



Islamabad POST

Friday, July 31, 2026

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

Arshad Nadeem reaches final of the C'wealth Javelin competition

Detailed News On Page-06

Naqvi says human smuggling to be checked sternly

Detailed News On Page-08

Bilawal hints at divorcing federal govt

Detailed News On Page-01

FO briefing

Pak says doing utmost to ease US-Iran tension

Renewed hostilities erupted on July 7, when Iran attacked commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, including a Qatari liquefied natural gas tanker, accusing the US of violating the understanding. The attack prompted multiple waves of US strikes on Iranian military targets

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office (FO) said on Thursday that Pakistan was doing its "utmost" to bring the United States and Iran back to the negotiating table under the Islamabad memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed last month. Addressing a weekly press briefing, FO spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said Pakistan noted with concern that the security situation in the Middle East "remains precarious" despite the relative calm of the past few days, which had rekindled hopes that this positive development, this calm, would consolidate into a durable and fully respected ceasefire and pave the way for dialogue. "We welcome all efforts aimed at sustaining cessation of hostilities and resumption of dialogue between Iran and the US," he said, adding that Pakistan remained engaged and will continue to do so. "Let me add that the negotiations between parties are ongoing to normalise the situation, particularly the situation in the Strait of Hormuz, as well as to de-escalate," he stated. He added that Pakistan was doing its "utmost" to bring the two parties back to the Islamabad MoU "so that all Iranians can be removed in the light of the spirit of the agreement and the Pakistan-foreign joint statement on June 22". Andrabi urged both the US and Iran to exercise "maximum restraint and fully adhere to their commitment to resume

Continued on Page 05

Kuwait says Iran strike hit Chinese firm

NEWS DESK

DUBAI: The Kuwaiti military said on Thursday that an Iranian strike north of the country hit a building belonging to a Chinese firm, killing a worker and causing significant damage to the structure. "Competent authorities immediately began taking the necessary measures and dealing with the situation upon the occurrence of the incident, in coordination with the relevant authorities," Maj. Gen. Saad Abdulaziz Al-Otaibi, spokesperson of the Defense Ministry, said in a statement. Kuwait, including other Gulf states and Jordan, have been hit by Iranian attacks targeting American assets over the past few weeks, in retaliation for US military operations. US military assets in Kuwait's Al-Dhikr camp and Al Al-Salem airbase were hit by the Iranians. Al-Otaibi said that Kuwait's armed forces were

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Bilawal hints at divorcing federal govt

DNA

MUZAFFARABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Wednesday warned that the federal government's "coercion" would lead it to elections in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Kashmir (JK) were rigged. Addressing a public rally in Muzaffargarh, the PPP chairman said the people's mandate must be decided through the ballot, not the bullet. He said that any theft of the public mandate must not be concealed. His remarks came days after the PML-N won nine seats while the PPP secured four of the 12 seats of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly elections in the Mirpur division. The PPP and PML-N — key allies in the Centre — exchanged heated words after the former accused the latter of rigging during the first phase of the AJK elections on July 27.

Pak repays \$1.4 billion Chinese loan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has repaid a \$1.4 billion Chinese commercial loan, but Chinese banks have not yet refinanced the amount. The News reported. The refinancing is expected to be provided to Islamabad after a few weeks. The report said, citing State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Governor Jamshed Ahmed, "We have undertaken foreign debt servicing of \$2.2 billion in July 2026, including \$1.4 billion of Chinese commercial loan and remaining \$800 million on account of other loans." Ahmed said while speaking to reporters outside Parliament House on Wednesday after attending a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Finance.

Friendship solidified

Saudi Arabia rolls over \$5 billion deposits with Pakistan for three years

SBP governor says rollover will help ease external-account pressure in current fiscal year

FAISAL SHEHRI

ISLAMABAD: Saudi Arabia has rolled over \$5 billion in deposits for three years, top officials confirmed on Wednesday. Finance Minister Muhammad Awarogoh confirmed the development, while, according to The News, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Governor Jamshed Ahmed also disclosed the same while speaking to reporters outside Parliament House. The rollover will help Pakistan reduce pressure on its external account as it manages foreign debt repayments in the current fiscal year. Ahmed said after attending the Senate Standing Committee on Finance. The SBP governor said, Pakistan's foreign debt servicing had declined from \$26.5 billion in fiscal year 2024-25 to \$21.5 billion in the current fiscal year 2025-26, owing to various factors, including declining interest rates. Of the \$21.5 billion in foreign

Continued on Page 06

US strikes Iran as widening war engulfs more countries

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: The US carried out fresh strikes in Iran on Wednesday, the US military said, further intensifying a five-month-old war that was already expanding beyond its main fronts to engulf additional countries in the region. "US forces began launching strikes against Iran at 8:00pm ET today (local time)," US Central Command said in a statement. "The strikes are a powerful response to yesterday's attempted Iranian attacks on US forces based in the Middle East." Earlier on Wednesday, a drone hit a US-owned gas storage

Continued on Page 06

MOROCCAN THRONE DAY



ISLAMABAD: Chief Guest Ali Pervais Malik, Federal Minister for Petroleum, Ambassador of Morocco Mohamed Karroume, and others cutting cakes to celebrate the Twenty-Seventh Anniversary of the Accession to the throne of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, at Islamabad Serena Hotel. — DNA

IRGC claims destruction of F-35 fighter jets

DNA

TEHRAN: Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) claims that in an attack on Jordan's Al-Azraq Airbase, it destroyed three US F-35 stealth fighter jets, the Iran news agency reports. "This morning, IRGC Aerospace Force fighters, in an attack on the deployment ramp and maintenance hangar of American F-35 fighter jets at Al-Azraq Airbase, using several ballistic missiles, completely destroyed three F-35 aircraft and inflicted heavy damage on three others," it says in a post on X.

Continued on Page 06

Russia govt condemned US curbs

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: The United States Senate passed a "punitive" procedural move advancing legislation named after the late US Senator Lindsey Graham. In pushing this package forward, lawmakers have done the current US administration a distinct disservice. Earlier this year, Senator Graham and his allies frequently traveled between Kyiv and Washington to demand maximum economic restrictions against Russia. Their proposals included imposing prohibitive tariffs—reaching up to 500%—on third-party nations purchasing Russian energy.

Continued on Page 06

Mohsin Naqvi says

Pakistan needs more provinces; administrative system fully collapsed

"The business people sitting right here are, in fact, behind this rotten system," Naqvi remarked. "If you genuinely want to change this system, you have to stop funding politicians"

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: In a blunt and scathing assessment of the country's governance and economic trajectory, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi declared that Pakistan's administrative system has completely collapsed, producing zero progress over the last 70 years. Speaking at the First Pakistan Investment Summit in Islamabad, Naqvi warned business leaders and policymakers that unless fundamental structural reforms are undertaken immediately, "even after 10 years, we will still be sitting here lamenting one another." Addressing a hall filled with the country's prominent corporate figures, Naqvi stated that the existing system is severely outdated and inherently incapable of delivering results. However, rather than laying blame solely on the political class, the minister turned the mirror on the commercial elite, holding them directly responsible for sustaining the status quo. "The business people sitting right here are, in fact, behind this rotten system," Naqvi remarked. "If you genuinely want to change this system, you have to stop funding politicians."

He explained that donations from wealthy business figures had political parties running elections, enabling those same factions to capture power and perpetuate a broken apparatus. To break this cycle, Naqvi urged the business community to

halt political campaign funding and demand systemic accountability instead. Turning to economic survival, Naqvi stressed that Pakistan cannot continue running indefinitely on foreign loans. He called for urgent domestic resource generation and appealed for broad political unity, emphasising that all political parties must set aside partisan divides and sit together to map out a structural path forward. Echoing these concerns, S.M. Tahir, patron-in-chief of the United Business Group (UBG), identified major institutional fault lines hindering economic growth. Joining a unanimous call from various summit speakers, Tahir highlighted the need for administrative restructuring, including the creation of new provinces and the emergence of fresh leadership. Speakers noted that Punjab's overwhelming administrative dominance as the largest province creates severe governance imbalances across the country.

Summit speakers also pointed a grim picture of Pakistan's social indicators, pointing out that over half the national population is currently living below the poverty line. With youth forming the majority of the population yet remaining largely unemployed, participants criticized temporary government handouts, asserting that Europe and micro-loans are not sustainable solutions for national development. Instead, the summit called for directly engaging

Continued on Page 06

Bullet-ridden bodies of six labourers found

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi strongly condemned the killing of the six labourers "by Fitna al-Hindustan terrorists" — a term the state uses to refer to groups it accuses of being sponsored by India to execute terrorist attacks on Pakistani soil

NEWS DESK

QUETTA: The bodies of six of seven labourers who were kidnapped earlier this week in the Turbat city of Balochistan's Kech district were found with bullet wounds on Thursday, an official told. On Tuesday, unidentified armed men had blocked Turbat-Mirpur Road in the Kech district area of Kech district and taken away the seven labourers, who were travelling in a vehicle. The kidnappers had killed one of the labourers the same day and dumped his body on a highway. He said the kidnappers had taken the labourers to an undisclosed location, where one of them was killed shortly after the abduction and his body was dumped on the highway. They later also killed the six remaining labourers, whose bodies were found in Turbat's Nasirabad area, he added. Testimony said the bodies bore torture marks and bullet wounds, and it seemed that the labourers had been shot at close range.

Continued on Page 06

PM strongly terrorist attack on police check post

APP

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday strongly condemned the terrorist attack carried out by Fitna al-Hindustan terrorists on a police check post in Hangu district. The prime minister expressed deep sorrow over the martyrdom of nine police personnel, including Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Dyar Khan, in the attack. He prayed for the elevation of the ranks of the martyrs in Jannah and extended his heartfelt condolences to their bereaved families, praying that they be granted courage to bear the loss with patience.

Continued on Page 06

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Crackdown on illegal LPG refilling stations intensified

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: The district administration has intensified its crackdown against illegal LPG refilling stations in public transport vehicles, with several LPG refilling stations sealed. The joint operation led by Assistant Commissioner Dr. Muhammad Hamid Siddiq was carried out by monitoring teams of the Regional Transport Authority (RTA) in collaboration with the Industrial Development Officer (IDO) at various locations across the tehsil. According to the administration, during the inspection, authorities found multiple LPG refilling stations illegally refilling Public Service Vehicles (PSVs) using LPG cylinders. The stations were sealed on the spot, while legal proceedings were initiated against those responsible. Speaking on the occasion, Assistant Commissioner Dr. Muhammad Hamid Siddiq said that filling LPG in public service vehicles through cylinders or carrying out unauthorized refilling was illegal, highly dangerous, and poses a serious threat to human lives. He warned that the district administration would adopt a zero-tolerance policy against such violations. He further directed LPG station owners and transport operators to strictly comply with government regulations and safety standards, warning that violators would face sealing of stations, heavy fines, and legal action.—APP

KP okays road projects to promote sustainable tourism

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has approved 17 tourism road projects aimed at improving access to major tourist destinations and promoting sustainable tourism across the province. Special Assistant to the Chief Minister for Tourism, Malik Adil Iqbal, said the projects were approved by Chief Minister Muhammad Nihal Khan Afridi as part of the provincial government's efforts to strengthen tourism as a key driver of economic growth and local development. Under the plan, around Rs5 billion will be invested in the construction and rehabilitation of 91.5 kilometers of roads linking major tourist destinations in Upper Chitral, Swat, Upper Dir and Lower Dir. The improved road network is expected to facilitate easier access for domestic and international tourists, enhance connectivity to scenic valleys, and improve travel infrastructure across the region. He said that the projects would also promote local businesses, hotels, restaurants and transport services, create new employment and investment opportunities, and contribute to the socio-economic development of the province by expanding the tourism sector.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Police officials lift vehicle during the operation against car dealers who occupied the footpaths and commuters parking area in G-8 Markaz, in the Federal Capital.

Kundi assures support for transgender's issues

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi has assured a delegation of "Da Hawwa Lur" Organization that the concerns of transgender persons and other marginalized communities would be taken up with the relevant authorities. The assurance came during a meeting with a delegation of the organization led by its Project Director, Ms. Shauwan Shah, at the Governor House. The delegation briefed the Governor on the organization's initiatives for the promotion of women's rights, girls' education, transgender rights, and advocacy for equality, inclusion and social justice. It also presented

a Charter of Demands, prepared in consultation with the transgender community, highlighting key issues relating to education, healthcare, employment, access to government institutions and participation in the political process. The delegation pointed to the absence of dedicated healthcare facilities, barriers in accessing police and justice institutions, limited educational and employment opportunities, and the non-operational status of transgender protection centres in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It appreciated the governor's advocacy for inclusivity and accessibility and acknowledged

his continued support for marginalized communities. Speaking on the occasion, Governor Kundi said the Pakistan Peoples Party had always stood for the rights of marginalized and vulnerable segments of society and would continue to raise their concerns at every forum. He commended the organization's efforts to protect and promote the rights of disadvantaged communities and assured the delegation that their issues would be taken up with the relevant authorities. At the end of the meeting, the delegation presented its Charter of Demands to the Governor.—APP

PAF chief for enhance defence coop with Belarus

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A high-level defence delegation of the Republic of Belarus, led by

confirming their shared commitment to further strengthening the longstanding partnership between Pakistan and Belarus. Chief of the Air Staff warmly welcomed the distinguished

to expand bilateral cooperation in areas of mutual training through joint exercises, and promoting robust technical & operational collaboration between the Air Force of the two friendly nations. Ma-



Major General Murawko Pavel Nikolayevich, Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces & First Deputy Defence Minister called on Air Chief Marshal Zahoor Ahmad Baber Siddiq, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force, at Air Headquarters, Islamabad. During the meeting both sides held comprehensive discussions on bilateral defence & industrial cooperation, military-to-military engagements, training and aerospace collaboration in emerging technologies.

delegation and reaffirmed Pakistan Air Force's commitment to further deepening bilateral defence ties between the two countries. Highlighting PAF's modernization drive, indigenous initiatives and operational excellence, the Air Chief underscored the importance of fostering enduring partnerships through enhanced military collaboration, joint training initiatives, technological cooperation and defence industrial synergy. He also reiterated PAF's resolve

for General Murawko Pavel Nikolayevich commenced the remarkable progress achieved by Pakistan Air Force under the visionary leadership of Air Chief Marshal Zahoor Ahmad Baber Siddiq. He was highly impressed by PAF's operational preparedness, technological advancements and self-reliance initiatives, describing it as a model for modern Air Forces to emulate. The visiting dignitary conveyed his strong desire to broadening bilateral defence cooperation.—APP

Misbah meets Azerbaijan envoy

ISLAMABAD: Advisor to the Chairman, Senate of Pakistan, Misbah Khan, on Thursday, called on Khazar Farhadov, Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan, at the Embassy of Azerbaijan in Islamabad. During the cordial meeting, both sides held detailed discussions on the long-standing brotherly relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan and explored avenues for further enhancing bilateral cooperation in parliamentary engagement, trade, culture, tourism, and people-to-people exchanges, said a news release issued by the Senate Secretariat. The Advisor conveyed the warm greetings and best wishes of Chairman Senate of Pakistan Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to further strengthening its historic and strategic relations with Azerbaijan. She appreciated the unwavering support extended by Azerbaijan to Pakistan on regional and international issues of mutual concern, emphasizing that the friendship between the two nations is founded on mutual trust, shared values, and common aspirations for peace and prosperity. Ambassador Khazar Farhadov highlighted the excellent trajectory of Pakistan-Azerbaijan relations and reiterated his country's desire to further expand cooperation in diverse sectors. He noted that the leadership of both countries attaches great importance to enhancing bilateral engagement and fostering closer ties between their respective peoples. On the occasion, Tarannum Farhadova, spouse of the Ambassador, presented her book reflecting the family's experiences in Pakistan, capturing the country's rich cultural heritage, warm hospitality, traditions, and the enduring values of its people. The publication offers heartfelt observations on Pakistan's social fabric and highlights the deep affection developed during their stay in the country. Receiving the book, Misbah Khan highly appreciated the thoughtful gesture, describing it as a meaningful token of love, affection, and respect for the people of Pakistan. She remarked that such literary contributions play an important role in strengthening cultural understanding and promoting goodwill between nations. She further stated that the positive reflections contained in the book would help project Pakistan's true image to the international community while reinforcing the bonds of friendship between the peoples of Pakistan and Azerbaijan. The meeting concluded with a reaffirmation of the shared commitment to further deepen bilateral relations and promote greater collaboration through parliamentary diplomacy, cultural exchanges, and sustained people-to-people contacts.—APP

Plan finalized for Youm-e-Istehsal-e-Kashmir

RAWALPINDI: The district administration held a joint review meeting on Thursday to finalize plans for Youm-e-Istehsal-e-Kashmir (Aug 5) and Independence Day (August 14) celebrations. Co-chaired by Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Muteeha Sahar and Additional Deputy Commissioner (Headquarters) Abdul Rehman Khan, the meeting was attended by the CEO Education, Director Colleges, Principal VigyanVidya College, and representatives from the Punjab Horticulture Authority and "Suthra Punjab". —APP

NHMP foils arms smuggling bid on M-5, held two suspects

ISLAMABAD: The National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) on Thursday foiled an attempt to smuggle a large cache of weapons on the M-5 Motorway near Rohri and arrested two suspects. According to the NHMP spokesperson, Motorway Police officials signalled a speeding suspicious car to stop, but the occupants ignored clear instructions at three different locations and attempted to flee.

The spokesperson said NHMP personnel pursued the vehicle with professional skill and intercepted it near Rohri. NHMP foils arms smuggling bid on M-5 Motorway, arrests two suspects. During the search, officials recovered 14 sub-machine guns (SMGs), one shotgun, 23 pistols, over 18,000 rounds of ammunition of various calibres, 89 additional magazines, four telescopic sights and five mo-

bile phones from the vehicle. The suspects, identified as Ubaid Ullah, a resident of Peshawar, and Abdullah, a resident of Rohri, were allegedly transporting the consignment of weapons from Peshawar to interior Sindh. The arrested suspects, along with the recovered weapons, ammunition and vehicle, were handed over to the relevant district police for further legal proceedings, the spokesperson added.—DNA



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TENDER NOTICE

PROCUREMENT OF OFFICE FURNITURE FOR PIAHCL CORPORATE OFFICE AT THE 7TH FLOOR, ANNEX BUILDING, ZTBL HEAD OFFICE, ISLAMABAD

- EPADS Reference No: P74611.
- PIA Holding Company Limited (PIAHCL) has allocated funds during the Financial Year 2026/27 for the procurement of office furniture for its Corporate Office at the 7th Floor, Annex Building, ZTBL Head Office, Islamabad.
- PIAHCL invites sealed electronic bids from eligible, experienced and financially sound manufacturers, suppliers and authorized dealers for the manufacturing, supply, delivery, assembly, installation and placement of office furniture, complete in all respects, in accordance with the specifications and requirements provided in the bidding documents.
- The procurement shall be conducted through the Single Stage One Envelope Procedure, adopting the Least Cost Based Selection (LCBS) method, in accordance with the Public Procurement Rules, 2004, applicable regulations, guidelines and instructions issued by the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority from time to time.
- The bidding documents containing detailed specifications, eligibility requirements, terms and conditions, evaluation criteria, Bill of Materials and contractual requirements are available through the e-Pak Acquisition and Disposal System (EPADS) v2.0 at: <https://eprocure.gov.pk>
- Interested bidders must be registered on EPADS v2.0 to access the bidding documents and participate in the procurement process.
- Bids must be accompanied by the prescribed Bid Security or Bid Securing Declaration, as applicable and specified in the bidding documents.
- Bid must be accompanied by a Bid Security of PKR 145,854/- and a Tender Fee of PKR 15,000/-, both in the form of Pay Orders in favor of PIA Holding Company Limited.
- The bids must be submitted through EPADS v2.0 on or before Friday, 14 August 2026 at 3:00 PM. The bids shall be opened electronically through EPADS v2.0 on the same day at 3:30 PM.
- Electronic bids must be prepared and submitted through EPADS 2.0 before the prescribed deadline. Bids shall be opened electronically through EPADS on the same day. Manual or hard-copy submission of bids shall not be entertained.
- The Procuring Agency reserves the right to reject all bids or proposals at any time before issuance of the Letter of Award, in accordance with Rule 33 of the Public Procurement Rules, 2004.
- In accordance with Rule 48 of the Public Procurement Rules, 2004, a Grievance Redressal Committee has been notified for this procurement. Relevant information shall be available on the websites of PIAHCL and PPRA.

Manager Real Estate, PIA Holding Company Limited (PIAHCL)
4th Floor, PIA Building, 49-AKM Fazal-e-Haq Road, Blue Area, Islamabad
Telephone: +92-303-503-1198, Email: mgr@realestatepiahdcl.com.pk

National Days and Armed Forces Days

JULY

- July 01/Japan Self Defence Day
- July 01/Singapore Armed Forces Day
- July 01 / Canada National Day
- July 01/Somalia Independence Day
- July 04/USA Independence Day
- July 05/Algeria Independence Day
- July 09/Argentina Independence Day
- July 09/Mongolia Revolution Day
- July 14/France National Day
- July 15/Brunei Sultan's Birthday
- July 21/Belgium National Day
- July 20/TRNC Independence Day
- July 23/Egypt National Day
- July 26/Cuba National Day
- July 26/Liberia National Day
- July 30/Morocco National Day

- Rescue (Police).....15
- Bomb Disposal.....15
- Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....112 & 16
- Emergency Ambulance.....112 & 16
- Rescue Services.....4451122
- Motorway Police.....9266044
- Motorway Police.....927060120
- Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596
- Rawalpindi.....927660120

Enquiry

- Edhi Ambulance.....115
- PIA Flight Info.....114
- PIA Cargo.....9280979
- Railway Enquiry.....117
- Railway Exchange.....9270831-5
- WASA Rawalpindi.....5554549
- CAA.....9281092

Hospitals

- CMH.....561111
- ML.....50111
- Cent Hospital.....9270907-11
- DHO.....5560314
- BGI.....929905017
- Holy Family.....9290327
- PIMS.....92817079
- Polyclinic.....9218300-99
- Shifa International 4930395

Departments

- CDA.....9221354-43
- CDA.....9260803-61
- Met Office.....9250906-6
- RDA.....5555894
- TMA.....5778886
- Commission Board 9270513

Islamabad Metropolitan

- Corporation.....9299224
- Potable Water.....9299224
- Rural Town.....5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....03215244480



ISLAMABAD: Sardar Waqar Shahzad presenting symbolic "Open Door" souvenirs to H.E. Mr. Rudolph Pierre Jordaan, High Commissioner of South Africa, and to Mr. Syed Qasim Raza, Chairman OPF.—DNA

Pol pricing body moves to phased deregulation of oil sector

The Minister emphasized that deregulation of the petroleum sector should be undertaken through a clear and measurable roadmap, with specific benchmarks and milestones identified to assess progress towards the intended objectives

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Fifth meeting of the Committee constituted by the Prime Minister to review the petroleum pricing mechanism was held under the chairmanship of Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervez Malik. The subcommittee constituted by the main committee presented their findings and recommendations on various aspects of the petroleum pricing mechanism. RPMC also presented its report comparing petroleum pricing and taxation structures in the region. Members of the Committee appreciated the daily pricing formula and the steps taken to enhance transparency

as well as reduce volatility in the new petroleum pricing mechanism. The Minister emphasized that deregulation of the petroleum sector should be undertaken through a clear and measurable roadmap, with specific benchmarks and milestones identified to assess progress towards the intended objectives. The Committee was briefed that the dashboard on the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) website is now operational and provides information on daily petroleum product prices, the applicable pricing formula and relevant Platts data, enhancing transparency and public access to pricing information. The meeting also reviewed the potential impact of strategic petroleum

reserves and a proposed price stabilization fund on the pricing mechanism, including their role in mitigating market volatility and ensuring stability of petroleum supplies and prices.

The Minister said that Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) should be made responsible for ensuring end-to-end digitization of the petroleum supply chain to improve transparency, traceability, efficiency and accountability across the system. The meeting further deliberated on the monitoring on the establishment of new OMCs and its implications for competition, investment and market structure. It was resolved that IFPM pool also needs a wholesome review. The issue of windfall

tax was also discussed. It was decided that the Finance Division, in consultation with the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and Petroleum Division, would present a report to the Committee on the matter in next meeting. It was decided that the Committee will continue to deliberate on the recommendations of the subcommittees and formulate a comprehensive roadmap for reforms in the petroleum sector with a view to promote transparency, competition, efficiency and consumer protection. The meeting was attended by National Coordinator NCMC, Lt General Zafar Iqbal, Minister of state for Finance Haid Adnan Khasni and other members of the committee.

CAREC consultation to boost regional digital connectivity

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan hosted the two-day CAREC Digital Corridor Consultation on July 29 and 30, bringing together senior officials, telecoms, communications operators, regulators, development partners and technical experts from nine CAREC member countries to discuss regional digital connectivity and digital infrastructure. The consultation was organized by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in collaboration with the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication (MITT) and the Economic Affairs Division (EAD). Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaukat Inayat Khan, who attended the meeting and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to promoting regional digital connectivity and digital transformation. He stressed the need to strengthen digital infrastructure and regional cooperation

to create new opportunities for economic growth, innovation and private sector investment across the CAREC region. The consultation opened with remarks by Asad Azeem, Regional Head of the Central and West Asia Department at the Asian Development Bank, who described the CAREC Digital Corridor as a strategic initiative to improve regional integration through strong digital infrastructure, policy coordination and cross-border connectivity. During the meeting, Dohaite presented the preliminary findings of the CAREC Digital Corridor Feasibility Study, focusing on four key areas: connectivity infrastructure, digital computing and data centres, internet exchange points, and the regulatory environment. Delegates reviewed the findings and discussed cross-border connectivity, data centres, cybersecurity, data governance, regulatory

harmonisation and measures to encourage private sector investment. They also examined a proposed investment roadmap, including priority regional digital infrastructure projects, phased implementation plans and financing options through public-private partnerships. The participating countries agreed to submit written comments on the draft feasibility study over the next two weeks. The feedback will be incorporated into the final report, which will be presented at the 28th CAREC Ministerial Conference in September 2026. In his closing remarks, ADB Country Director Emma Pan thanked the participating delegations for their contributions and emphasised the need for continued cooperation among CAREC member countries to turn the Digital Corridor initiative into concrete regional investment projects.—DNA

Ayubia Park emerges as hub for wildlife conservation

ISLAMABAD: Ayubia National Park, a protected area of 3,312 hectares located in Abbottabad District, has emerged as an effective platform for promoting eco-tourism while advancing the cause of forest and wildlife conservation in Pakistan. Every year, hundreds of thousands of tourists, students, teachers and nature enthusiasts visit the park, particularly the scenic Pipeline Walking Track, where they experience the beauty of the Himalayan temperate forests and gain a deeper appreciation of nature. The park serves as a natural outdoor classroom, educating visitors about the ecological importance of forests in regulating the climate, conserving water resources, preventing soil erosion and sustaining biodiversity, commented Sardar Muhammad Nawaz, DFO Ayubia National Park. Talking to a group of journalists during an awareness tour to Northern Forest Region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sardar Nawaz shared that through interactive signposts, awareness campaigns and interactions with wildlife officials, tourists are encouraged to adopt environmentally responsible practices, including avoiding littering, minimizing plastic waste and respecting wildlife habitats. By combining recreation with environmental education, Ayubia National Park has become a model of sustainable eco-tourism. Nawaz remarked, "It not only showcases the rich flora and fauna of the Gilgit region but also fosters public support for the conservation of forests and wildlife, reinforcing the message that protecting Pakistan's natural heritage is a shared responsibility essential for the well-being of future generations". Nestled in the lush Gilgit region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the park is attracting more than one million between 900,000 to 1,000,000 tourists on annual basis. DFO Nawaz shared, Among the park's most popular attractions is the scenic "Pipeline Walking Track", a relatively easy trail stretching between Ayubia and Durga Gali. The track, built along an old water pipeline, winds through thick pine, fir and oak forests and offer spectacular views of the surrounding valleys.—APP

Hyderabad Bar delegation visits FCCP

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of the High Court Bar Association Hyderabad, Sindh, led by its President, Arif Hussain Tursi, visited the Federal Constitutional Court of Pakistan. The Registrar FCCP, Hafeez Ullah Khan, welcomed the delegation and briefed it on the establishment of the Federal Constitutional Court, its constitutional jurisdiction, and its unique role within Pakistan's judicial system. He emphasized that effective coordination and co-operation among the judiciary, the legal fraternity, and other institutions are essential for the efficient administration of justice and the development of a strong judicial system. The delegation was then shown a comprehensive documentary highlighting the establishment of the Federal Constitutional Court of Pakistan, its constitutional status, jurisdiction, role in the judicial system, and institutional development. The Secretary also showcased the establishment of the Court's various directorates and departments, their responsibilities, its modern administrative framework, and the initiatives undertaken to ensure transparent, efficient and timely delivery of constitutional justice to the public. Heads of the Court's various departments informed on the functions, responsibilities, administration, working mechanisms, and ongoing projects. The delegation was also apprised of the Court's administrative management, information technology, research, media, human resources, and other supporting departments, providing participants with a comprehensive understanding of the Court's administrative structure, professional systems, and institutional capacity. The delegation appreciated the Federal Constitutional Court of Pakistan's modern administrative system, high professional standards, transparency, institutional development, and expressed satisfaction with the Court's effective performance.—APP

Imran Ghaznavi to act as CCO

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Privatization Commission has redesignated the position of Chief Media Officer, held by Mr. Imran Ghaznavi, as Chief Communication Officer (CCO), with immediate effect. The redesignation reflects the Commission's continued commitment to strengthening its strategic communication framework and aligning its institutional communication functions with contemporary governance and public sector best practices. As Chief Communication Officer, Mr. Imran Ghaznavi will continue to lead the Commission's communication function, with an enhanced focus on strategic communications, media engagement, stakeholder outreach, public information, and external relations in support of the Commission's mandate. The Privatization Commission remains committed to promoting transparent, timely and effective communication with stakeholders, the media, and the public.

NWB explores entrepreneurship landscape

ISLAMABAD: The National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) hosted a delegation from the National Workshop Baluchistan (NWB) at the National Science and Technology Park (NSTP) here on Thursday to showcase Pakistan's rapidly growing innovation and entrepreneurship landscape. The delegation comprised a diverse group of media professionals, social media influencers, youth representatives, students, and faculty members primarily from Baluchistan and other provinces across the country. During the visit, Director NSTP Mr. Amer Sheikh led the delegates on the physical risk NUST and NSTP visit to fostering research, technological innovation, and industry collaboration. He highlighted how the NSTP functions as a premier laboratory for academia, industry, government, and entrepreneurs work together to transform creative concepts into market-ready solutions that drive national socioeconomic development. The delegates toured several high-growth tech enterprises based at NSTP, including Loran Oases, Orbit ED, Rapido, and Kofly, engaging directly with startup teams to see how emerging technologies are being used to address real-world challenges. They also explored outspace ventures under the launch X-innovator, such as Space X, Sync, Wheris, Etery, Agrafarm, Seltis, Patau Dynamics, RoCa, UsatApp, and CubeX TMS, gaining valuable insights into digital transformation and startup development. The visit concluded with an interactive discussion session, reaffirming NUST and NSTP's ongoing commitment to nurturing entrepreneurial talent, strengthening regional inclusion.—APP

Legal action warned against baseless allegations

The spokesperson appealed to political and social stakeholders, as well as the media, to refrain from exploiting BISP for political purposes and to help safeguard the credibility of the institution so that deserving women and their families continue to receive assistance with dignity and without interruption

ISLAMABAD: The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has strongly condemned attempts by certain elements to undermine its reputation for narrow personal or political interests, warning that legal action under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) could be initiated against those making baseless allegations or using the programme for political point scoring. A BISP spokesperson said the programme is Pakistan's largest national social protection initiative and is widely recognised at both national and international levels as a successful model of transparent, efficient service delivery and timely financial assistance to deserving households. The spokesperson said delegations and development partners from around the world regularly visit Pakistan to study BISP's

operational model and successful practices, reflecting the programme's global recognition. Expressing concern over recent attempts to damage the institution's reputation, the spokesperson said millions of deserving women and families benefit from BISP and that targeting the programme through false allegations or political motives is unacceptable. The spokesperson added that BISP reserves the right to initiate legal proceedings under the PECA Act, wherever applicable, against those involved in spreading baseless claims. The spokesperson said BISP operates under the highest standards of transparency and accountability, with its financial and administrative affairs subject to regular audits, robust monitoring mechanisms and oversight by international development

partners, ensuring the credibility and integrity of its system. The spokesperson said President Asif Zardari and Prime Minister Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif have full confidence in the programme's transparent and effective service delivery mechanism. The use of BISP's beneficiary database during the Ramadan Relief Package, the COVID-19 emergency and flood relief operations, the spokesperson said, reflects the government's confidence in the programme. The spokesperson appealed to political and social stakeholders, as well as the media, to refrain from exploiting BISP for political purposes and to help safeguard the credibility of the institution so that deserving women and their families continue to receive assistance with dignity and without interruption.—APP

Briefs

ERC reviews monsoon crisis

ISLAMABAD: The Emergency Response Committee (ERC) on Thursday held its seventh session at the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) headquarters to review the flood situation, rescue operations, relief efforts and preparedness measures across Pakistan, with federal and provincial authorities pledging stronger coordination to deal with emerging challenges. The meeting, held on the directions of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, was chaired by the link by Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal. Federal Minister for Power, Northern Areas, Ahmad Khan Laghari attended the session at the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC), while Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr. Musaddiq Malik, Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Bara Tirmazi Hussain, Federal Minister for Water Resources Mian Muhammad Muneer Wattoo, Punjab Health and Emergency Services Minister Khawaja Salim Rafique, chief secretaries of provinces and regions, Chairman NDMA and senior officials joined physically and virtually. According to officials, the committee reviewed the overall monsoon situation, including recent incidents, human casualties, infrastructure damage, rescue activities, relief operations and rehabilitation efforts in affected areas. The NEOC also briefed participants on the latest hydrological conditions, river flows and potential weather-related hazards that could affect vulnerable regions in the coming days. The committee assessed response measures taken by federal ministries, provincial governments and district administrations and acknowledged the efforts of rescue agencies and local authorities in protecting communities, restoring essential services and providing assistance to affected populations. Participants stressed the need for seamless coordination among all stakeholders to ensure a swift and effective response to any worsening weather situation. Prof. Ahsan Iqbal directed all relevant departments to maintain operational readiness, strengthen inter-agency coordination, continue proactive preparedness measures and accelerate relief and rehabilitation work in areas impacted by heavy rains and flooding.

FIA urges public to verify visa agents

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Islamabad Zone on Thursday urged citizens to verify the credentials of visa agents before making any payments or travelling abroad, reiterating its commitment to combating human trafficking on the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons. An FIA official told APP on the directions of the Director FIA Islamabad Zone, Deputy Director Ash-Huma Trafficking Circle (AHTC) Islamabad, Tariq Masood recorded a special video message to raise public awareness about the dangers of human trafficking and fraudulent overseas employment schemes. In his message, Tariq Masood advised people intending to travel abroad for employment or education not to trust unregistered or illegal visa agents. He urged them to verify the agent's registration and the authenticity of their visa before making any advance payment. He said human trafficking was a serious crime that not only deprived people of their hard-earned money but also put their lives at risk. He added that the FIA Anti-Human Trafficking Circle Islamabad was continuing its crackdown against human traffickers and would pursue such networks without discrimination. The official urged citizens to immediately report any suspicious visa agent or human trafficking-related activity to the FIA so that prompt legal action could be taken. He also highlighted the campaign's key message: "Verify Before You Travel."-APP

IRS roundtable discusses 'India: From strategic relevance to irrelevance?'

Former envoy to US, China and India, Ambassador Ashraf Jahangir Qazi discussed India's defence relationship with the United States and argued that New Delhi's international influence has diminished following what he described as setbacks during Operation Sindoor



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) organized a roundtable discussion titled 'India: From Strategic Relevance to Irrelevance' bringing together former diplomats, military experts, and scholars to examine evolving regional and global strategic dynamics, particularly in the wake of developments in South Asia during 2025. Opening the session, President IRS Ambassador Jamar Saleem observed that Pakistan is increasingly being perceived internationally as a responsible and peace-oriented state. He argued that changes in the United States' strategic approach towards India since May 2025 have created new opportunities for Pakistan to strengthen its strategic, political, and economic standing. He emphasized that Pakistan's strategic relevance should be viewed independently of India and leveraged through internal consolidation and prudent policymaking. Former envoy to US, China and India, Ambassador Ashraf Jahangir Qazi discussed India's defence relationship with the United States and argued that New Delhi's international in-

fluence has diminished following what he described as setbacks during Operation Sindoor. He maintained that India has also lost ground in shaping China's strategic calculus and is increasingly viewed as a source of regional instability. Ambassador Qazi suggested that India lacks support from Washington for any future military escalation and asserted that Pakistan's technological capabilities have been strengthened through cooperation with China. He also proposed that, given the limited utility of Chabahar Port, regional connectivity initiatives should instead focus on Caudat. Pakistan Foreign Secretary Ambassador Anwar Ashraf Chaudhry cautioned that India's current decline in strategic relevance may be temporary rather than permanent. He attributed the shift primarily to changes in US strategic priorities under President Donald Trump, including a more constructive US-China approach, as well as growing regional discontent with New Delhi. Ambassador Chaudhry further argued that India has gradually lost its traditional leadership position in the Global South to China. Reflecting on the May 2025 crisis, he observed that Pakistan's response demonstrated how technological advances have

fundamentally transformed the character of asymmetric warfare. General (Retd.) Naeem Khalid Lodhi stressed that, regardless of international perceptions, India will continue to remain strategically significant for Pakistan. He argued that India is already pursuing what he termed 'Sindoor 2.0' through proxy actions and non-state elements operating against Pakistan. He maintained that the United States is unlikely to distance itself completely from India and recommended that Pakistan seek greater Chinese involvement on key issues such as Jammu and Kashmir and the Indus Waters Treaty. He also emphasized the importance of keeping diplomatic channels with India open through sustained efforts towards dialogue. Professor Mujib Alai argued that India's strategic importance has been overstated by sections of the US media and India policymakers. He contended that expectations of India as an emerging great power have not been matched by its performance, exposing limitations in its strategic capabilities. According to Dr. Alai, India's importance to the United States has largely depended on Washington's perception of China as a strategic competitor. He further observed that India's foreign policy has his-

torically displayed resistance to external influence, accompanied by strong strategic assertiveness. While describing India as a significant regional power, he argued that it has often been reluctant to assume broader regional responsibilities. Dr. Khuram Iqbal discussed what he described as a significant shift in US strategic thinking, arguing that Washington's emphasis has moved towards reinforcing its own centrality in the Pacific rather than India's role in the Indo-Pacific. He suggested that questions surrounding India's military credibility following Operation Sindoor, together with policy differences with Washington including India's reluctance to acknowledge President Trump's role in the May 2025 ceasefire and perceived inconsistencies in its position on the Russia-Ukraine conflict, have contributed to a decline in India's credibility as a strategic partner. The discussion concluded that changing geopolitical realities are reshaping strategic alignments in South Asia and beyond. Participants emphasized the importance of Pakistan pursuing a balanced foreign policy, strengthening its economic capabilities, enhancing regional connectivity, and remaining prepared to capitalize on emerging strategic opportunities while maintaining diplomatic engagement with neighbouring countries.

Petroleum imports up by 5.76% to \$16.862 b

ISLAMABAD: The imports of the overall petroleum group witnessed an increase of 5.76 percent during the fiscal year (2025-26) as compared to the previous year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. The total imports of the petroleum group during July-June (2025-26) stood at \$16,862,242 million against the imports of \$15,913,726 million during the same months of last year. Among petroleum commodities, the import of petroleum products increased by 7.05 percent, from \$5,956,000 million last year to \$6,280,158 million during the period under review year. Likewise, the imports of Petroleum Crude increased by 31.54 percent from \$5,446,295 million last year to \$7,165,537 million while the import of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) went up by 3.21 percent during the period under review and stood at \$1,088,778 million as compared to \$1,054,907 million in the corresponding period in 2024-25. On the other hand, the import of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) decreased by 35.19 percent from \$2,475,159 million to \$2,221,183 million. The imports of all other petroleum group products went up by 5.88 percent and were recorded at \$9,386 million as against \$8,965 million-APP

Sherry condemns Hangu terror attack

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Vice President Senator Sherry Rehman on Thursday strongly condemned the terrorist attack on a police check post in Hangu, paying glowing tribute to the police personnel who bravely confronted the terrorists while courageously defending the country. In a statement, she said that SSP City Dhyar Khan and nine other personnel, who laid down their lives while bravely confronting the terrorists, were the pride of the nation and a shining example of courage, sacrifice and dedication to duty. She said the terrorists would never succeed in their nefarious designs, adding that security forces and the brave people of the country stood united in the fight against terrorism and were prepared to make every sacrifice to eradicate the menace. Sherry Rehman expressed confidence that the day was not far when Pakistan would completely overcome the scourge of terrorism through the collective resolve.-APP

Govt to diversify products: Ahsan

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Thursday said the government was pursuing robust diversification and market portfolios to achieve sustainable economic growth of at least six per cent. He stressed that expanding exports through new products and destinations was critical to securing long-term economic independence. Addressing a media briefing on the Monthly Development Report, the minister said the government was working closely with industry and the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to transform the country's top 20 export clusters into globally competitive sectors while promoting non-traditional industries, such as engineering, light engineering, chemicals and advanced manufacturing. "Our destination is not only diversification but sustainable growth of at least six per cent. That growth has to be export-led; otherwise it will become another economic bubble that bursts within a few years," Ahsan said. He said the government had set a target of increasing Pakistan's exports to \$180 billion by 2026, adding that the existing export structure was inadequate to achieve this objective. "We need to diversify both our product portfolio and our export markets. Pakistan is still exporting many of the same products to the same destinations as it did 40 years ago. This model is no longer sufficient for a competitive global economy," he remarked. The minister said the government, in collaboration with the SBP and the private sector, was offering incentives to promote non-traditional export sectors, including engineering, light engineering, chemicals and advanced manufacturing, to broaden the country's export base. He said the strategy also aimed to transform Pakistan's top 20 export clusters into globally competitive industries capable of generating higher-value exports and strengthening the external sector. Ahsan acknowledged that merchandise exports during the last fiscal year were affected by disruptions in regional shipping routes, higher insurance costs and logistical challenges arising from the Iran-US conflict. However, exports of goods and services still recorded overall growth despite these external shocks. He said workers' remittances reached a record \$11.8 billion, up 8.6 per cent over the previous year, helping maintain external sector stability despite geopolitical uncertainties in the Gulf region.-DNA

World Day against trafficking in persons - 2026

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Every year on 30th July, the world observes the World Day against Trafficking in Persons to raise awareness of the plight of trafficking victims and to strengthen global efforts to protect and support them. The day's theme is "Trapped Behind the Scams", draws attention to the growing threat of trafficking in persons for the forced criminality, where criminal networks exploit vulnerable individuals by deceiving, coercing, and forcing them to commit crimes, including online scam operations and other cyber-enabled criminal activities that generate significant illicit profits for organized crime groups. To mark the day, representatives from federal

ministries, government departments, law enforcement and criminal justice institutions, the development sector, civil society organizations, and the diplomatic community gathered in Islamabad in a joint commemoration organized by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Labour Organization (ILO), Sustainable Social Development Organization (SSDO), International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), and International Return and Reintegration Assistance (IRARA). Messages delivered by representatives of the organizations underscored the importance of collective action to strengthen criminal justice responses, advance prevention efforts, and ensure comprehensive victim protection, assistance, and reintegration support. Senior officials from the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, and the Federal Investigation Agency highlighted Pakistan's ongoing efforts to strengthen its response to trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants, while promoting safe, orderly, and regular migration. Key national initiatives highlighted included the National Emigration and Welfare Policy, developed under the leadership of Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, as well as Pakistan's first dedicated Invesor National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons (2025-2030) and National Action Plan to Counter Smuggling of Migrants (2025-2030).

UN Women launches AI school Pakistan

MAINOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication (MITT), together with UN Women Pakistan have launched the UN Women Gender-Responsive AI School Pakistan, marking a major step towards advancing inclusive, ethical and gender-responsive artificial intelligence (AI) in Pakistan. The Gender-Responsive AI School aims to strengthen national capacity by equipping policymakers, government institutions, parliamentarians, the United Nations system, academia, civil society, the private sector, and community leaders with the knowledge and practical skills to harness AI responsibly and ensure women and girls are equal participants in Pakistan's digital trans-

formation. Welcoming participants, Mr. Jamshed M. Kazi, Country Representative, UN Women Pakistan, said: "Pakistan is setting a new benchmark for the Asia-Pacific region through the UN Women Gender-Responsive AI School: the first initiative in the region to deliver a national Training of Trainers programme with tailored learning pathways for the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, as well as civil society and the private sector. What begins here is not following a precedent; it is setting one. Together with the Government of Pakistan, the Ministry of IT & Telecom and KOICA, we are pioneering in the leadership institutions, and skills needed to build an inclusive, ethical, and gender-responsive AI future." The curriculum combines conceptual learning with

practical application through tailored learning pathways covering AI foundations, gender-responsiveness and ethical AI. At governance, prompt engineering, AI agents, and AI applications for public administration and inclusive development. Ahead of its launch, the initiative delivered specialized training programme for parliamentarians, government officials, UN personnel, academia, and civil society, creating a growing national network of AI champions. Speaking at the launch, Mr. Soham Ravi, Deputy Country Director, KOICA Pakistan Office, said: "KOICA is proud to support the UN Women Gender-Responsive AI School as an inclusive digital future. By strengthening digital skills and promoting responsible AI, we are helping build an innovation ecosystem where women.

Minister lauds ACT AI programme

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shuja Patana Khawaja witnessed the concluding class of ACT AI Cycle, an eight-week Artificial Intelligence (AI) training programme conducted through the IEC Smart Classroom. The initiative was implemented through a collaborative partnership of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme, Higher Education Commission (HEC) Pakistan, National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTC), and AISIBridge to equip Pakistan youth with cutting-edge AI knowledge and practical skills. Congratulating the participants, the Minister inducted with the graduating students, who shared their inspiring success stories, including the development and launch of innovative AI tools during the course. He observed that Artificial Intelligence is no longer confined to the information technology sector but is transforming every field of knowledge and profession. He urged the students to continuously upgrade their skills to remain relevant in the future job market. Expressing her appreciation for the participation of students from remote areas of the country, the Minister said their passion for learning reflects the immense potential of Pakistan's youth. She remarked that long-term economic sustainability increasingly depends on technological skills and effective utilisation of AI.

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The Fortress Endures: Pakistan and the Vision of Islamic Solidarity



MUHAMMAD MOHSIN IQBAL

PAKISTAN stands as a living testament to an enduring spiritual and ideological conviction. From its very inception, the rallying cry that unified millions was both simple and profound: "What does Pakistan mean? La ilaha illallah." Under this banner of faith in the Oneness of Allah, the nation emerged on the world map in 14 August 1947, as a homeland for Muslims of the Subcontinent, guided by the vision of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the philosophical ethos of Islamic idealism. It was not merely a political endeavour but the realisation of a distinct national identity rooted in Islamic ideals of justice, sovereignty, and unity. Yet the path was fraught with peril. Even before the new state could draw breath, formidable obstacles arose—economic collapse, mass migrations, and external scepticism. Many predicted that its borders would soon dissolve under pressure, but divine will ordained otherwise. Like a ship battling turbulent seas, Pakistan endured and reached the shores of stability through resilience and faith. As the country grappled its footing, a landmark gathering in Lahore in February 1974 marked a turning point. The Second Islamic Summit Conference brought together leaders from 38 Muslim nations, including King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, Anwar Sadat of Egypt, and Muammar Gaddafi. Hosted by Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, this assembly transformed individual aspirations into collective strength. Muslims, like fingers joining to form a mighty fist, stood united on a common platform. The summit addressed the aftermath of the 1973 Arab-led oil crisis, affirmed Pakistan's Islamic character, and elevated Pakistan's stature as a bridge among Islamic nations. From this unity flowed a shared mission that propelled the country forward. Throughout its history, Pakistan has answered calls for global security and the stability of the Islamic world. It earned the honourable distinction of the Fortress of Islam, particularly through its longstanding commitment to safeguarding the Haramain Sharifain. Pakistani troops have served in Saudi Arabia since the 1970s, with deployments in training,

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

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Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 06 Issue: 347

Email: dailyispost@gmail.com

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advisory, and protective roles—often numbering over 10,000 at peaks, including during the 1990-91 Gulf War. This sacred duty reflects not mere strategy but a religious obligation deeply felt by the nation. Adversaries, notably neighbouring India, seized every opportunity to portray Pakistan as a failing state. Yet at moments of trial, unseen help arrived. In May 2025, Pakistan demonstrated military prowess that astounded observers, restoring its lost prestige through resolute leadership that harnessed the divine spark ignited upon 14 August. The Strategic Vision for Defence, formulated with Saudi Arabia, signed on 17 September 2025 in Riyadh by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, formalised decades of brotherhood. This pact declares that any aggression against one is an aggression against both, encompassing comprehensive cooperation in defence, training, technology, and joint deterrence. Reports suggest potential deployment of up to thousands of Pakistani personnel and assets, including JF-17 aircraft, underscoring Pakistan's role as a steadfast guardian. Building upon this success, Pakistan has played a constructive mediating role in Gulf tensions, earning widespread appreciation for its balanced diplomacy. Cooperation with Turkey has deepened through bilateral deals in defence and trade, while Kuwait and other regional states have expressed interest in similar partnerships. Pakistan's armed forces, with approximately 650,000-685,000 active personnel—one of the world's largest standing armies—alongside an estimated hundreds of nuclear warheads and modern platforms like JF-17 fighters and advanced missiles, provide credible strength to these endeavours. Looking to the future, Pakistan's perspective remains one of hope anchored in unity and good intentions. The day is not distant when an alliance of Islamic countries, forged through mutual respect and shared values, may emerge—bearing precedents in the European Union or NATO yet rooted firmly in Islamic principles of solidarity. Such a framework would face formidable obstacles: historical differences, external influences, and economic disparities. Yet with the spirit that carried Pakistan through partition, the 1971 trials, and recent triumphs, it remains achievable. Pakistan, with its strategic location, military capability, and diplomatic bridges—linking South Asia, the Gulf, and beyond—can serve as a pivotal node in this vision. It continues to champion economic cooperation within the OIC, advocate for peace with justice on issues like Palestine and Kashmir, and promote connectivity that benefits the wider ummah. Pakistan's journey, from ideological birth to a standing state, exemplifies faith sustained against the odds. As it advances, the nation carries not only the aspirations of its 250 million people but the hopes of many who see in its endurance a beacon for the Muslim world. With trust in Allah, unity among its ranks, and steadfast resolve, Pakistan is poised to fulfil a greater role in fostering stability, prosperity, and brotherhood across Islamic lands. The future beckons with challenges and opportunity alike; guided by its founding principles, the nation shall meet both with honour.

Iran's Nuclear Capability, Retaliation and Global Catastrophe

Qamar Bashir



Europe, by remaining deaf, dumb, and blind to the crimes being committed by the United States, faces a future of unimaginable suffering. When Africa goes under, when the Sahel and West Africa lose the capacity to produce food, tens of millions of people will begin a forced migration because they have no choice. They will lose tens of millions in the deserts of the Sahara, but they will arrive at the shores of the Maghreb...

THE potential for nuclear escalation represents the most terrifying dimension of the Iran war. The Trump administration's framing of the Pichone nuclear facility as a potential existential threat to the United States is so strong, so formidable, and so meticulously designed that normal conventional weapons are unable to reach its core. The durability of Pichone to conventional incursions has led to discussions in media, in podcasts and in political parlance about the potential use of nuclear weapons as perhaps the only solution to prevent Iran from assuming the status of a nuclear power. There are troubling indications that Donald Trump has already considered the use of nuclear weapons, with reports suggesting he has approached the Pentagon at least once, perhaps twice, to draw up nuclear strike options against Iran. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has rejected these requests, citing fundamental unconstitutionality. However, the danger lies in the potential use of intelligence information to manufacture a threat that would be adaptable to US doctrine. The nuclear posture review and the commander's guidance to the nuclear implementation plan have already created a definition that permeates the United States to use nuclear weapons if an existential threat is identified. If the United States determines that Iran is installing a viable centrifuge capability or has installed a nuclear warhead assembly plant, the cognitive justification for nuclear use becomes dangerously plausible. The potential for a nuclear strike on the Pichone facility would have catastrophic consequences. While Iran might survive a nuclear attack if it does not fall on most of its cities, the Iranian commandment would likely eliminate Iran, a small country that cannot survive even a small or mid-level nuclear warhead. Furthermore, Iran has declared it possesses fissile material to produce 10 to 15 atomic warheads, along with sophisticated delivery mechanisms. Iran has made it clear that it possesses the fissile material necessary to produce nuclear weapons and has the delivery mechanisms already available in a very sophisticated form. The war has fundamentally altered the nuclear calculus. With the killing of the previous Supreme Leader, US intelligence agencies now assess that his successor is far more interested in pursuing a nuclear weapon. This shift represents a grave consequence of the US policy of regime change. Iran's leadership believes the acquisition of nuclear capability as the ultimate deterrent against the existential threat posed by Washington and Israel.

The retaliatory potential extends beyond the immediate region. While Iran's delivery systems may not currently be able to reach the United States directly, such weapons could be transported through cargo ships and launched when they approach American shores. Such a possibility is logically, militarily, and otherwise plausible. The threat of retaliation would likely cause the United States and Israel to think hundreds of times before making such a decision. The impact would extend far beyond these countries that import oil to include those that import fertilisers and food. Without fertiliser, the production of grain and food will be diminished to a large extent, creating starvation in many countries of the world. Both the shortage of oil, which runs the economy, and the shortage of fertiliser, which keeps the population alive, would affect billions of people. The resultant immigration pressures on Europe and other countries would be catastrophic. Millions of people would die, and those who are not admitted by European countries and other nations would perish in the sea or on the land. This catastrophic scenario has a great possibility if the issue is not resolved amicably. The explosion of the conflict to the Red Sea, where Iran's Houthis allies in Yemen have declared a naval blockade against Saudi Arabia, threatens to close a second major global shipping corridor, exacerbating the disruption of essential commodities. Europe, by remaining deaf, dumb, and blind to the crimes being committed by the United States, faces a future of unimaginable suffering. When Africa goes under, when the Sahel and West Africa lose the capacity to produce food, tens of millions of people will begin a forced migration because they have no choice. They will lose tens of millions in the deserts of the Sahara, but they will arrive at the shores of the Maghreb, North Africa, and they will surge into Europe. The Iranian population, when they lose the capacity to produce food, will move through Turkey into Europe. Turkey will give them the sign to leave using, and Europe will be flooded by them by desperate refugees that will sack Europe dry. This is the future of Europe because of the policies of Donald Trump. The potential for billions of people to die represents the future of humanity because of the catastrophe that is about to unfold. Once this process begins, once the infrastructure of life support deteriorates, it cannot be readily reconstructed.

The world will be losing so much of its energy and resources responding to these global catastrophes that it will not be able to put the effort into reconstruction. Humanity is being condemned from absolute death or more of catastrophe. The responsibility for this war and its consequences rests entirely with both Israel and the United States. They are the ones who should bear the burden of putting back the clock and turning the world once again to a normal situation. If the United States decides to use nuclear weapons, the world might see a total catastrophic situation that must be avoided by all countries putting their heads together in unity to stop this war as soon as possible, ensuring that humanity is not eliminated from the face of the earth. The international community must recognise that the conflict has reached a point where Iran has refused to succumb and the United States is bent on making Iran surrender. In both these situations, the only weapon to system the United States has now which can change the war scenario is the nuclear weapon. But it Iran also surprises both Israel and the United States as it has done in conventional warfare while starting nuclear warfare, then the world might see a total catastrophic situation. The potential for nuclear escalation, the disruption of global energy supplies, the threat of mass starvation, and the prospect of millions of refugees overwhelming Europe represent a catastrophic scenario that the world must recognise and address. The cycle of violence appears destined to continue, with Iran having learned to manage the conflict and the United States taking a clear path to victory. The world needs to start shouting. The crimes being committed by the United States must be exposed, and the international community must force a end to this Israeli policy. It is said Trump's decisions are condemning humanity to catastrophe, and every European leader who remains silent shares the responsibility for what is to come. The time for action is now. The world must not let itself be taken in by unity to stop nuclear warfare. Discouraging the escalation, the world must eliminate from the face of the earth. The alternative is unthinkable: a future of starvation, migration, and death on a scale never before witnessed in human history. This is not hyperbole; this is the reality of the moment, and it must be confronted with the urgency it demands.

— Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)
Former Press Minister,
Embassy of Pakistan to France
Former Press Attaché,
Former MD, SRRC (Michigan, USA)

History Still Carries a Warning

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer & Sayed Anwar



EVERY cycle of violence in Balochistan revives an old and uncomfortable question in Pakistan's political discourse: could the province become another East Pakistan? The comparison has gained renewed attention following the sharp escalation in militant attacks during the past two years. Coordinated assaults on security installations, expanding insurgent activity, and the persistence of political discontent have encouraged many observers to revisit the lessons of 1971. While the comparison is understandable, it is also incomplete. History seldom repeats itself in identical form. Yet it often offers warnings that states ignore at their own peril. The insurgency in Balochistan is not a recent development. It has accompanied Pakistan's political journey almost since independence. From the first rebellion in 1948 to successive waves of unrest, the province has remained trapped in a cycle of confrontation between the state and sections of Baloch nationalist groups. The latest resurgence, however, appears more organised, technologically adept, and geographically dispersed than any earlier phases. Militant organisations have demonstrated an ability to strike military camps, infrastructure projects, and even strategic coastal areas, presenting challenges to Pakistan's internal security. It is this deteriorating security environment that has prompted renewed references to East Pakistan. At first glance, the similarities appear striking. In both cases, many citizens believed that their province contributed significantly to the national economy while receiving comparatively little in return. Before 1971, East Pakistan generated most of Pakistan's export earnings through jute, yet many Bengalis argued that development spending and political power remained concentrated in West Pakistan. In Balochistan, similar arguments revolve around natural gas, mineral wealth, Gwadar Port, and the strategic projects associated with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Despite possessing enormous natural resources, Balochistan continues to record poor indicators in education, healthcare, employment, and infrastructure. Such disparities have strengthened the perception that resource extraction has not translated into proportional local development. Whether every element of this perception is statistically accurate is open to debate, but perceptions themselves often shape political realities. Throughout history, feelings of exclusion have proved just as influential as measurable economic indicators. Identity politics has further deepened these grievances. East Pakistan's language movement became the defining symbol of Bengali political consciousness after the refusal to grant Bengali equal national status alongside Urdu. In Balochistan, the language dispute in form but not entirely in substance. Questions surrounding cultural recognition, provincial autonomy, missing persons, political representation, and the space available for nationalist politics continue to dominate public debate. Over decades, distrust has accumulated, making compromise increasingly difficult. Security has consequently become the principal instrument of state policy. Pakistan's armed forces have undertaken repeated counterinsurgency campaigns aimed at dismantling militant organisations and restoring order. Many attacks have been successfully prevented, while numerous militant commanders have been eliminated. Yet military success has not translated into lasting political stability. Insurgencies rarely disappear through force alone; often underlying political disputes remain unresolved. This lesson has emerged repeatedly across different regions of the world. It is here that memories of 1971 naturally arise. Pakistan's tragic experience in East Pakistan demonstrated that military operations, when detached from meaningful political engagement, may suppress violence temporarily without resolving the grievances that sustain it. That historical lesson deserves careful reflection not because Balochistan is destined to follow the same path, but because unresolved political issues tend to grow more complex over time. However, the similarities should not obscure the profound differences between the two cases.

The most decisive distinction lies in demography. Before Bangladesh's independence, Bengalis constituted the majority of Pakistan's population. The Awami League secured an unprecedented electoral mandate in the 1970 general elections, going Sheikh Mujibur Rahman constitutional legitimacy to form the federal government. The subsequent refusal to transfer power transformed a political dispute into a national catastrophe. No comparable circumstance exists in contemporary Pakistan. Balochistan occupies about 10% of the country's landmass but accounts for only a small proportion of its population. Its political influence within the federation cannot be translated into an electoral majority capable of reshaping national politics through parliamentary means. Consequently, the constitutional dynamics that precipitated the crisis of 1971 simply do not exist today. Geography also tells a different story. East Pakistan was physically separated from West Pakistan by more than a thousand miles of Indian territory, making military reinforcement extraordinarily difficult once war began. Balochistan, by contrast, remains fully connected to Pakistan's transportation and communication network. Highways, railways, and military logistics provide Islamabad with strategic access that was impossible in 1971. The federal government's response to the Baloch insurgency has fundamentally altered the balance of power. Today's international environment offers no comparable scenario. Although Pakistan frequently accuses hostile external actors of supporting separatist violence, its neighbours are not actively seeking its disintegration. The Baloch insurgency, despite its persistence, remains divided among multiple organisations with differing strategies and objectives. Fragmentation has limited its political

coherence and prevented the emergence of a unified alternative governing authority. These differences make one conclusion unavoidable: Balochistan is not another East Pakistan. Yet the province's historical grievances, its economic challenges, and its political realities demand a response that goes beyond military operations. A province need not succumb to become a long-term strategic liability. Persistent insurgency can gradually weaken economic productivity, discourage foreign investment, delay infrastructure projects, and impose heavy financial and human costs on the state. CPEC, Gwadar Port, and the development of Pakistan's western regions all depend upon durable security combined with local political confidence. Neither objective can be achieved in isolation. This requires moving beyond a policy framework dominated exclusively by security considerations. Effective governance in conflict-affected regions demands credible political dialogue, accountable provincial institutions, and transparent resource-sharing mechanisms, and visible improvements in public services. Development projects cannot succeed if local communities perceive themselves merely as spectators rather than beneficiaries. Equally important is rebuilding trust between the federation and the province. Trust cannot be restored through announcements alone. It grows through consistent implementation of constitutional commitments, meaningful participation in decision-making, fair economic opportunities, and confidence that grievances will receive institutional rather than coercive responses. Pakistan's federal structure already provides mechanisms for greater provincial participation. The challenge lies less in constitutional design than in political execution. Genuine implementation of existing commitments may achieve far more than the repeated introduction of ambitious packages that fail to reach the communities they are intended to serve. The lesson of 1971 is to rethink neither provocation nor credulity. It is a reminder that national cohesion ultimately rests upon political legitimacy as much as military capability. States remain strongest when citizens believe they possess an equal stake in their collective future. Balochistan's fate will not be determined solely by the military or security operations. It will be shaped by whether Pakistan succeeds in narrowing the distance between the federation and its largest province—politically, economically, and psychologically. The country possesses the opportunity to prevent history from becoming a recurring warning. Whether that opportunity is seized will influence not only the future of Balochistan but also the long-term stability of the Pakistani federation itself.

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Briefs

PSX extends losses, sheds nearly 495 points

ISLAMABAD: The benchmark KSE-100 index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bearish trend on Thursday, losing 495.39 points, a negative change of 0.29 per cent, to close at 176,547.08 points against 177,042.49 points recorded in the previous trading session. The ready market witnessed a trading volume of 711.201 million shares, compared to 574.076 million shares traded on Wednesday, while the traded value slightly increased to Rs25,596 billion from Rs25,359 billion. Market capitalisation declined to Rs18,718 trillion from Rs18,778 trillion recorded a day earlier. Out of 455 companies that traded in the ready market, 175 posted gains, 279 suffered losses, while 41 remained unchanged, reflecting a predominantly bearish trend across the market. Trade Brokerage led the volume chart with 176.884 million shares, followed by WorldCall Telecom with 22.314 million shares and Pak. Int. Bank with 22.125 million shares. Among the top gainers, PIA Holding Company Limited surged by Rs256.32 to close at Rs18,000.00, while Bhacare Textile Mills Limited advanced by Rs78.92 to settle at Rs879.60. —APP

RCCI calls for balanced fuel pricing mechanism

RAWALPINDI: President Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), Usman Shaukat called on the authorities concerned Thursday to introduce targeted subsidies alongside market-based fuel pricing reforms to protect businesses from price volatility. In a press statement, Usman Shaukat acknowledged the federal government's initiative to transition toward market-driven fuel pricing via daily adjustments, describing it as a positive step toward fiscal transparency, curbing fuel smuggling, and supporting the State Bank of Pakistan's inflation targets. However, the RCCI President cautioned that daily price fluctuations could create severe uncertainty for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), transport operators, manufacturers, and exporters by driving up freight charges, production costs, and agricultural inputs. To mitigate operational disruption, Usman Shaukat urged authorities to adopt a price-band mechanism with fortnightly revisions instead of daily changes. He also proposed temporary fuel tax rebates for export industries, targeted subsidies or tax credits for SMEs, and automatic fuel surcharge adjustments for the transport sector to sustain economic growth and market competitiveness. —APP

Rupee gains 01 paise against Dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Thursday appreciated by 01 paise against the US Dollar in interbank trading and closed at Rs 277.61, compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 277.62. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 278.75 and Rs 278.95, respectively. The price of the Euro against the rupee increased by Rs 1.49 and closed at Rs318.13 against the previous day's closing of Rs 316.64, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen remained unchanged to close at Rs 1.69, whereas the exchange rate of the British Pound witnessed an increase of Rs 1.36 and closed at Rs 370.97 compared to the previous day's Rs 369.61. The exchange rate of the United Arab Emirates Dirham went up by 01 paise and closed at Rs75.54, while the Saudi Riyal declined by 01, closing at Rs 72.99. —APP

Institutional collaboration key to progress: ICCI President

Welfare of workers and progress of trade and industry go hand in hand: Yasin

DNA

Yary Muhammad Yaseen

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) and the CMA Labour Union on Thursday agreed to strengthen institutional cooperation for addressing civic and business-related challenges, reaffirming their shared commitment to promoting a cleaner, more efficient and investment-friendly federal capital. The understanding was reached during the visit of a CMA Labour Union delegation led by its President Aurangzeb Khan and Secretary General Chaudhry Muhammad Yasin to the Chamber here on Thursday. Welcoming the delegation, ICCI President Sardar Tahir Mehmood said that the prosperity of Islamabad is intrinsically linked with the efficiency of its civic institutions and the vibrancy of its business community. He observed that sustainable economic growth requires quality municipal services, modern infrastructure and a business-ready environment capable of attracting investment and generating employment. He highly appreciated the dedication and hard work of CMA employees in maintaining and improving the city's civic infrastructure and assured the delegation that the ICCI would continue to work closely with all public institutions for the collective development of Islamabad. Secretary General of the CMA Labour Union Chaudhry Muhammad Yasin thanked the ICCI leadership for the warm welcome and appreciated the Chamber's consistent efforts in safeguarding the interests of the business community. He said that the welfare of workers and the progress of trade and industry go hand in hand, and

that effective coordination between the CMA Labour Union and ICCI would help resolve civic issues more efficiently and contribute to making Islamabad a model capital. Reaffirming that the CMA Labour Union firmly believes in democratic, constitutional and peaceful struggle, he added that CMA employees played a pivotal role in building, maintaining and beautifying the federal capital, therefore they deserve dignity, improved working conditions and adequate welfare facilities and that all the issues relating to them should be resolved through constructive dialogue rather than unilaterally. Chairman ICCI Founder Group

Sheikh Tariq Sadiq and former President Khalid Chaudhry by reaffirming Chamber's resolve to work closely with the CMA Labour Union for the welfare of workers, the business community and the overall development of Islamabad. Those present on the occasion included executive members Imran Miah, Malik Naeem, former Senior Vice President Malik Naveed, Vice President Ashfaq Chaitah, Chairman ICCI Real Estate Committee Iqbal Ullah, Masterani, representatives of different Traders Welfare Associations, CMA Labour Union Patron-in-Chief Haji Sadiq, Supreme leader Mirza Saad and other

were also present. President Khalid Chaudhry by reaffirming Chamber's resolve to work closely with the CMA Labour Union for the welfare of workers, the business community and the overall development of Islamabad. Those present on the occasion included executive members Imran Miah, Malik Naeem, former Senior Vice President Malik Naveed, Vice President Ashfaq Chaitah, Chairman ICCI Real Estate Committee Iqbal Ullah, Masterani, representatives of different Traders Welfare Associations, CMA Labour Union Patron-in-Chief Haji Sadiq, Supreme leader Mirza Saad and other

Gold price rises by Rs1,000 per tola

ISLAMABAD: Gold prices witnessed an increase in the local market on Thursday, with the price of 24-carat gold per tola rising by Rs1,000 to settle at Rs877,136, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gerni and Jewellers Association. Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24-carat gold increased by Rs877 to Rs866,477, while 10 grams of 22-karat gold gained Rs786 to reach Rs835,501. In the international market, the price of silver per tola fell by \$10 to \$4,050 per ounce, the association reported. Meanwhile, silver prices declined in the local market, with the price of silver per tola fell by Rs50 to Rs6,215, while the price of 10 grams of silver decreased by Rs65 to Rs5,328. The price of silver in the international market also dropped by \$0.70 to \$57.50 per ounce, the association added. —APP

Pakistan showcases textile excellence

NEW YORK: Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States, Rana Saad Shikoh, on Wednesday inaugurated Pakistan pavilion at the Texworld New York City 2026 Summer Show, a biannual event that connects global textile manufacturers, fabric sourcing companies, and fabric suppliers with buyers from across the US market. The Ambassador was accompanied by Pakistan's Consul General in New York, Amir Ahmad Akram and Trade and Investment Counsellor Adnan Awan. Organized by the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) in collaboration with the Trade & Investment Wing of the Consulate General of Pakistan, New York, the pavilion highlights Pakistan's growing capabilities in value-added textiles, apparel, leather products, sports goods, and home textiles. Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Shikoh highlighted the vital role of Pakistan's textile sector in the national economy and reaffirmed the Government's commitment to promoting exports and strengthening commercial ties with the United States. Consul General Akram underscored Pakistan's reputation as a reliable sourcing destination and reaffirmed the Consulate's commitment to facilitating business partnerships between Pakistan and the United States. Trade & Investment Counsellor Adnan Awan said that Texworld New York City offers an important platform for Pakistani exporters to connect with international buyers and expand their presence in the US market. —APP

Egypt confirms drone caused fire on two gas vessels

CAIRO/LONDON: A drone caused the fire that engulfed two gas vessels at Egypt's Mediterranean port of Damietta, the Egyptian cabinet said on Thursday, confirming that the blaze which erupted a day earlier was the result of an attack rather than an accident. No party has claimed responsibility for the incident which happened not far from the Suez Canal that has become the last safe oceanic route for Saudi oil to global markets. Authorities are continuing their investigations and taking necessary measures to protect Egypt's national security, the cabinet added. British maritime security firm Ambros said on Wednesday that a drone had hit a US-owned gas storage tanker at the port, in an initial assessment that raised concerns about a further spate of conflict across the Middle East. Three trading sources familiar with the incident said the drone hit floating storage tanker Energen Winter, causing a fire that spread to another vessel, Gaslog Salem. The Energen Winter was reportedly struck on its starboard side, causing a fire that was extinguished. British maritime risk management group Vantage said, Egypt's petroleum ministry said in a statement on Wednesday that the fires at the port were dealt with immediately by firefighting and security teams and caused no injuries or fatalities. Petroleum Minister Karam Badawi went to the site to oversee response efforts, it said. The drone strike occurred shortly after Iran carried out a missile attack against US forces in Jordan, and Washington and Saudi Arabia struck Iran-backed paramilitary groups in Iraq. US President Donald Trump threatened to retaliate against Iran's missile strike against a US naval ship in the Red Sea. The Energen Winter is a floating storage and regasification unit owned by US-based firm Energen Infrastructure. Its technical, safety and commercial operations are managed by Wilhelmsen Ship Management, a Singapore-based subsidiary of Norwegian company Wilhelmsen Group. The incident comes at a sensitive time for Egypt's gas market. Egypt became an LNG exporter following the development of the giant Zohr offshore gas field, but declining domestic production and rising demand have forced it to return to international markets as a major LNG buyer. Any prolonged outage would be closely watched by LNG traders for its potential impact on demand and spot prices. The vessels are expected to remain out of service for some time, two sources told Reuters, with one saying that a tank at the Energen Winter was breached, potentially posing a risk to the port. The Energen Winter has a registered capacity of about 120 million cubic feet per day, equivalent to roughly 7 percent of Egypt's daily gas consumption and 16 percent of the country's total LNG receiving and regasification capacity, according to Egyptian consultancy EIMD Studies. "The outage is not expected to create an immediate supply gap because Egypt has alternative import facilities and fuel options available, but it would reduce spare capacity in the system at a time of peak summer demand," an EIMD note said. Some of the options, it said, include increasing other regional gas supplies, increasing use of hard assets, increasing use of liquefied natural gas capacity, and, as a last resort, temporarily reducing gas supplies to some industrial activities. —APP

French teen fined in Singapore 'straw licking' case

SINGAPORE: A French teenager was fined in Singapore Thursday after pleading guilty to a public nuisance charge for a straw-licking stunt that landed him in his way in the city state. Didier Gaspard Owen Maximilien, 19, was handed a \$450 (S\$165) fine after admitting to posting to social media a video of himself putting a straw he had licked back into the dispenser on an orange juice vending machine. The clip went viral on Instagram shortly after the incident on March 12, triggering a backlash that led to his arrest in Singapore, which is known for its strict enforcement of public order and hygiene rules. Handing down the sentence, Judge Kelly Ho said since Maximilien's "age and nature of the offense," alternatives like probation or a community-based sentence would not be imposed. Prosecutors agreed to the defense's proposal for a fine, saying the offense was at the "lower end" of its seriousness and while hygiene was compromised, no member of the public used the straw, so there "was no evidence of harm." They added that Maximilien "pledged guilty at the earliest possible opportunity." Wearing a dark suit and white shirt without a tie, Maximilien was seen standing calmly in the dock while the judge pronounced the sentence. His parents were seated in the gallery. They left the court shortly afterwards and declined to speak to reporters. His defense counsel Kalid Des Marignan earlier argued for a fine in mitigation of sentence as opposed to probation. Maximilien's family had trouble getting a guardian in Singapore and a community-based sentence was logistically not possible as he had to go back to France in September to continue his studies, the lawyer said. "He is fully sorry for having caused all this trouble," Marignan told the judge, adding that he had been counselled by his family. Singapore is known for its no-nonsense approach to public stunts. —APP

MoU inked to boost vehicle exports

ISLAMABAD: MG JV Automobile Pakistan and Bangladesh's RANCON Group signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Thursday to boost vehicle exports and enhance automotive sector cooperation between the two countries. Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production, Haroon Akhtar Khan, witnessed the signing ceremony, which marks a step toward expanding Pakistan's automotive exports in line with the government's export-oriented economic vision. The agreement marks a significant milestone for Pakistan's automotive industry and reflects the growing international confidence in the country's manufacturing capabilities, said a press release issued by Ministry of Industry and Production. It said that the agreement, MG JV Automobile Pakistan will export 100 locally assembled vehicles to Bangladesh during the current year, while total exports are projected to reach 5,000 vehicles over the next four years. Talking to the media after the ceremony, Haroon Akhtar Khan said the agreement would generate millions of dollars in foreign exchange for Pakistan and represents another important

step towards achieving the Government's export-led industrial growth agenda. He said, Pakistan was pursuing policies that promote exports, strengthen local manufacturing, attract investment, and create a business-friendly environment for industries, adding the government was finalizing a comprehensive Auto Policy aimed at increasing vehicle exports, enhancing localization, and strengthening the country's automotive manufacturing base. The SAPM emphasized that Pakistan's automotive sector has made remarkable progress in quality, localization, and production capacity, enabling locally manufactured vehicles to compete successfully in international markets. He said the government would continue extending all possible support to industries that contribute to exports, employment generation, and technological advancement. Speaking on the occasion, Muhammad Mostafizur Rashid Bhuyan, Executive Director of RANCON Group, said the agreement would introduce healthy competition in Bangladesh's automobile market while providing consumers with high-quality vehicles coming from Pakistan. —APP

D-8, OIC youth forum to intensify collaboration on youth empowerment

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Developing Organisation for Economic Co-operation (D-8) and the OIC-affiliated Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum (ICYF) have agreed to intensify mutual collaboration on youth engagement and empowerment. This was decided during the meeting between D-8 Secretary-General Ambassador Sadiq Mahmood and ICYF President Mr. Taha Ayhan at the D-8 Secretariat in Istanbul. Ambassador Mustafa Özcan, Director at the D-8 Secretariat, and Mr. Tanus Somer, Director General ICYF, also joined the discussions as part of their respective delegations. Extending warm welcome to the ICYF President, Secretary-General Ambassador Sadiq Mahmood thanked his active role in steering youth affairs from the important OIC platform, underlining the complementary nature of the approaches of D-8 and ICYF in terms of youth development, and stressed the importance of optimal implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the two organizations in 2025. The Secretary-General also apprised of recent developments in the D-8's youth engagement policy — including the outcomes of the first

step towards achieving the Government's export-led industrial growth agenda. He said, Pakistan was pursuing policies that promote exports, strengthen local manufacturing, attract investment, and create a business-friendly environment for industries, adding the government was finalizing a comprehensive Auto Policy aimed at increasing vehicle exports, enhancing localization, and strengthening the country's automotive manufacturing base. The SAPM emphasized that Pakistan's automotive sector has made remarkable progress in quality, localization, and production capacity, enabling locally manufactured vehicles to compete successfully in international markets. He said the government would continue extending all possible support to industries that contribute to exports, employment generation, and technological advancement. Speaking on the occasion, Muhammad Mostafizur Rashid Bhuyan, Executive Director of RANCON Group, said the agreement would introduce healthy competition in Bangladesh's automobile market while providing consumers with high-quality vehicles coming from Pakistan. —APP

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Briefs

UAE
condemns
Iran attack
on Saudi
Arabia

DUBAI: The UAE has condemned the recent drone attacks launched from Iraqi territory targeting oil facilities in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province. In a statement published on its X account on Thursday, quoted by state news agency WAM, the UAE's Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that these attacks are a "flagrant violation of the sovereignty of Saudi Arabia and a threat to its security and stability." The ministry reiterated the UAE's "full solidarity" with Saudi Arabia and its support for all measures aimed at safeguarding its security and stability. Meanwhile, GCC Secretary-General Ahmed Al-Thagafi, who visited the UAE on Thursday, also slammed what he described as "terrorist" attacks on Saudi Arabia of interests by Iran-aligned militias in Iraq. Al-Thagafi deemed the acts "a dangerous escalation, a flagrant violation of the Kingdom's sovereignty, and a direct threat to its security and stability, as well as to regional peace and security." "The continuation of these terrorist assaults constitutes a direct threat to regional peace and security, undermining international efforts aimed at de-escalating tensions and consolidating security and stability," read the statement. — APP

Israeli
strikes
kill three
in Gaza

CAIRO: Israeli strikes killed at least three children, including two, in the Gaza Strip on Thursday, health officials said, as negotiators held new talks with Hamas leaders to reach a ceasefire and full implementation of a US-brokered Gaza peace plan. Media said an Israeli airstrike on a tent camp in Khan Younis, south of the enclave, killed a man and an eight-year-old girl. In the Rafah refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip, an Israeli airstrike hit a house killing an 18-month-old child and wounding at least eight people, media said.

The Israeli military said both strikes targeted Hamas militants. The latest deaths add to a toll of more than 1,200 Palestinians, mostly civilians, killed by Israeli attacks since the ceasefire took effect, according to Gaza health officials.

Hamas does not usually disclose its losses. The trace-balled full-scale fighting but has not ended nearly 100 Israeli strikes. Fourteen soldiers have been killed by militants in Gaza over the same period. In Cairo, Hamas leaders were holding talks with mediators from Egypt, Qatar and Turkey, over the implementation of the second phase of President Donald Trump's plan, as presented to them by his Board of Peace, that envisions its implementation. — APP

Oil prices slip as tankers continue to ply Middle East conflict zones

Iran also said that it had fired on US bases in Jordan and struck three tankers that were transiting the Strait of Hormuz through what it said was an unauthorised route

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LONDON: Oil prices gave up some of their gains on Thursday as oil tankers continued to make their way out of the Middle East even as tensions there escalated, with the US. Iran's spending beyond its main funds. Brent futures fell \$1.29, or 1.47%, to \$80.45 a barrel as of 09:00 GMT. US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude fell 56 cents, or 0.68%, to \$83.90 a barrel. Brent settled at 73.90 in the previous session and WTI up 6.58 in one of the sharpest spikes of the Iran war, reversing a 28-point drop Tuesday after a pause in hostilities in the five-month conflict. Thirty-nine commodity ships passed through the Bab el Mandeb strait into the Red Sea on Tuesday, the highest number since July 19, with only a few transiting through the Strait of Hormuz. However, shipping data showed, "While overall volumes are reduced, oil continues to leak out of the region through multiple channels, and additional workarounds are being explored. The longer this situation persists, the more likely alternative routes and methods will erode Iran's leverage over the Strait of Hormuz." IG market analyst Tony Symeon said in a note.

The Strait of Hormuz is the world's most important oil ship-

ping route, through which around a fifth of global oil and gas flows previously passed. It has been largely blocked since the start of the US-Iran war in February despite attempts to reach a diplomatic breakthrough on the passage of ships through the strait. Iran has ruled out an Oman proposal for regional joint management of the strait, a senior Iranian official said on Wednesday. US Saudi strikes hit petroleum forces in Iraq on Wednesday, the first time that Saudi had publicly issued US air strikes, in retaliation for drone attacks on Saudi oil targets launched from Iraq. That marked the resumption of US strikes in the Middle East, since President Donald Trump over the weekend called off a bombing campaign amid dwindling munitions. Iran also said that it had fired on US bases in Jordan and struck three tankers that were transiting the Strait of Hormuz through what it said was an unauthorised route. Sources said on Wednesday that Saudi Arabia was seeking to build a coalition to protect Red Sea shipping from Houthi attacks. The group in Yemen said on July 20 that it would impose a naval blockade on Saudi Arabia in the Red Sea, expanding attacks on tankers and opening another new front in the Iraq war in a push to also disrupt shipping in the Bab el-Mandeb strait, the second most important oil shipping channel.

Pak Navy ship rescues stranded fishing vessel

Owing to the swift and timely response, crew members of FV AL JALALI were provided with food, drinking water, and medical care at sea, and the stranded vessel was thereafter towed safely towards shore

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KARACHI: In a swift and coordinated emergency response, Pakistan Navy successfully rescued Fishing Vessel (FV) AL JALALI, which had been in distress about 120 NM south of Gwadar. A total of 19 crew members onboard the vessel, including 11 Pakistani and 8 Iranian nationals, were stranded at sea due to engine failure of the vessel. The situation was further aggravated by deteriorating weather conditions in the North Arabian Sea during the ongoing monsoon, placing the lives of the crew in immediate danger. Upon receipt of the distress call, Joint Maritime Information Coordination Centre (JMICC) promptly coordinated with Pakistan Navy to initiate an immediate Search and Rescue Operation. PNS TAHKUR was immediately tasked to undertake the rescue operation and provide assistance to the stranded FV. Owing to the swift and timely response, crew members of FV AL JALALI were provided with food, drinking water, and medical care at sea, and the stranded vessel was thereafter towed safely towards shore. The successful operation is a testament to Pakistan Navy's unwavering resolve to ensure the safety of life at sea and its readiness to respond to maritime emergencies across the region.

President praises Pakistan Navy's swift action

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday commended the Pakistan Navy for safely rescuing fishermen stranded in the Northern Arabian Sea. The president, in a statement, praised the Navy's timely action in rescuing both Pakistani and Iranian nationals, describing the operation as a practical demonstration of the Pakistan Navy's high professional capabilities and humanitarian spirit. He said that that safeguarding human lives at sea reflected the Pakistan Navy's strong commitment to fulfilling its national and international responsibilities. — DNA



Pakistan Navy successfully rescues stranded fishing vessel in North Arabian Sea

UK envoy, Sindh CM
convene business leaders

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KARACHI: The UK Government and Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah brought together UK businesses and investors as well as Sindh's business leaders to improve Pakistan's investment climate. Convened by the UK Government in partnership with the Government of Sindh, the roundtable aimed to strengthen investor confidence and support sustainable economic growth. Discussions focused on the key factors shaping investment decisions, including policy predictability, taxation, regulatory frameworks, foreign exchange processes, infrastructure, and the broader business environment. Alison Blackmore, Deputy British High Commissioner, said: "British companies have invested in Pakistan for decades, creating jobs, transferring knowledge and contributing to the country's economic growth. We want to see that partnership continue to grow." "The UK is supporting Pakistan's efforts to help government partners simplify regulations, strengthen institutions and reduce unnecessary barriers for businesses."

Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah welcomed the contribution of UK businesses to Sindh's economy and reaffirmed the provincial government's commitment to creating a more pro-investor environment to support reforms in taxation, customs, regulation, digitalisation and investment facilitation. Through UK support, more than 600 regulatory reforms have been approved over the past year to simplify regulations, improve governance, strengthen institutions and reduce unnecessary barriers to business. The UK is also supporting Karachi's implementation of the World Bank's Business Ready (B-READY) framework which identifies and aims to resolve practical barriers facing firms, including across areas such as business entry, taxation, utilities and dispute resolution.

New Zealand diplomat draws
ire of Beijing ambassador

DNA

WASHINGTON: New Zealand's top diplomat Winston Peters drew the ire of Beijing's ambassador in Wellington on Thursday after stating a lawmaker or of Chinese descent to "go back to your own country". During a debate on New Zealand's response to the Covid pandemic on Wednesday, populist NZ First leader Peters was asked by Chinese-born Green Party member Lawrence Kuo-Nga "Are you racist?" In response, Peters said the lawmaker, who was born in the Chinese city of Tianjin but grew up in Auckland, had "come here five minutes ago". "Go back to your own country. That's where they like a fuckin', but they don't

like that here," Peters said. "This is a democracy, unlike what you're used to. Go back to where you're from, you loudmouth." The comments sparked a rare intervention from Chinese ambassador to New Zealand Wang Xiangping, Wang said on X on Thursday that while he preferred to stay out of domestic politics, "suffice it to say, sometimes, a statement says more about the person that makes it than anything or anybody else". Peters fired back at Wang, saying his comments had "proven my point". "We live in a democracy that includes free speech and rights and those two values that other certain countries not only lack, but do so with force," Peters said on X. "If that offends the pearl clutchers and the communist shells labelling it as 'dangerous' — welcome to New Zealand!"

President,
Interior
Minister
review
security
situation

DNA

KARACHI: President Asif Ali Zardari and the Federal Interior Minister Moinuddin Khan reviewed the country's overall law and order situation, with particular focus on the security situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan here in a meeting held at Bahawal House on Thursday. During the meeting, the interior minister briefed the president on the prevailing law and order situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, as well as the ongoing measures being taken to combat terrorism. President Zardari paid tribute to the bravery, professionalism and sacrifices of the Pakistan Armed Forces, law enforcement agencies and police in the fight against terrorism. He said the entire nation stood firmly behind its security forces in the collective effort to eradicate terrorism and ensure lasting peace in the country. The meeting also featured a detailed exchange of views on the country's prevailing political situation, besides discussions on other matters of national interest.

Nine killed
in house
roof collapse

DNA

LAHORE: At least nine people were killed and three others injured after the roof of a house collapsed near Sahi Wala in Lahore's Badliwala area, rescue officials said. According to rescue officials, the injured were shifted to a nearby hospital for medical treatment, while efforts to remove the debris were continuing. Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz expressed grief over the loss of lives in the incident and directed authorities to ensure the best possible medical treatment for the injured.

In a separate incident, two children were killed and two other people injured after the roof of a house collapsed during rain in Faisalabad. The deaths came weeks after 14 children died after the roof of a tutoring centre collapsed in Lahore.

Japan quake toll hits 34 as
survivors struggle in heat

KUMAMOTO: Japanese emergency workers searched tirelessly for survivors at a wrecked shopping mall on Thursday, as the death toll from a major earthquake hit 34 and tens of thousands were left without power in punishing heat. The Kumamoto disaster management office issued the new tally for Tuesday's quake, with seven bodies now extracted from the mass of rubble, steel and wires of the Asan shopping mall after a suspected gas blast. Eight people were also confirmed dead at the Nippon Paper Industries factory in Yatsushiro city, where part of a rod-and-whisker endstock collapsed, according to the office. Five others were in a critical condition after the 7.6-magnitude tremor, which affected 9,500 locals were in evacuation centers in the region of southwestern Japan on the island of Kyushu. The quake caused widespread damage, flattening homes, damaging bridges, triggering fires and leaving tens of thousands of residents without power and water in temperatures forecast to hit 38C this weekend. Some 15,521 households remained without electricity on Thursday. Hundreds of elderly people — Japan has the world's second-oldest population — clambered on this mate on the hard lobby floor at a no community center in Uki city as they sought relief from the searing sun. "Thank God for these shelters," said one woman, who declined to give her name, as people slept between chairs and tables or gathered under a tarp. "In this heat, if you don't have electricity and air conditioning, it's very tough," father-four super-market employee Hiroyuki Matsushima, 53, told AFP. With no power and running water, retired Kenji Ota, 72, has been sleeping inside his car at night. "This quake was so strong, it was horrible... I can only sleep for two hours or so at night," he said. The town of Iikawa was one of the areas worst hit, where many older structures crumbled in the quake and where residents still had no water or power on Thursday. — APP

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