel and instructed them to respond promptly to any emergency situation. ce for everyone in Murree.—APP

Four people burned in gas cylinder blast

ISLAMABAD :Atleast four people were burned and injured after a cylinder explosion occurred at a house in Islamabad's Sector F-15/2 late Saturday night, in the area of Tarnol Police Station according to details, district administration said rescue teams responded promptly and brought the fire under control, with a magistrate present to monitor the operation. Four people, including two children, sustained injured, while the blast also caused major damage to the house, official added, local media channels reported. The injured were shifted to a nearby hospital for medical treatment. The explosion also caused extensive damage to the house, including shattered windows, damaged doors, and affected walls. The initial investigation indicated that the blast was caused by a gas leak from a water heater (geyser), the district administration said. The Capital Emergency Services also confirmed the incident. Authorities are continuing their probe to determine the exact cause and circumstances of the explosion.—APP

Police seize arms and drugs

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police arrested 109 accused during the past seven days under the ongoing "Weapon-Free Islamabad" and "Nasha Ab Nahi" campaigns, recovering a large cache of illegal weapons and narcotics. An official told APP on Sunday that 72 accused involved in illegal possession and display of weapons were arrested during targeted operations across the federal capital. He said police recovered two Kalashnikovs, five guns, one rifle, 59 pistols, three daggers and a large quantity of ammunition from their possession. The official said 37 drug peddlers were also arrested during the weeklong crackdown. He said police recovered more than seven kilograms of ice (crystal meth), over four kilograms of hashish, more than two kilograms of hero-in and 145 bottles of liquor from the accused. The official said the "Weapon-Free Islamabad" and "Nasha Ab Nahi" campaigns were continuing on the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi. He said Islamabad Police had adopted a zero-tolerance policy against illegal weapons, aerial firing, display of arms and drug trafficking, while special police teams were carrying out targeted operations against criminal elements. The official said Islamabad Police would continue effective action to protect the lives and property of citizens and eliminate crime from the federal capital.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Defence Senator Muhammad Talha Mahmood presenting a shield to Secretary General of the Muslim World League Sheikh Dr Mohammad bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa during a reception in honor of Secretary General of the MWL, at his residence in the Federal Capital.

Ombudsman's AI vision guarantees swift decisions within 60 days:Naveed

ISLAMABAD: Federal Ombudsman Naveed Kamran Baloch on Saturday said his institution is harnessing digital and AI-powered reforms to elevate public service delivery, broaden awareness and capacity-building initiatives for government employees, and ensure Ombudsman decisions are implemented well within the prescribed 60-day time frame. While appearing on a PTV News programme, Federal Ombudsman Naveed Kamran Baloch highlighted the Ombudsman institution's role, sharing his personal experiences and thanking the government leadership for strengthening the system through technology and AI-driven solutions to provide speedy, transparent and accessible justice. Kamran Baloch said the institution is focused on supporting the underprivileged segment of society, with nearly 90 percent of complainants seeking relief against issues faced at government departments and public offices. He added that AI technology is

helping take justice services to citizens' doorsteps, with implementation of Ombudsman decisions ensured within 60 days, while efforts are underway to further reduce the time-frame. He emphasised that public awareness is essential for ensuring access to justice and said the Federal Ombudsman is actively working to strengthen complaint resolution mechanisms. The institution is establishing monitoring cells and appointing focal persons in public dealing departments, including NADRA, airports, BISP, power sector and other organizations to improve service delivery and ensure timely redressal of citizens' grievances. He further said the Federal Ombudsman is ensuring coordinated efforts to resolve issues faced by overseas Pakistanis, with the Foreign Secretary supporting effective coordination among relevant institutions. These initiatives are aimed at making public services more responsive, transparent and accessible for all citizens. Responding to a query, he stressed the

need for capacity building, training and specialized courses for employees involved in public dealing to improve service delivery. He said the Federal Ombudsman provides justice to citizens while ensuring accountability, transparency and credibility across institutions, with regular feedback reflecting public confidence in the system. To another query, he also elaborated on the complaint filing process and legal procedures, stating that applicants can approach the Federal Ombudsman not only through physical applications but also via telephone and social media platforms. He said dedicated teams and researchers are working to ensure quick responses and efficient guidance for complainants. Replying to a question about complaints, he said over 256,000 cases were received by the Federal Ombudsman last year, while he personally reviews around 920 to 1,000 complaints on a daily basis. He said a forensic digitalised

system with AI-based tools is being utilized to analyze cases, enhance efficiency and ensure speedy resolution. On the nature of complaints, he said most grievances arise from departments involved in public dealing. He added that the Federal Ombudsman is actively engaged with 12 to 14 key public service organizations and is working continuously to introduce reforms for improved performance and greater public satisfaction. In his concluding remarks, Naveed Kamran Baloch stressed the importance of public awareness, dignity and compassion in service delivery. He said the Federal Ombudsman is committed to making justice more accessible and ensuring citizens receive fair and respectful treatment. He said the Waqfi Mohtasib has emerged as a strong pillar of administrative accountability by addressing public grievances, improving governance standards and promoting transparency, responsibility and efficiency in government services.

National Population Council to lead unified population strategy

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Saturday reaffirmed the government's commitment to addressing Pakistan's population challenge through coordinated, evidence-based and whole-of-government action, saying the country's future would depend on the quality, productivity and preparedness of its people rather than the size of its population. He observed on World Population Day that this year under the theme "Realizing the hopes and aspirations of young people, today and for the future," the minister said Pakistan's large youth population was both a national asset and a major policy responsibility. He said Pakistan's population should be viewed as human capital to be developed rather than a burden to be managed, adding that investments in health, nutrition, education, skills development and women's empowerment would translate into greater productivity, resilience and prosperity. Ahsan Iqbal said Pakistan had made progress in reducing fertility, with the total fertility rate declining from 4.1 births per woman in 2006-07 to 3.6 in 2017-18, a figure reaffirmed by the latest Household Integrated Economic Survey 2024-25. However, he said the pace of decline remained insufficient to meet the country's development requirements. He noted that Pakistan's population had reached 241.49 million according to the 2023 Digital Census, growing at an annual rate of 2.55 percent, and could exceed 386 million by 2050 if current trends continued, placing enormous pressure on education, healthcare, housing, employment, water resources, food security, infrastructure and public finances. The minister said population outcomes were fundamentally linked with governance, adding that after the 18th Constitutional Amendment, responsibilities related to fertility, health, education and social protection had become dispersed across different tiers of government. He said Pakistan had not lacked population policies but rather an effective mechanism to align all stakeholders under a single national framework, describing the establishment of the National Population Council as a major governance reform. Ahsan Iqbal said the Council, chaired by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, brought together provincial governments, the leadership of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.—DNA

Pakistan, WDO to enhance coop for women's empowerment

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Human Rights, Azam Nazeer Tarar on Sunday reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment towards protecting and promoting women's rights, emphasizing stronger cooperation among Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member states in this regard. He was speaking during a meeting with the Counsellor Sarah Ismail Al Shoura, Executive Director of the Women Development Organization (WDO). During the meeting, the minister said Islam had granted women comprehensive rights and a dignified status, adding that it was the collective responsibility of the Muslim Ummah to safeguard and uphold those rights. He said Pakistan was implementing priority initiatives for the protection and empowerment of women, noting that women are playing leading roles in politics, parliament and other key sectors of national life. The meeting also focused on promoting cooperation between Pakistan and the Women Development Organization, with discussions covering women's rights, empowerment, and expanding collaboration among OIC member states. The minister and Counsellor Sarah Ismail Al Shoura agreed to strengthen cooperation in the areas of women's empowerment, socio-economic development and institutional collaboration.—APP

Pak's IWT case strong, but climate change looms larger

ISLAMABAD: Climate expert Ali Tauqeer Sheikh stressed that while Pakistan's legal case under the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) was strong, but climate change posed a far greater and rapidly escalating threat to the Indus Basin. In an interview with APP, Sheikh noted that Pakistan's response to recent Indian arguments was firmly grounded in international law, particularly in light of the Permanent Court of Arbitration's rulings and the treaty's provisions safeguarding downstream rights. "On the legal points, Pakistan's rebuttal is strong," he said. Referring to the ongoing debate over the treaty, Sheikh cautioned that the Himalayan watershed has already lost nearly a quarter of its perennial ice cover due to climate change. "Climate change is the third commissioner. It attends no meetings and honours no awards, but it is already rewriting the treaty," he said.—APP

NTC launches landmark SIDP

ISLAMABAD: National Telecommunication Corporation (NTC) has officially launched the NTC Solar Infrastructure Deployment Program (SIDP), a landmark initiative that marks a significant milestone in the Corporation's commitment to energy efficiency, operational resilience, and environmental sustainability. The SIDP aims to harness renewable energy to power NTC's offices, telecommunications exchanges, data centres, and operational facilities across Pakistan. By transitioning to clean energy, NTC seeks to substantially reduce electricity costs, enhance energy reliability, and support the Government of Pakistan's national renewable energy objectives, said a press release issued here. To formalize the initiative, an official Contract Signing Ceremony was held in Islamabad between NTC and a consortium comprising Kasib Builders and Developers (Pvt.) Ltd., Zeeruk International (Pvt.) Ltd., and Zeeruk Energy Development (Pvt.) Ltd. The SIDP will be implemented under the Build-Own-Operate-Transfer (BOOT) framework. Under this model, the Joint Venture will fully finance, design, install, operate, and maintain advanced solar photovoltaic (PV) systems at designated NTC sites. Upon completion of the concession period, ownership of the entire solar infrastructure will be transferred to NTC. Beyond reducing recurring operational expenditures, the transition to solar energy will significantly lower NTC's carbon footprint while reinforcing the Corporation's commitment to environmentally responsible and sustainable operations. Speaking at the ceremony, NTC Management emphasized the strategic importance of the project: "The SIDP represents a transformative step towards reducing our dependence on conventional energy sources while delivering long-term financial and operational benefits. By investing in innovative and sustainable technologies, NTC is strengthening a modern, resilient, and energy-efficient telecommunications infrastructure that supports Pakistan's transition towards a greener and more sustainable future." —DNA

Kashmir Martyrs' Day today to remember 1931 massacre

ISLAMABAD: Kashmir Martyrs' Day will be observed on Monday (July 13) to honor the 22 Kashmiri Muslims massacred by Dogra monarchy forces in 1931, a historic event that remains an indelible symbol of resistance after worshippers laid down their lives in defiance of state tyranny simply to complete the Azaan. The day recalls when, under Maharaja Hari Singh, the Muslim-majority population faced severe economic exploitation and religious discrimination. Tensions peaked during the trial of Abdul Qadeer, who was arrested for a fiery speech against autocratic rule. On July 13, 1931, thousands gathered outside Srinagar's Central Jail to support Qadeer. When the time for Zuhr prayer arrived, a young man stood up to deliver the Azaan and was shot dead on the orders of the Dogra governor. In an extraordinary act of resilience, another protester stepped forward to continue the call and was also shot. This succession continued until 22 Kashmiris were

martyred, targeted one after another to silence a single Azaan. Once an official state holiday symbolizing the foundational struggle for civic rights, its formal status was stripped by India following the unilateral revocation of Article 370 in August 2019. As the anniversary is marked, the day honoring the 22 Kashmiris stands erased from the official calendar, with access to the Martyrs' Graveyard sealed off by heavy barricades and razor wire in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). Historical patterns repeat as current Indian security forces adopt tactics reminiscent of the Dogra regime, intensifying systemic crackdowns on the civilian population across the occupied valley. With over 900,000 security personnel deployed on the ground, IIOJK stands as one of the world's most densely militarized zones, relying on snap curfews and frequent internet shutdowns to strictly control the outflow of information. Local news outlets and independent

journalists face intense censorship under draconian media policies that have effectively criminalized human rights reporting and forced a near-total editorial shutdown. Furthermore, human rights defenders, lawyers, and political activists are routinely detained without trial for indefinite periods through the sweeping, unchecked application of anti-terror statutes like the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA). Alongside this, the continuous implementation of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) grants security personnel absolute legal immunity, effectively blocking any criminal prosecution for custodial deaths in civilian courts. To stifle indigenous public sentiment and prevent mass mobilization, prominent regional political leaders and former chief ministers, including Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti, are routinely placed under pre-emptive house arrest with their gates chained shut ahead of the day.—DNA

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Balochistan’s Crossroads



QAMAR BASHIR

FORMER CIA analyst Larry Johnson recently argued that Israel’s intelligence agency, Mossad, has maintained a longstanding covert relationship with certain Baloch militant elements operating along the Pakistan-Iran border. Referring to allegations that have previously appeared in Western media, Johnson stated that Israeli operatives had allegedly recruited Baloch militants while posing as American intelligence officers to conduct operations inside Iran.

Building upon that historical episode, he further argued that the recent surge in militant attacks in Pakistan’s Balochistan province should not be viewed as isolated acts of violence but as part of a broader geopolitical strategy designed to generate instability simultaneously in Pakistan and Iran. Johnson’s remarks have reopened an important debate regarding the wider geopolitical dimensions of the Baloch conflict. Having spent more than six decades living in Balochistan, I find Johnson’s assessment worthy of thoughtful consideration—because it raises questions that deserve careful examination.

I was born in Quetta and have witnessed every major phase of the province’s insurgency. Governments have changed, military operations have come and gone, peace agreements have been negotiated and abandoned, but the insurgency that exists today is fundamentally different from those witnessed in previous decades. It is more sophisticated, more disciplined, more lethal, and considerably more capable of executing coordinated attacks across vast distances. Militants today employ sophisticated communications, modern weapons, intelligence gathering, coordinated logistics, and operational planning that naturally raise questions regarding the origin of such capabilities, and inevitably encourages analysts to examine not only domestic grievances but also wider geopolitical influences. For anyone who has lived in Balochistan, recurring insurgency is neither surprising nor new. However, I believe the present insurgency cannot be understood solely through the prism of local grievances. It increasingly appears connected to broader strategic and ideological competitions unfolding across South Asia and the Middle East. Regional conflicts seldom remain purely local; they often become the meeting point where domestic vulnerabilities intersect with external geopolitical interests. One analytical framework begins with the concept of Akhand Bharat, an ideological current associated with Hindu nationalist thought that envisions the reunification of territories that historically formed part of undivided India. This construct has influenced elements of India’s long-term strategic outlook. Within that framework, Pakistan represents the principal geopolitical obstacle to India’s emergence as the dominant power of the subcontinent. Consequently, a politically fragmented or internally weakened Pakistan would naturally be viewed as strategically advantageous. Another analytical framework is the

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concept of Israel’s long-term strategic thinking of greater Israel that has consistently emphasized preventing the emergence of regional powers capable of challenging its military superiority or strategic freedom of action.

Viewed through that analytical lens, Pakistan occupies a unique position as the only Muslim-majority nuclear-armed state possessing substantial military capabilities and expanding defense cooperation with several Muslim countries. According to this interpretation, Pakistan inevitably figures within broader regional strategic calculations. The motivations of Israel and India may or may not be entirely independent of one another. Yet history demonstrates that different states pursuing separate interests can nevertheless generate outcomes that reinforce one another without operating through a common plan.

History repeatedly demonstrates that governments and insurgencies eventually return to negotiations after years of costly confrontation. The tragedy is not that negotiations occur, but that they often begin only after immense human suffering and economic destruction. Every bombing deepens mistrust. Every military operation creates new wounds. Every family that loses a loved one carries scars that persist long after the fighting ends. After observing Balochistan’s turbulent journey for more than six decades, I remain convinced that neither perpetual confrontation nor military victory alone can secure the province’s future. If external actors are indeed seeking to exploit Pakistan’s vulnerabilities, Pakistan’s strongest response lies not only in military preparedness but in building a politically cohesive, economically prosperous, constitutionally inclusive, and socially united nation. Ultimately, this is the lesson for both the Pakistani state and the insurgents. Violence, regardless of who employs it, cannot build a stable society. Governments possess greater responsibility because they possess greater authority. They must lead the path toward reconciliation, address legitimate grievances through constitutional means, and isolate only those committed to terrorism. Those who have taken up arms must likewise recognize that no enduring political objective can be achieved through bloodshed.

Balochistan has buried enough sons, sacrificed enough generations, and endured enough cycles of violence. The insurgency has inflicted immense suffering on the province itself. Baloch militant groups have killed numerous security personnel, targeted innocent civilians, brutally murdered workers and travelers from other provinces, and destroyed roads, railways, communication networks, and other public infrastructure essential for the province’s development and the well-being of its people. The state, too, has paid a heavy price in lives, resources, and public trust while striving to restore order. Continued violence—whether committed by insurgents or in the course of armed confrontation—has only deepened wounds, delayed development, and prolonged the suffering of ordinary Baloch citizens. The future of Balochistan should not be determined by bullets, by mutual mistrust, or by the strategic ambitions of outside powers. It must instead be built upon dialogue, justice, constitutional inclusion, economic opportunity, and national unity. History repeatedly teaches that even the longest and bloodiest conflicts ultimately end at the negotiating table. Wisdom lies in reaching that table before another generation is consumed by war.

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

CPEC 2.0: The Next Phase of Pakistan’s Economic Transformation

T.M Awan

This transition is consistent with China’s own economic evolution. As labor costs rise in China and advanced manufacturing becomes a national priority, certain labor-intensive industries are expected to seek new destinations abroad. Pakistan has an opportunity to attract a portion of this investment, particularly if Special Economic Zones can be linked to export-oriented manufacturing and integrated into regional supply chains. Agriculture presents another important frontier. Pakistan possesses vast agricultural potential but continues to struggle with low productivity, outdated farming practices, and inefficient resource management

WHEN the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was launched in 2013, it was primarily viewed through the lens of infrastructure. Roads, power plants, transmission lines, and the development of Gwadar Port dominated public discourse. At the time, Pakistan was grappling with crippling energy shortages, inadequate transport connectivity, and an investment deficit that constrained economic growth. CPEC was designed to address these structural bottlenecks. More than a decade later, the conversation is changing.

The emerging concept of CPEC 2.0 suggests a shift from building infrastructure to creating economic value. The focus is gradually moving from roads and energy projects toward industrial cooperation, technological innovation, agriculture modernization, digital connectivity, human resource development, and export-oriented growth. In many ways, CPEC 2.0 reflects both the lessons of the first phase and the realities of a rapidly changing global economy.

The first phase of CPEC undoubtedly delivered significant gains. Energy projects helped reduce Pakistan’s chronic electricity shortages, while new highways and transport networks improved connectivity across various regions. Gwadar, despite its challenges, established itself as an important symbol of Pakistan-China strategic cooperation. Yet infrastructure alone was never intended to be the final destination. It was meant to create the foundation for industrialization and economic transformation.

That transformation remains a work in progress. Several factors slowed the momentum of the original CPEC roadmap. Political transitions, policy inconsistencies, economic instability, IMF-related fiscal constraints, and security concerns all affected implementation timelines. The result was that while many infrastructure projects moved forward, the industrial and investment dimensions lagged behind expectations. Today, however, the international environment may be creating a new opportunity.

Global supply chains are undergoing a profound restructuring. Rising geopolitical tensions, trade disputes, technological competition, and the “China Plus One” strategy adopted by many multinational firms are encouraging businesses to diversify production locations beyond China. Countries capable of offering

competitive labor, strategic geography, and improved infrastructure are increasingly positioning themselves as alternative manufacturing destinations.

This is where CPEC 2.0 becomes strategically significant. Pakistan’s geographic location remains one of its most underutilized assets. Situated at the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East, and Western China, Pakistan possesses the potential to become a regional hub for trade, logistics, and industrial production. The infrastructure built during the first phase of CPEC provides a platform upon which a more sophisticated economic model can be developed.

Recent discussions between Pakistani and Chinese officials suggest that the next stage of cooperation will place greater emphasis on agriculture, information technology, industrial cooperation, vocational training, and innovation-driven growth. Chinese officials have increasingly described CPEC 2.0 as a vehicle for translating earlier infrastructure investments into broader economic opportunities. The objective is no longer simply connectivity. It is productivity.

This transition is consistent with China’s own economic evolution. As labor costs rise in China and advanced manufacturing becomes a national priority, certain labor-intensive industries are expected to seek new destinations abroad. Pakistan has an opportunity to attract a portion of this investment, particularly if Special Economic Zones can be linked to export-oriented manufacturing and integrated into regional supply chains. Agriculture presents another important frontier. Pakistan possesses vast agricultural potential but continues to struggle with low productivity, outdated farming practices, and inefficient resource management. Chinese expertise in agricultural technology, water management, seed development, and mechanization could contribute significantly to improving productivity and food security. Such cooperation would align closely with the broader objectives of China’s Global Development Initiative, which emphasizes sustainable and inclusive development.

The digital economy may prove equally important. The next phase of economic competition will not be determined solely by highways and ports but also by data, innovation, artificial intelligence, fintech, and digital infrastructure. If CPEC 1.0 focused on physical connectivity, CPEC 2.0 has the potential to focus on

knowledge connectivity. Joint ventures in information technology, research collaboration, skills development, and startup ecosystems could generate long-term economic dividends that traditional infrastructure projects alone cannot provide.

However, optimism must be accompanied by realism. Pakistan cannot expect CPEC 2.0 to succeed automatically. The challenges that slowed progress in the past have not disappeared entirely. Policy continuity, regulatory reforms, investor confidence, macroeconomic stability, and security remain essential prerequisites for attracting large-scale investment. Industrial zones cannot flourish without predictable policies, reliable governance, and a competitive business environment.

Moreover, Pakistan must avoid viewing CPEC solely through a geopolitical lens. While the corridor undoubtedly carries strategic significance, its long-term success will ultimately be measured by economic outcomes. Job creation, export growth, technology transfer, industrial competitiveness, and improvements in living standards are the indicators that matter most.

The broader regional environment also strengthens the case for economic cooperation. As global power centers shift and economic fragmentation increases, middle-income countries face growing pressure to build resilient partnerships and diversify growth strategies. For Pakistan, deepening economic engagement with China while simultaneously expanding connectivity with regional markets offers a pragmatic path forward.

The true significance of CPEC 2.0 lies not in the scale of investment alone but in the nature of transformation it seeks to achieve. The first phase focused on constructing the foundations of growth. The second phase must focus on generating growth itself. If CPEC 1.0 was about building roads, power plants, and ports, CPEC 2.0 must be about building industries, skills, innovation, and competitiveness. The success of this transition will determine whether the corridor remains merely an infrastructure project or evolves into the economic transformation initiative that its architects originally envisioned.

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When Crises Converge: Changing Humanitarian Realities in KP and the Merged Areas

Rehan Ali



Her family, like many others, lost not just shelter but their means of survival. In the aftermath, outreach teams engaged with affected communities, ensuring that support reached those who needed it most. For women like Fatima, this engagement was crucial. It was not just about relief, but about being heard, about rebuilding with some sense of dignity

IN January 2026, an evolving security situation and rising tensions in Tirah Valley and parts of Kurram led thousands of families to seek safety in nearby areas. Like many others, Amina gathered her children and a few belongings and set out on an uncertain journey. For weeks, she lived in a temporary settlement on the outskirts of Bara, sharing limited space with relatives and adapting to a life she never imagined. “We left everything behind,” she says quietly. “We thought it would be for a few days.”

But days turned into weeks. With over 378,000 people affected and nearly 54,000 families displaced, the scale of need quickly became evident. For families like Amina’s, the most immediate concerns were food, clean water, basic healthcare, and protection from harsh weather.

When response teams reached her settlement, the first interaction was not distribution, but listening. Names were recorded, family sizes noted, urgent needs identified. Soon after, assistance followed food supplies, hygiene kits, winterization items, and basic medical care. “At least now,” she says, “we feel someone knows we are here.”

Hundreds of kilometers away in Buner, Fatima Gul’s story carries a different, but equally painful memory.

On 15 August 2025, a sudden cloudburst struck parts of Swat and Buner, unleashing intense rainfall within hours. Streams turned into torrents, sweeping through villages with little warning. Homes collapsed, roads vanished, and livelihoods built over years were washed away in a single afternoon. “We did not even have time to think,” Fatima recalls. “Everything was gone.”

Her family, like many others, lost not just shelter but their means of survival. In the aftermath, outreach teams engaged with affected communities, ensuring that support reached those who needed it most. For women like Fatima, this engagement was crucial. It was not just about relief, but about being heard, about rebuilding with some sense of dignity. These stories, though different in cause, reflect a common reality. Across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Merged Areas, crises are no longer isolated events. Conflict, climate shocks, and economic strain are increasingly intersecting, creating a layered humanitarian challenge. It is not one emergen-

cy replacing another, but multiple pressures unfolding at the same time, stretching both communities and response systems. In such a landscape, the role of national humanitarian institutions becomes even more critical. The Pakistan Red Crescent Society, working alongside public authorities and Movement partners, has remained engaged across these evolving situations, often operating in areas where needs are immediate and access is difficult.

Since early 2025, under the leadership of Chairperson Mrs. Farzana Naek, efforts have been underway to strengthen institutional systems and improve response capacity. The focus has been on building more structured, accountable processes while enhancing coordination and service delivery. These changes are gradually shaping a more adaptive and responsive institution, capable of managing both sudden emergencies and prolonged crises. The scale of response over the past year reflects this effort. More than 410,000 people have been reached nationwide through emergency operations, including over 225,000 during the floods response. In Bajaur, with support from ECHO, a multi-sector initiative supported over 60,000 individuals through health, water and sanitation, and cash assistance.

At key border points, where returning Afghan families arrive under difficult conditions, integrated Humanitarian Service Points at Torkham and a Medical Health Facility at Chaman have provided essential services. Health care, water and sanitation, protection, restoring family links, and community engagement have been brought together to ensure that assistance is both coordinated and dignified, reaching over 116,000 Afghan migrants. In Tirah and Kurram, where Amina’s story began, response teams reached more than 51,500 displaced individuals despite challenging terrain and weather, providing food, non-food items, hygiene kits, winterization support, and first aid. These efforts underline a simple reality: in places where access is uncertain, presence itself becomes part of the response. An important element across these interventions has been balance. Support has extended not only to displaced and returning populations but also to host communities, helping ease local pressures and maintain social cohesion in already strained environments.

Preparedness is also gaining attention. Early Action Protocols are being introduced, alongside a broader Emergency Contingency Plan that includes a focus on nutrition, particularly for women and children. Health initiatives continue to expand, including immunization efforts in Bannu, Sub-Division Wazir, and Chaman, reaching over 109,000 individuals through community engagement and awareness. Behind many of these efforts are volunteers. With a network exceeding 728,000 individuals and nearly 18,800 actively engaged, they remain a vital link between response systems and communities. Recognizing their central role, the Chairperson has set an ambitious vision to expand the volunteer base to one million, further strengthening PRCS’s ability to deliver timely and effective humanitarian services. At the same time, greater emphasis is being placed on Protection, Gender and Inclusion, ensuring that women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities are not overlooked. In complex emergencies, inclusion is not an add-on, it is essential to effective response.

Yet, the broader environment is becoming more uncertain. Global conflicts and economic pressures are reshaping funding priorities, with resources increasingly stretched. For institutions responding to growing needs, this creates real constraints on how far and how fast support can reach. This is where the conversation shifts beyond response. The patronage of the President of Pakistan and the PRCS, Mr. Asif Ali Zardari, along with the continued support of Movement partners, provides an important foundation. But the scale and complexity of today’s challenges call for wider engagement from all stakeholders.

Because in the end, stories like Amina’s and Fatima’s are not just about loss. They are about what follows the moment when someone arrives, listens, and stays. And in places where crises converge, that presence becomes more than assistance. It becomes a bridge between uncertainty and recovery, a reminder that even in the most difficult moments, no community should have to face the journey alone.

– The writer is Assistant Director, Media & Communication, Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS), National Headquarters, Islamabad.

Briefs

US launches new strikes against Iran

FROM PAGE 01
Meanwhile, Iran's Revolutionary Guards said the Strait of Hormuz would be closed "until further notice," state media reported. The Guards had fired warning shots at a vessel using an unauthorised route, the reports said. The move threatens to further complicate efforts to salvage US-Iran negotiations after both sides exchanged strikes over the past few days. Earlier strikes by Tehran on vessels in the strait had triggered exchanges of fire between Iran and the United States, sparking heated rhetoric between the adversaries. A key roadblock to a final agreement is the future of the Strait of Hormuz, with Tehran insisting it will control shipping through the waterway and Washington demanding unrestricted navigation.

Forces gun down more than 70...

FROM PAGE 01
personnel fought the terrorists bravely and killed 15 militants during the initial engagement. The military spokesperson said nine police personnel embraced martyrdom in the initial fighting, adding that militants had taken police personnel hostage before security forces reached the area. Pakistan witnessed a surge in terror activities, particularly in its KP and Balochistan provinces, since 2021, when the Afghan Taliban came into power.

Five labourers shot dead...

FROM PAGE 01
the killing of the unarmed labourers, saying terrorists had once again exposed their "sinister intentions" by targeting innocent workers. "The objective of terrorists is not the pursuit of any cause but to spread terror, hatred and destabilise Pakistan," CM Bugti said, adding that action against those challenging the writ of the state would become "more decisive". Balochistan government spokesperson Shahid Rind also condemned the incident, saying the provincial government had taken notice of the attack and ordered an investigation. "Those involved in the killing of innocent citizens will not escape the grip of the law," Rind said, adding that the government stood with the bereaved families in their time of grief.

Oman says 23 rescued, after...

FROM PAGE 01
British maritime agency UKMTO said the crew had abandoned ship and were on a lifeboat, around 17 kilometres (10 miles) east of Oman. The attack came as Tehran announced it was closing the Strait of Hormuz and launched missiles and drones at its Gulf neighbours in retaliation for new US strikes. The Indian foreign ministry said the attacks on commercial shipping in the region were "deeply worrisome".

Iran attacks, Qatar, Bahrain, UAE

FROM PAGE 01
Meanwhile, missile alerts sounded for the third time on Sunday in Bahrain, home to the US Navy's 5th Fleet. Kuwait's military also said it was intercepting incoming fire. The United Arab Emirates said its defense systems engaged missiles and drones from Iran. In a statement, the ministry of defense said the missile threats detected this morning were outside the country's borders. A Omani security source reported that drones have targeted sites in the governorate of Musandam. The sultanate condemned the attacks and vowed to take all measures that safeguard the country's security and residents.

Argentina beat Swiss 3-1 after extra time to reach World Cup semi-finals

The thriller - Kansas City's final game of the tournament - looked headed for a shootout before Alvarez whipped a gorgeous long-range shot into the top corner in the 112th minute that Gregor Kobel at full-stretch had no chance of saving

DNA

KANSAS CITY: Argentina's Julian Alvarez and Lautaro Martinez scored deep in extra time to secure a dramatic 3-1 quarter-final win over 10-man Switzerland on Saturday and set up a heavyweight last-four clash against England in Atlanta on Wednesday. Lionel Messi's Argentina side kept alive their bid to become the first team to retain the World Cup since Brazil in 1962 with a victory that sparked pandemonium among the sea of sky-blue-and-white supporters and ended Switzerland's fairytale run. The Swiss had reached the World Cup quarter-finals for the first time since 1954, but fell one match short of an unprecedented semi-final appearance, suffering a major blow when Breel Embolo was sent off for diving in the 72nd minute. The thriller - Kansas City's final game of the tournament - looked headed for a shootout before Alvarez whipped a gorgeous long-range shot into the top corner in the 112th minute that Gregor Kobel at full-stretch had no chance of saving. Martinez added a third for the holders nine minutes later when he calmly slotted home the rebound of Thiago Almada's shot. Alexis Mac Allister had given Argentina the lead in the 10th minute, meeting Messi's corner at the front post with a flicked header that sailed beyond Kobel and into the far corner. It was the first time Switzerland had trailed in the tournament. The Swiss refused to wilt however. After a largely uneventful first half, the contest burst into life as Switzerland repeatedly tested Emiliano Martinez, forcing the Argentina goalkeeper into a string of sharp saves and jolting the South American supporters into full voice. An equaliser felt inevitable as the Swiss piled on the pressure, and they were rewarded in the 67th minute



when Dan Ndoye exchanged passes with Ricardo Rodriguez down the left before sliding a right-footed finish through Martinez's legs. Ndoye snarled into the nearest television camera as Switzerland's fans erupted. But the Swiss were reduced to 10 men when Embolo got a second yellow card for simulation. It came after a lengthy VAR review for mistaken identity, with the referee

overturning his initial decision to caution Argentina's Leandro Paredes. Embolo collapsed in tears and was consoled by teammates as he left the pitch. Argentina responded by pinning Switzerland back for long periods. Cheered on by fans who made Arrowhead Stadium feel more like Buenos Aires than Kansas City, the holders surged forward as chants of

"Vamos, vamos!" echoed around the venue. Messi, playing in his sixth World Cup at the age of 39, nearly settled the contest in stoppage time with a fierce strike that flashed inches wide of the post. Switzerland weathered wave after wave of pressure and appeared destined to force a shootout but their resistance was finally broken in the closing moments of extra time. - APP

Bellingham scores twice to lift England past Haaland

MIAMI GARDENS: Florida: Jude Bellingham scored in the third minute of extra time to lift England past Norway 2-1 and into the World Cup semifinals for the first time since 2018. Bellingham's goal was his second of the game - he also had an equalizer late in the first half. The Real Madrid star is now tied with England teammate Harry Kane with six goals in this tournament, behind the eight of France's Kylian Mbappé and Argentina's Lionel Messi. He scored twice in the round of 16 as England beat co-host Mexico. England, winner of the 1966 World Cup and facing pressure to return to the title match, is now one win away from getting there. The Three Lions will face either Argentina or Switzerland, who were set to play Saturday night in Kansas City, Missouri. Andreas Schjelderup scored in the 36th minute for Norway, a squad that reached its first quarter-finals and took the Internet by storm with its "Viking row" and the charisma of 6-foot-5 striker Erling Haaland. Haaland - the Manchester City star who had seven goals in this tournament - was held without a goal for the first time in the World Cup. He was subbed out on Saturday for Jorgen Strand Larsen in the second half of extra time. Norway nearly went ahead 2-1 in the 56th minute when Torbjørn Heggem put a rebound past goalkeeper Jordan Pickford after a corner kick. Following a video review, the goal was disallowed because of a foul by Haaland in the box. Haaland was also denied by Pickford on a point-blank header in the first half. Schjelderup, making just his second start of the tournament, fired a shot that caromed off the right post and into the net to stun an England team that had dominated possession to that point. Bellingham's equalizer from close range elicited a roar from that crowd that included Mick Jagger and England great David Beckham. Schjelderup, who set up both of Haaland's goals in Norway's round of 16 win over Brazil, celebrated by stretching his arms wide and looking at the crowd as his teammates lifted him onto their shoulders. Meanwhile, Kane sat near midfield, grabbing his leg and looking toward the officials. - APP

South African footballer Jayden Adams dead at 25

DNA

MEXICO CITY: South African midfielder Jayden Adams, who represented his country at the ongoing World Cup, died Saturday at the age of 25, Sports Minister Gayton McKenzie said. Soccer "It is with profound shock and a heavy heart that I have learnt of the passing of Jayden Adams," McKenzie said in a statement. "South African football has lost one of its brightest young talents." The minister did not disclose a cause of death. Police said they had opened an investigation after the body of a 25-year-old man was found at a house in Schotsekloof, a suburb in central Cape Town, on Saturday morning. "Circumstances surrounding this incident are under investigation," Western Cape police spokesperson FC van Wyk told AFP. Executive Branch Adams played in all three of South Africa's group-stage matches at the tournament but did not feature in the knockout defeat by Canada.

Self-care fuels Pakistan's growing women fitness movement

ISLAMABAD: As upbeat music echoes through a modest dedicated gym in Thanda Pani, a rural community on the outskirts of Islamabad, a line of young women take turns lifting weights and running on treadmills. It is an image that would have been almost unimaginable in the area just a few years ago. For decades, gyms in Pakistan were largely perceived as male domains. Today, that perception is steadily changing. From major cities to semi-urban communities, women are increasingly carving out time, not for work, family, or studies, but for themselves. This shift is backed by data; according to Smartscraper, Islamabad boasted 225 gyms by April 2026, a 7.08 per cent increase since 2023, highlighting a skyrocketing demand for fitness facilities. Gym owners are at the front lines of this transformation, adapting to a surge in female registrations. Farzana Amin, the owner of Ladies Fitness Club, Shaheen Town, recalled the rapid evolution of her own business when speaking to APP. "In the beginning, only 10 to 15 women used to come to the gym regularly. Within a few months, our membership increased to around 60 to 65 women," Farzana shared. She noted that she purposefully opened a ladies-only gym after observing that many women wanted to improve their health but felt hesitant in co-gender facilities. "My aim was to provide a safe, comfortable, and supportive environment where women could exercise with confidence." The demographic of women reclaiming their health spans all generations. Musarat Shaheen, a housewife, talking to

APP admitted she never envisioned herself working out at this stage of her life. "Most of my time was spent taking care of my family, and I often ignored my own health," Shaheen said. "With age, I realized that staying active is important for my energy. Fitness is not only for young people; everyone can make positive changes at any age." For younger, working professionals, the motivations are equally deep. Sana Khan, a regular gym-goer, found solace in the gym after battling fatigue from long office hours and an inactive lifestyle. "I started going to the gym to improve my health and energy levels, not just to change my appearance," Khan explained. "I believe consistency is more important than following extreme diets." While the culture is thriving, it brings modern psychological challenges, heavily fueled by digital spaces. University students and young girls note that while social media first introduced them to fitness routines, it presents a double-edged sword. Gym member Zarneena Ali observed that digital platforms increase awareness but simultaneously manifest toxic standards. "Social media creates pressure to achieve unrealistic body goals," Zarneena said. "People join gyms with the expectation of quick results, but fitness requires patience and dedication. It is a long-term commitment, not a temporary trend." Mehmoona Khalid, an Islamabad-based gym instructor, echoed these concerns to APP. She revealed that a large part of her job now involves managing expectations and dismantling the allure of shortcuts. - APP

Hormuz 'more important'...

FROM PAGE 01
twenty per cent of the world's oil supply remains its most potent instrument of economic warfare. The comment highlights Iran's posture that if its own economic stability and oil exports are threatened by Western sanctions and military actions, it has the intent and the geographical positioning to paralyze global energy markets completely.

Pak, Turkiye exchange views on...

FROM PAGE 01
rights, social security and institutional cooperation, exchange experiences and advance the joint projects. Pakistan and Turkiye also signed a Memorandum of Understanding to enhance cooperation in the field of family, social services and social security. Both the countries reiterated their commitment to promote joint ventures.

Ukraine president sacks his PM

FROM PAGE 01
"I am grateful to Yulia for her clear, steady, and effective work as Prime Minister, for her years of productive service on Ukraine's team, and I have offered her the opportunity to lead a new and important area of relations with a key partner," Zelenskyy said on X. "I expect that, together with MPs, we will make the corresponding changes in the Government of Ukraine."

In call with Iran's Araghchi...

FROM PAGE 01
US and Iranian forces exchanged heavy missile and drone strikes, with Tehran targeting US facilities in states across the Gulf on Sunday after saying it had again closed the vital Strait of Hormuz. President Donald Trump had earlier this week declared the end of a ceasefire meant to halt the fighting that the US and Israel began on February 28, though Trump has left the door open to continued negotiations.

Mediator Pakistan expresses...

FROM PAGE 01
"Pakistan reiterates its strong support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all brotherly countries in the region, and urges all sides to exercise restraint, take immediate steps towards de-escalation, and uphold respective commitments under the Islamabad MoU," the foreign ministry said. The Foreign Office said that Pakistan remained committed to supporting efforts aimed at achieving lasting peace and stability through dialogue and diplomacy.

A Question of Identity



TANVEER HUSSAIN

THE issue of reserved seats for refugees from Jammu and Kashmir in the Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) Legislative Assembly has been under debate for quite some time. Unfortunately, the discussion has now extended beyond parliamentary halls to social media, public gatherings, and, in some instances, street protests. Although the mainstream media has remained relatively silent on this sensitive issue, social media platforms have witnessed intense debates, harsh rhetoric, and reports of violent incidents. In such a situation, it is essential that constitutional principles, the rule of law, and the nation-

al interest take precedence over emotions, political expediency, and populist slogans. There are fundamentally two opposing viewpoints regarding the refugee seats. One opinion argues that since these refugees are no longer residents of the geographical territory of Azad Kashmir, their representation in the Legislative Assembly should be reconsidered. The other maintains that these individuals are the original inhabitants of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), who were forced to migrate to Pakistan because of Indian state oppression, wars, and continuous persecution. Therefore, they cannot be deprived of their historical, constitutional, and political identity. Both sides present their own arguments, and both viewpoints deserve careful consideration. However, one fact stands above all others: the Constitution of Azad Jammu & Kashmir already provides a clear mechanism for resolving this issue. Under the Constitution, the Legislative Assembly may increase, reduce, or abolish refugee seats through a two-thirds majority. When the law itself provides a constitutional solution, disagreements should be resolved through democratic and legal means rather than through street agitation,

social media campaigns, or the use of force. Respect for the rule of law is the foundation of every democratic society and remains the surest path to political stability and national cohesion. It should also be remembered that the refugee seats are not merely a matter of political representation; they symbolize a historical responsibility and a national commitment. Following the events of 1947, hundreds of thousands of Kashmiris were displaced from their ancestral homes because of war, Indian military actions, and state repression. They sought refuge in Pakistan, yet they have continued to retain their identity as citizens of Jammu and Kashmir. They did not merely lose their homes; they also lost their lands, businesses, livelihoods, and, in countless cases, their loved ones. Ignoring these sacrifices would not only disregard historical realities but would also weaken the very foundation of the Kashmir freedom movement. Azad Jammu & Kashmir has long been regarded as the Base Camp of the Kashmir Freedom Movement. It was for this very reason that refugee representation in the Legislative Assembly was incorporated into the constitutional framework. The purpose was not only to safeguard the

political rights of the refugees but also to convey to the international community that the voice of the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir remains alive and that Pakistan continues to support their internationally recognized right to self-determination. It is also true that, over time, demographic realities, electoral constituencies, and representative structures evolve. If the people of Azad Kashmir or their political parties believe that reforms to the existing system are necessary, such reforms should certainly be discussed. However, that discussion must take place through constitutional dialogue, mutual respect, and democratic institutions—not through accusations, inflammatory rhetoric, or violence. National issues demand wisdom, patience, and restraint. Today, people of Kashmir origin continue to serve in important political institutions around the world. Several Kashmiris have been elected to the European Parliament, the British Parliament, and other democratic institutions, representing their communities with distinction. If, under public pressure, the Azad Kashmir Legislative Assembly were ever to decide to abolish the refugee seats, nearly four million refugees of Jammu

and Kashmir could effectively lose their political identity and their constitutional right to representation. Such a development would have significant constitutional, political, and humanitarian implications. One constructive alternative would be to reserve a number of seats for Jammu and Kashmir refugees in the National Assembly of Pakistan if the refugee seats in the AJK Legislative Assembly were ever reduced or abolished. Such an arrangement would preserve their political identity while providing an effective platform to address their issues—including education, employment, healthcare, rehabilitation, identity documentation, and other civic concerns—directly within Pakistan's national legislature. Available statistics also support the practicality of this proposal. According to the 2021 elections, the total number of registered voters in Azad Jammu & Kashmir was approximately 3.38 million, while registered refugee voters numbered around 400,000. By comparison, some constituencies of Pakistan's National Assembly have significantly larger electorates. For example, NA-67 Hafizabad has approximately 870,000 registered voters. Based on this proportional representation, allocat-

ing two or three reserved seats in Pakistan's National Assembly for refugees from Jammu and Kashmir could be a practical constitutional option, provided the necessary legal and constitutional requirements are fulfilled. Ultimately, this issue is not about the victory or defeat of any particular group. It concerns national unity, the preservation of Kashmiri identity, and the future of the Kashmiri freedom movement. Differences of opinion are a natural feature of every democratic society, but preventing those differences from turning into confrontation is a shared responsibility of political parties, state institutions, intellectuals, civil society, and the public at large. The need of the hour is for all stakeholders to come together, consult constitutional experts, political leaders, and representatives of the refugee community, and reach a consensus-based solution that fully complies with the Constitution while protecting the historical identity and political rights of the refugees from Jammu and Kashmir. Such an approach would strengthen democratic institutions, reinforce national unity, and further consolidate Pakistan's principled support for the people of Jammu and Kashmir in their struggle for the right to self-determination.

Briefs

Oman posts \$5.4b trade surplus by end of April

RIYADH: Oman's trade balance recorded a surplus of 2.09 billion Omani rials (\$5.4 billion) by the end of April, little changed from 2.11 billion rials in the same period of 2025, as merchandise exports continued to exceed imports during the first four months of the year. Preliminary data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information showed that Oman's total merchandise exports reached 7.6 billion rials by the end of April, while merchandise imports stood at 5.5 billion rials, resulting in a trade surplus of more than 2 billion rials. Oil and gas exports fell 7.5 percent to 4.7 billion rials by the end of April, compared with 5.1 billion rials in the same period a year earlier. Non-oil exports reached 2.1 billion rials, compared with 2.2 billion rials in the corresponding period of 2025. The data comes as Oman's regional neighbors continue to report strong trade activity, with re-exports and non-oil trade playing a larger role across the Gulf. Saudi Arabia's trade surplus more than doubled in April, driven by higher oil exports, while non-oil exports, including re-exports, also increased. The UAE reported that re-exports reached 830.2 billion dirhams by the end of 2025, underscoring its position as a regional trade hub. —APP

flydubai resumes flights to Aleppo after 14-year hiatus

RIYADH: UAE low-cost carrier flydubai is set to resume flights to Aleppo after more than 14 years, launching daily direct services to the Syrian city as part of the expansion of its Syrian network. Flights are scheduled to commence on July 20, making Aleppo flydubai's second destination in Syria alongside the capital, Damascus, according to state news agency WAM. This move reflects flydubai's commitment to enhancing air connectivity with underserved markets. The airline was the first UAE carrier to resume scheduled flights to Damascus in 2025. With increasing demand on this route, flydubai has since increased services to the Syrian capital to three daily flights. The expansion comes as Dubai strengthens its position as a global aviation hub, with Dubai International Airport serving a record 95.2 million passengers and 291 destinations in 2025 while forecasting nearly 99.5 million travelers this year. "The launch of our daily flights to Aleppo marks a significant milestone in our network expansion strategy. Our core mission has always been to support Dubai's position as a global aviation hub by providing direct flights to underserved markets," flydubai CEO Ghaith Al-Ghaith said. He added: "By operating daily flights to Aleppo, we are not only meeting the growing demand for direct travel but also contributing to strengthening economic. —APP



ISLAMABAD: On the occasion of the 2nd Pakistan International Food & Restaurant Awards 2026, Mr. Rashid Rauf Banday, received the award from Syed Qamar Raza Shah, Chairman OPF; Mubarak Zeb, Federal Minister for Tribal Affairs; Farah Naz, Parliamentary Secretary for National Heritage & Culture; Aftab Ur Rehman Rana, MD PTDC; and Muhammad Rauf Raja, Focal Person PMYP on Tourism held in Islamabad.

KSA, Canada new chapter in investment partnership

Priority sectors identified by both sides include mining and critical minerals, financial services, advanced manufacturing, artificial intelligence, data centers, and workforce skills — areas where Canadian expertise aligns closely with Saudi Arabia's national priorities

DNA

JEDDAH: Saudi Arabia and Canada are deepening their economic ties through the Saudi-Canadian Investment Forum, a high-level gathering held in Jeddah alongside a visit by the Canadian prime minister to the Kingdom. The forum brings together senior officials, investors, financial institutions, and private sector leaders from both countries to strengthen investment cooperation and identify priority sectors for collaboration. The forum is a practical milestone in a renewed bilateral partnership, designed to bring decision-makers together to spot opportunities, forge partnerships, and follow through on priority sectors. The gathering reflects a broader shift in the relationship, one built on complementary strengths, mutual respect, and a shared ambition for long-term growth. Priority sectors identified by both sides include mining and critical minerals, financial services, advanced manufacturing, artificial

intelligence, data centers, and workforce skills — areas where Canadian expertise aligns closely with Saudi Arabia's national priorities. Mining stands out as a particularly strong area of cooperation. Canada is a global leader in mining and mining finance, while Saudi Arabia is positioning the sector as a pillar of economic diversification. The Kingdom's mineral wealth is estimated at around \$2.5 trillion across more than 2.1 million sq. km, with opportunities identified in more than 50 minerals and accelerated exploration underway across the Arabian Shield. Canadian firms and capital are already active in the Kingdom. Barrick operates locally, and Ivanhoe Electric has partnered with Ma'aden to explore roughly 48,500 sq. km. Manara Minerals — a joint venture between the Public Investment Fund and Ma'aden — holds a 10 percent stake in Vale Base Metals, reinforcing shared Saudi-Canadian interests in copper and nickel. Canadian investment institutions, asset managers, insurers, and fintech firms can participate in the growth

of Saudi Arabia's capital, debt, sukuk, insurance, and venture capital markets. The Saudi stock market's capitalization reached approximately SR9.44 trillion riyals (\$2.53 trillion) as of June 2026, according to figures cited at the forum. Expanded foreign investor access has opened clearer pathways for international institutions to participate in the market's growth. Vision 2030 and the National Industrial Strategy provide a long-term platform for industrial investment, giving Canadian manufacturers access to infrastructure, industrial cities, and special economic zones to expand production and exports. Saudi Arabia aims to reach 35,000 factories by 2035, with industrial investment approaching 2 trillion riyals, and to raise the manufacturing sector's contribution to GDP to roughly 895 billion riyals by 2030. Manufacturing led Canadian investment inflows into the Kingdom in 2024, according to Ministry of Investment data, with companies such as Ingenia Polymers already established as leading Canadian investors. The King-

dom plans to reach 6.6 gigawatts of AI data center capacity by 2034. AirTrunk, partly owned by Canada's CPP Investments, is developing a \$3 billion AI data center complex with Humain, while an existing partnership with Cohere on Arabic-language AI reflects practical alignment between the two countries. The investment relationship also extends to workforce development. Saudi Arabia's industrial and technological transformation requires continuous upskilling, an area where Canadian institutions hold strong international capabilities in technical and vocational education. Skills partnerships help sustain investment by linking capital deployment with local capacity-building, with Canadian training providers positioned to support growth across mining, AI, and services sectors. The Ministry of Investment and the Invest Saudi platform will continue connecting interested investors to sectoral opportunities, government entities, private-sector partners, incentives, and practical guidance throughout the investment journey.

Syrian transitional parliament holds first session

DAMASCUS: Syria's transitional parliament began its first session on Sunday, state television reported, tasked with drafting the country's new constitution and laying the groundwork for democracy after decades of authoritarian rule. Syria's new authorities dissolved the country's rubber-stamp legislature after toppling longtime ruler Bashar Assad in December 2024, and adopted a temporary constitutional declaration to cover a five-year transition period. In October last year, and in a process criticized as undemocratic, local committees appointed by the electoral commission — which in turn was appointed by President Ahmed Al-Sharaa — began selecting two-thirds of the 210 members of the new parliament. Sharaa appoint the remaining third, 70 members this week. The session began on Sunday with 206 members, excluding the Druze-majority Sweida province in the south and a deceased member. Sweida still has not designated its members following sectarian bloodshed there last year, though Sharaa appointed two representatives from there. The selection process was held in formerly Kurdish-run areas of the north and northeast earlier this year, after the Damascus authorities assumed control there and signed a deal on integrating Kurdish institutions into the state. —APP

Empowering youth thru skills, jobs key to uplift: ICCI

ISLAMABAD: Acting President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Tahir Ayub, has called for a comprehensive national strategy to transform Pakistan's rapidly growing population into a productive economic force through sustained investments in education, healthcare, skills development, entrepreneurship, and employment generation. He said that with prudent planning and human capital development, Pakistan's youthful population could become the country's greatest competitive advantage, driving industrial growth, innovation, exports, and long-term economic prosperity. He expressed these views while talking to different delegations of business leaders on the occasion of World Population Day on Saturday, observing that the day served as an important reminder of the need to strike a balance between population growth and sustainable economic development. He emphasized that the true strength of a nation lied not merely in the size of its population, but in its ability to educate, empower, and productively engage its people in nation-building. Tahir Ayub said that Pakistan was blessed with one of the largest youth populations in the region, presenting a historic demographic opportunity that could accelerate economic transformation if supported by forward-looking policies. However, he cautioned that without timely investments in quality education, vocational and technical training, healthcare, digital literacy, and decent employment opportunities, the demographic advantage could turn into a significant socio-economic challenge. The ICCI Acting President observed that the private sector has a pivotal role to play in creating employment opportunities, promoting entrepreneurship, investing in workforce development, and supporting innovation. He urged the government to strengthen collaboration with the business community, academia, and development partners to equip young people with market-driven skills and prepare them for the evolving demands of the global economy. He further emphasized that policy consistency, economic stability, and a business-friendly environment are indispensable for attracting investment and generating employment on the scale required to absorb Pakistan's expanding workforce. He called for greater investment in industrialization, technology, SMEs, and export-oriented sectors to create sustainable livelihoods and improve living standards. Speaking on the occasion, ICCI Vice President Mohammad Irfan Chaudhry stressed that empowering youth through technical education, vocational training, digital skills, and entrepreneurship is essential for enhancing productivity and reducing unemployment. He added that a vibrant SME sector, supported by enabling government policies and easier access to finance, can play a transformative role in creating jobs and ensuring inclusive economic growth. —DNA

Israeli attacks in Gaza kill five people

CAIRO: Israeli attacks killed at least five people in the Gaza Strip on Sunday, including a 9-year-old girl, Palestinian health officials said. Medics said Israeli gunfire directed at a tent encampment on the eastern side of the Al-Bureij refugee camp in central Gaza killed 9-year-old Tala Abu Matar. The Israeli military did not immediately comment on the girl's death. An airstrike at a metal foundry in Gaza City's Sabra neighborhood killed four people. Witnesses said the site was hit with three Israeli missiles. Israel's military told Reuters it had struck "terrorist" infrastructure, without giving further details. The ceasefire agreed in October 2025 between Israel and Hamas halted major fighting in the enclave, but it has failed to stop Israeli attacks that have killed more than 1,000 Palestinians since it took effect. Four Israeli soldiers have been killed by militants in Gaza over the same period. The latest violence comes as Hamas leaders visited Cairo for further talks over implementing the second phase of US President Donald Trump's Gaza peace plan. The discussions include Hamas disarmament and Israeli army withdrawals, according to sources close to the talks, adding that there had not yet been a breakthrough. Nearly all of Gaza's 2 million people, most of whom have been displaced several times, now live on a tiny strip of land along the coast, mainly in makeshift tents or damaged buildings, under Hamas control. —APP

Thousands of Albanians march against Trump-linked resort

TIRANA, Albania: Thousands of Albanians marched in Tirana Saturday calling for the resignation of the country's prime minister and protesting a tourism project linked to the Trump family — the 42nd consecutive night of such demonstrations. The marchers were also protesting a concert Saturday by controversial US rapper Kanye West, whose antisemitic rhetoric has led to his performances being banned in some European capitals. Demonstrators waving Albanian flags chanted slogans against both Prime Minister Edi Rama and the rapper, who now styles himself as "Ye." Rama met the rapper at his office before the concert, later posting video of the packed event on social media and giving it a five star rating. It is difficult to assess how many people demonstrate each night in the capital, but according to AFP journalists on the ground, thousands of people protest every day. Protesters object to the estimated \$4.6-billion luxury hotel development linked to US president Donald Trump's family because it would go ahead in an environmentally protected area, Zverniec. They say the project threatens a nearby lagoon on the Adriatic coast critical to migrating birds. Developers also hope to transform the uninhabited island of Sazan — once a secret communist military base — into a tourist destination. —APP



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Briefs

Typhoon
Bavi batters
eastern
China

DNA

BEIJING: Typhoon Bavi, the most powerful storm to strike mainland China this year, brought heavy rainfall to the eastern coast on Sunday and lashed densely populated cities with violent winds, testing the country's ability to cope with extreme weather. Bavi had weakened by Sunday morning to a tropical storm as it pushed inland, but forecasters warned that the France-sized storm system could unleash prolonged and widespread rainfall across eastern and northern China in the coming days. Nearly two million people were evacuated ahead of Bavi's arrival, mostly in Zhejiang province, an economic and technological powerhouse in the world's second-largest economy. Bavi struck Zhejiang's coastal city of Yuhuan at around 11:20 pm (local time) on Saturday before making a second landfall in Yueqing, part of the city of Wenzhou, at around midnight. "When it made landfall last night, the winds were very strong," Yueqing resident Li Liangxing told Reuters. "We could hear roof tiles and tree branches falling. Of course we were scared, but we live by the sea, so we're used to it." Gesturing toward a flooded canal beside his residential compound, Li said he had never seen the water rise so high. "There used to be a alkway there, but now it's underwater," he said. More than 1,300 trees fell across Yueqing, with more than 700 of them uprooted entirely, state broadcaster CCTV reported. The deepest flooding reached roughly half the height of a vehicle tire.

GST hike
pushes up
hybrid
vehicle prices

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: With the government yet to announce the Auto Policy 2026-31 following the expiry of the 2021-26 policy on June 30 this year, local assemblers have started raising prices of electrified vehicles after the increase in general sales tax (GST) on hybrid vehicles to 25 per cent from 8.5pc in the budget for FY27. Indus Motor Company has increased the prices of its two Toyota Corolla Cross hybrid electric vehicle (HEV) models by Rs1.364 million and Rs1.314m to Rs10.299m and Rs9.849m, respectively. Similarly, Honda Atlas Cars Limited has raised the price of its HR-Ve model by Rs1.370m to Rs10.369m. Other assemblers, who have yet to increase prices.

Political shadows eclipse
Bangladesh new govt

"We were not even aware that Suman was involved in politics," his uncle Jewel Babu told AFP, saying he was a hardworking teenager who worked night shifts at a kitchen market while studying for school

DHAKA: Bangladesh's new government won power promising to end political violence, but six months after Prime Minister Tarique Rahman took office, the killings continue. Rahman, who leads the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), pledged during February's elections to end the state-backed violence that marked Sheikh Hasina's rule before her ouster in the 2024 revolution. Rights groups say political rivalries, weak law enforcement and a culture of impunity are driving continued violence after the elections brought Bangladesh's first elected government to power since the uprising. Prominent rights organization Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) recorded at least 66 politically related killings, along with 61 deaths in police custody, 11 extrajudicial killings and other alleged human rights abuses over the last six months. It insists the situation is improving and argues that the increase in reported killings reflects historic cases because surviving relatives only now feel secure enough to report them to police. "After the current government assumed office, we are in a historically improved position on most indicators," Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed told parliament in late June. In June, 17-year-old Mohammed Suman joined a rally held by Hasina's Awami League. The rally was banned — Hasina is a convicted fugitive hiding in neighboring India and facing a death sentence in absentia — and Suman vanished. Three days later, police recovered the teenager's rotting corpse from the Turag River in Dhaka, along with

the bodies of two others. "We were not even aware that Suman was involved in politics," his uncle Jewel Babu told AFP, saying he was a hardworking teenager who worked night shifts at a kitchen market while studying for school. Suman's family said they pieced together what happened from friends, who said police and a mob broke up a flash Awami League rally, forcing them to flee by boat across the river. "We have heard that, after being chased by local BNP leaders, they crossed the river only to encounter police," said Supreme Court lawyer Arif Sarkar Pavel, who is representing seven men arrested during the same incident and held under anti-terrorism laws. "Some people also beat them with bamboo sticks after they jumped into the river," he added. "Police are trying to bury the truth." Police have denied accusations of brutality and said that there was "no incident" of killing. AFP could not independently verify how Suman died. Police spokesman AHM Shahadat Hossain said authorities were investigating all reported incidents of violence. "In some cases, political party members were killed over personal feuds or land disputes," Hossain told AFP. "However, because the victims were involved in politics, the incidents are labelled as political violence." He added that authorities expected tensions to rise ahead of local polls later this year. "Past records show that we experience more violence during local government elections," Hossain said. — Agencies

Bosnia's Ambassador to Pakistan
honors victims of Srebrenica genocide

Ambassador Emin expressed deep gratitude to Pakistan for its support during Bosnia's darkest days. He recalled Pakistan's humanitarian aid shipments, advocacy at the United Nations, and the role of the Pakistani Battalion in assisting survivors

SAIFULLAH ANSAR / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Bosnia and Herzegovina's Ambassador to Pakistan, Emin Cohodarevic, delivered a solemn address to mark the International Day of Reflection and Commemoration of the 1995 Genocide in Srebrenica. Speaking before dignitaries, officials, and guests, the ambassador paid tribute to the more than 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys systematically murdered in July 1995, calling the atrocity "the greatest crime committed in Europe after the Holocaust." The commemoration coincides with the 31st anniversary of the genocide. Ambassador Emin noted that ten newly identified victims were buried at the Potočari Memorial Center near Srebrenica, their remains pieced together from fragments found in mass graves and forests. "The perpetrators tried to hide the crime by moving bodies from grave to grave. They did not succeed," he said. The ambassador reminded attendees that the genocide was the culmination of years of persecution, ethnic cleansing, and mass killings across Bosnia and Herzegovina beginning in 1992. He condemned the international community's failure to act decisively, describing the UN's designation of Srebrenica as a "safe zone" as "the biggest stain



on the conscience of the international community." "After the Holocaust, the world said: 'Never again.' Half a century later, genocides were committed in Rwanda and Srebrenica," Emin declared, warning that the phrase has lost much of its meaning in today's world. Ambassador Emin expressed deep gratitude to Pakistan for its support during Bosnia's darkest days. He recalled Pakistan's humanitarian aid shipments, advocacy at the United Nations, and the role of the Pakistani Battalion in assisting survivors. "We remember and appreciate the help you provided in the reconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina after the war, as well as the support you provide to our country today," he said. He also thanked Pakistan for its role in the adoption of the UN General Assembly resolution in May 2024, which established July 11 as the International Day of Remembrance and Commemoration of the Srebrenica Genocide. Emin described the resolution as "a moral, historical, and civilizational act of the United Nations." The ambassador emphasized that the genocide is firmly documented and adjudicated by international and domestic courts, rejecting denial efforts. He urged future generations to "speak the truth, research, write, learn, and remind — not for revenge, not for hate, but for justice."

Former emir of Qatar dies at 74

Sheikh Hamad, who stepped down in June 2013 after 18 years as emir, was the architect of Qatar's stunning ambitions that turned it into an international crossroads in less than a generation

DUBAI: Qatari former Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani has died at the age of 74, the nation's Amiri Diwan, its top government body, said on Sunday. "With hearts steadfast in faith in God's decree and destiny, the Bureau of the Emir mourns the great loss to the nation of the late — may God have mercy on him — His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani," read a statement published by the emir's office on social media. Sheikh Hamad, who stepped down in June 2013 after 18 years as emir, was the architect of Qatar's stunning ambitions that turned it into an international crossroads in less than a generation. Sheikh Hamad attended Britain's military academy, Sandhurst, and became commander of Qatar's armed forces and defense minister. He was named crown prince in the late 1970s and gradually broadened his duties to include planning for Qatar's vast oil and gas reserves. Sheikh Hamad was responsible for overseeing the rapid transformation of Qatar



into a modern state open to the world. He pushed Qatar Airways to expand into a major international carrier, trying to

rival neighboring carrier Emirates. The country's international airport in Doha, Qatar's capital, which cost at least \$15 billion to construct, also bears his name. Sheikh Hamad was the architect of Qatar's effort to develop its liquefied natural gas (LNG) infrastructure that allowed it to get its vast gas reserves to global markets, turning the state into one of the world's largest exporters and laying the foundations for its vast wealth. He established media network Al Jazeera, which gave Qatar an outsized voice in Arab politics. He also oversaw the successful bid to host the 2022 soccer World Cup, a move that firmly put Qatar on the global stage and accelerated a decade of infrastructure building that remade the capital Doha. Sheikh Hamad had wide-ranging visions for Qatar's role as a diplomatic broker. Over the years, its mediation was brought to bear on the conflict in Sudan's western Darfur region, Lebanese factional feuding and the rift between the Palestinians' Hamas and Fatah factions. — Agencies

Foreign nationals security
remains key priority

ISLAMABAD: DIG Special Protection Unit (SPU) Punjab Tayyab Hafeez Cheema Sunday said ensuring security of foreign nationals, high-risk individuals, and sensitive infrastructure projects remains the department's top priority, adding that SPU has provided security cover to over 153,000 guests by utilizing advanced technology, AI-based surveillance, trackers, real-time monitoring systems and dedicated control rooms. While appearing on a special PTV program, DIG Special Protection Unit (SPU) Punjab Tayyab Hafeez Cheema highlighted the department's mission and operational framework, stating that SPU was established to provide dedicated security to foreign nationals, high-risk individuals and sensitive infrastructure projects, including CPEC-related initiatives, through specialized training, professional expertise and modern security

solutions. He said SPU personnel receive specialized training to deal with complex security challenges, while digitalized systems, real-time monitoring, tracking technology and centralized control rooms are being utilized for continuous security oversight. Cheema added that round-the-clock monitoring and technology-based solutions have improved coordination, response time and operational efficiency in protecting foreign guests and important projects. DIG Cheema further emphasized the importance of enhancing IT literacy among law enforcement personnel by organizing training programs and providing necessary resources to improve their technical skills. He said modern policing requires continuous capacity building, digital awareness and effective use of technology to meet emerging security challenges. — APP

PM grieved over
loss of lives

"We pray for the swift recovery of the injured and the safety of all those affected," the prime minister further said in his post

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Sunday, expressed his deep grief and condolences over the tragic loss of life and widespread devastation caused by the severe floods and landslides in Bangladesh. "Deeply saddened by the tragic loss of life and widespread devastation caused by the severe floods and landslides in Bangladesh," the prime minister posted on X handle. On behalf of the people of Pakistan, he extended his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families and expressed the unwavering solidarity with the Government and people of Bangladesh. "We pray for the swift recovery of the injured and the safety of all those affected," the prime minister further said in his post. — APP

US senator and Trump ally
Lindsey Graham dies age 71

WASHINGTON: Prominent US Senator Lindsey Graham, a key ally of President Donald Trump, died on Saturday aged 71 following a "brief and sudden illness," his office said in a statement on his official X account. "On the evening of Saturday, July 11, US Senator Lindsey Graham passed away from a brief and sudden illness," the Republican senator from South Carolina's office said, adding that his "family appreciates prayers at this time and asks for privacy during this incredibly difficult period." US President Donald Trump offered his condolences for the death of Graham on Sunday. "Senator Lindsey Graham, one of the greatest people and Senators I have ever known, is dead! He was always working, and was a true American Patriot. Lindsey will be greatly missed!!!" Trump said in a post on Truth Social. Israel's top officials also offered their condolences over Graham's death. Israeli President Isaac Herzog, Defense Minister Israel Katz, Foreign Minister Gideon Saar and former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett were among a few who called Graham in separate X posts a true friend of Israel and one of its strongest supporters. — APP

Afghan morality
police attacks
women attire outlets

HERAT: Businesses in Afghanistan's western city of Herat have suffered from a downturn in female customers opting to stay home following a recent crackdown by morality police on women's attire, according to shopkeepers, drivers and residents. Dozens of women were detained by the Taliban government's morality police in early June on accusations they were violating official dress codes by not wearing the body-cloaking chador or burqa. A rare protest against the restrictions was violently dispersed with at least two people killed, according to the United Nations. "Since those incidents occurred... there were no women in the markets," 26-year-old Ramin Ghafoori, a Herat-based businessman who runs a tailoring shop, told AFP. Female shoppers dominate the customer base of the normally bustling markets in Herat, Afghanistan's western commercial hub and one of its largest cities. "Ninety percent of our sales are to women, women come to buy even for men," said Nazeer Ahmad Azimi, who runs a shoe store, noting men were often too busy to shop, occupied in the job opportunities that have shrunk for women. He estimated that the recent ramp-up of enforcement in restrictions on women had halved the turnover in the city's markets. — APP

JOINING HANDS FOR A CAUSE

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

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

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

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